

Just ask and they cast

The founder and owner of the Casting Shop foundry, Ian Close has one maxim – “you ask, we cast”.

His reputation as a man who gets the job done according to clients requirements, whether that be a one off R&D project or a production run, extends well beyond his Christchurch base, with a growing number of Auckland businesses and even companies across the Tasman coming to Ian to take advantage of his knowledge of foundry work, which has been built during 45 years in the industry.

Ian began his involvement in the foundry industry in 1966 and after completing a four year apprenticeship he headed to Australia on a Rotary initiated Craftsman Training Scholarship to extend his knowledge and skill base. He worked in Australia and studied for several years before returning home to Christchurch and after two years Ian began working for Kingston Close Ltd in which he became a partner. After 29 years at Kingston Close he branched out on his own, setting up Casting Shop Ltd six years ago with wife Rosemary.

“In many ways I am a problem solver and it is my extremely experienced staff who assist with providing the solutions. There is very little we can’t or won’t do.

“Most of our customers come to me with a problem and we come up with a solution – some are easy and others take longer.

“We assess the customer’s need, work with them to determine what they exactly want and to what level of finish they require.

“For example, a manufacturer will come to us with a design and a rough idea for the fittings they require. We work with them to flesh out the design for those fittings, determine what casting process is the best to create the mould, then we manufacture.”

Casting Shop utilises three mould making processes – Green Sand, Chemical Sand and Lost Wax, also known as Investment Casting.

“Green Sand is the oldest method of moulding known to man, using sand, water and clay,” Ian explains. It is used in over 40 percent of the work we do and meets most people’s needs due to its dimensional accuracy, finish and cost.

Chemical Sand is a quicker process that produces a higher quality surface finish and is a little more expensive.

The Lost Wax process is used when the customer demands a product with the highest quality finish and the greatest accuracy.

The three processes allow the Casting Shop to

produce one off pieces, from vintage car parts and sculptured art works, through to short production runs of parts for the manufacturing and farming industries through to top end high performance components.

Casting Shop also manufactures for the civil and domestic market, including everything from street grates and street furniture to fire grates and heater parts. In addition to the manufacturing and farming areas, a lot of Casting Shop’s advanced work goes to the marine, health, dairy, food and agriculture industries.

“With our electric melting furnaces we are able to melt various aluminium alloys, brass and bronze alloys, cast irons, Ni-hard, Ni-resist and chrome irons, together with various grades of steels and stainless steel. Our smallest casting is 10 grams,” Ian says.

“We are in constant contact with pattern makers (old school and digital) and machine shops, so in many cases we are able to go from concept to completion.

“What we are seeing is some of our customers are finding their overseas manufactured products do not have the same quality, both in terms of accuracy and finish, that we are able to make in New Zealand affordably.”

Ian says the foundry industry in New Zealand is a very strong fraternity and if on the rare occasion he is stumped by a customer’s request, he knows he will be able to find a solution among the collective minds of his foundry colleagues.

Since moving to the Watts Road premises in Christchurch, Ian has expanded the premises to include a wholesale shop, which is a great benefit to his local customers, but also acts as a window into the business for his North Island clients.

“In the last few years we have been attracting a greater number of customers from the North Island, particularly from Auckland, as we have developed a growing reputation not only for getting the job done, but also tackling the more complex work other foundries are not set up for.”

Ian acknowledges most of the kudos for the Casting Shop’s growing reputation for quality and accuracy goes to his staff. “Most of my staff have over 20 years experience in the industry and we wouldn’t be able to operate to the level we do without them.”

Ian says that his team is very nimble, flexible and responsive, making work like breakdowns easy to fit in, usually with overnight delivery.

Testimonial

John Stevens (PhD Agronomy) is founder and director of Flexiseeder Ltd involved with the research, development and production of agricultural machinery around the world. When John wanted to update plot seeder machinery he included Ian Close and the Casting Shop as part of his development team.

“I have worked with foundries internationally and I can safely say there is no one in the world better at what he does than Ian and the team at Casting Shop. 90 percent of our product is exported into developed economies.

“From the concept stage, through research and development, to testing and production Ian’s assistance was pivotal.

“This has grown to a \$2 million development project and accuracy was a key part of what we had to achieve if it was to be successful on the world stage.

“Plot seeder machinery hadn’t kept up to date with modern requirements in some key areas and as part of updating the machinery to international standards we had to be able to cast components which had not been cast before.

“Ian’s ability as a lateral thinker, his ability to work as part of a team and the quality of the finished work means the completed product is now a major player in the international market.

“We would not have got this far without the assistance of Ian, Rosemary and the Casting Shop team.”

- John Stevens, founder and director, Flexiseeder Ltd

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— Advertising Feature



1.
Burning out the wax from the mould



2.
Wax burnt out, ready to pour the stainless steel in



3.
Pouring the stainless steel into the mould



4.
Metal poured in the mould but still hot



5.
Poured mould, cold with ceramic knocked off



6.
The finished product