

FENCING TIMES

XL Edition

2024, Issue 11

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CIRCULATION:

Fencing Times is published in both print and digital editions. More than 17,000 readers in 7000 businesses across Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK read Fencing Times in their own language. An additional international edition in English is sent to readers throughout Europe.

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Teamwork makes the dreamwork

In a previous column I wrote about the importance of a healthy working atmosphere – which is actually something that every company needs to have in order to run smoothly. If you want to go a step further than just ensuring that your business has a healthy working atmosphere, you can build team spirit.

'Team spirit' is the superlative of the 'healthy working atmosphere'. It gives your business wings. It really does: if your company's performance when there's a healthy working atmosphere is fairly average, then with good (or would you say 'high'?) levels of team spirit things will really pick up steam and you can move mountains.

Just take two installers who can't stand each other, and try sending them out together. Then the next day send the same guys out, but this time each with a colleague they get on well with – you'll see the difference immediately.

When there's good team spirit, colleagues will collaborate rather than dumping problems on each other's plates. They'll learn from each other, and they'll help each other out with tasks. Colleagues become friends, who together are prepared to take on bigger challenges because each of them knows that if they get to a point where they don't know how to proceed, the other one will get them through.

Team spirit makes people more creative, because they're more comfortable and less afraid of other people's (negative) comments. This can uncover hidden talents, and it encourages people to get the best out of themselves and to take responsibility for doing so.

We recently came across a study that found that staff who work for companies with good team spirit feel 74 per cent less stressed, have

106 per cent more energy, and are 50 per cent more productive. We haven't looked into how the researchers measured this, but the figures are certainly impressive. Less stress means less downtime, less chaos, and fewer mistakes. And being 50 per cent more productive would mean getting one-and-a-half times more metres into the ground – with a hefty pile of additional profit as a result.

"Yes, but," I can hear you saying, "to have lots of team spirit, you need to have people who are open to that. People who enjoy working as part of a team. If you have even a couple of those in your company, you're lucky. If your people aren't team players, then what can the boss do about it?"

And you'd have a point there. Some people are rigid thinkers who are only worried about their own tasks and their own problems. People who certainly don't want to get involved in their colleagues' issues, because oh no, what if it means that they don't get their own work finished and have to work overtime – or end up getting told off by the boss.

But if you have people like that on your staff, then why not think outside the box and ask yourself whether you couldn't maybe manage to cope without them completely? No one's forcing you to keep them on. Especially if it feels like they're a handbrake on the smooth running of your business, it might be a good idea to let them go.

Because every team needs team spirit in order to grow. Even teams that look good from the outside end up stalling if there's no team spirit. They simply stop developing.

Team spirit is based on trust, safety and appreciation. Despite belonging to the team, team members must be seen as individuals and need to feel that their personalities are valued. The most important aspect here is trust.

When there's trust, you feel safe to share and implement your own ideas. It encourages you to keep trying and to stay curious. It gives you the courage to admit your mistakes and to share your successes. In a safe team where the members trust each other, problems are raised and discussed rather than being swept under the carpet.

But this sort of team spirit doesn't happen by itself. Even if all your staff are great people, who enjoy working as part of a team and are open to building close bonds with their colleagues, team spirit is something that you actively need to work on.

That doesn't mean having to spend a weekend a month on the side of a mountain doing a survival course with all your staff, or going to an Escape Room every Friday. Just like developing a good working atmosphere, building team spirit starts with the little things. Things like saying 'thank you' and 'hello'.

"Um, what?" Yes, really. That's where it starts. With saying 'thank you' and 'hello' just like they taught you back in kindergarten. It should be the most normal thing in the world, but you'd be amazed how many companies there are where it's normal to just march straight in and get to work. You need to introduce the death penalty for that, immediately.

When your staff arrive at work, have everyone do a quick round of the colleagues who are already there, just to say good morning. For the first three weeks you'll have to make it compulsory and insist that they all do it... and after that it will become a habit. And don't forget to create a separate 'Water Cooler' channel or the like in your chat app for those who are working from home.

The same goes for giving feedback in a friendly way, listening to each other, and looking your colleagues in the eye when they're speaking to you: It's the little things that show that you appreciate each other. And when it comes to team spirit, appreciation is the most important building block.

"We really don't have time for that here," is the most commonly-heard excuse for not doing all these things, but it's also the most typical factor that eats away at appreciation. Express your appreciation and let other people know that you value them. Look other people in the eye, really listen to them when they speak, say thanks – even when you're in a rush.

All the good things you give to your team will come back to you, in the form of increased team spirit.

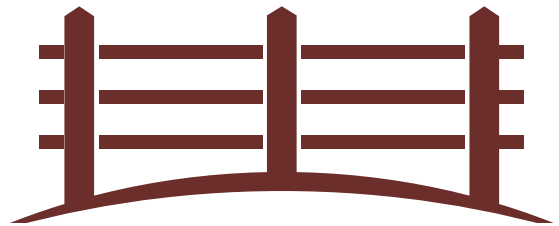
Some other important factors in improving team spirit: be clear and straightforward. Give everyone in a team a clearly-defined role, with clear tasks and responsibilities. Be clear about your vision and goals for your company, and about the goals the team needs to achieve.

Communication might not need too much of your attention in everyday matters, but the more important or complicated the issue or project, the more of your effort it will require. As a general rule, it can rarely be said that colleagues talk too much about important issues. I've never heard anyone criticise a colleague for explaining something too simply and too clearly.

And don't forget to celebrate your successes, too. Treat your installers to waffles or ice creams, if they wrapped up a big project on time yesterday so you can now pop a nice big invoice in the post. Sponsor two crates of beer for the Friday afternoon drinks. You'll recoup the cost tenfold once the various teams in your company get up to speed.

And of course, once you've done all these things – and the additional team spirit has made you extra-successful and brought in buckets of extra money – there's nothing to stop you from organising regular mountainside survival weekends, city trips, and other fun outings for your team. ■





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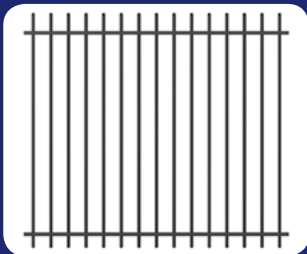
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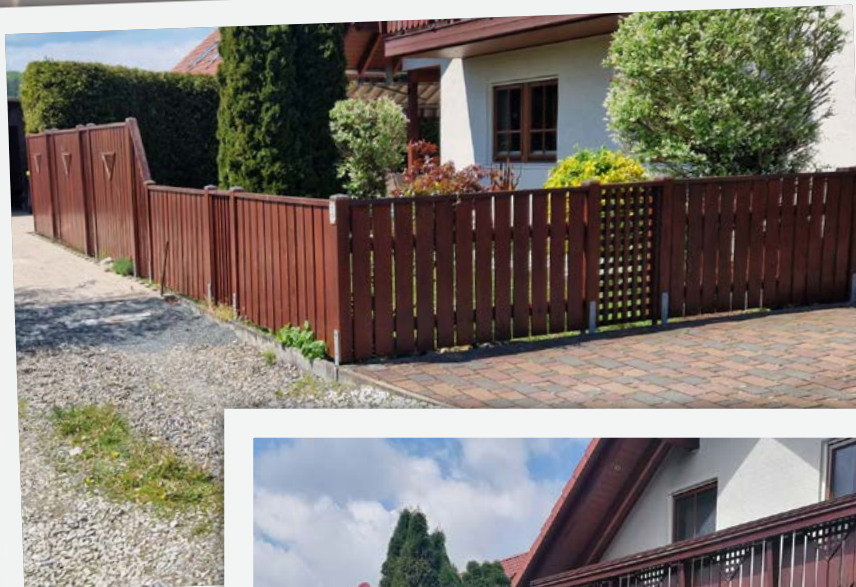
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FENCE POST



Elli@TGM

Elli Klein of fencing company Thein Grimm Marre in Braunschweig sent us these before-and-after photos. Elli's installers replaced a wooden fence with an ornamental fence from Rüschoff. Beautiful job, Elli. That transitional element in particular is really nicely done. Here on the editorial team we always find it irritating when the horizontal lines don't flow smoothly. Presumably there's an official name for this condition and we've always wanted a good psychiatrist to help us get over it, but fortunately it's not an issue when looking at this photo. Thanks for sending it in!

fencepost@fencingtimes.com

Have you got a tip for us? Or taken part in something great that you want to share with the market? Spotted a beautiful fence or a beautiful gate? Or perhaps a really ugly fence, which you turned into a great photo? Let us know and share it with your colleagues in the sector.



Korneliusz@Bedo

Korneliusz Stańczyk of Bedo Technology from Świdnica in Poland, a village to the south of Wrocław, sent us this photo of a colonial-style fence that he made himself. Nice work, Korneliusz!



Denis@Walput

Denis Valput of fencing company Draht Walput in Rheinstetten, near Karlsruhe, sent us this photo. It shows a fence at the 'Bundesgartenschau' garden show held in Mannheim last spring and summer. "We installed a fence with swing gates and turnstiles around the whole site, which was formerly an American army barracks," Denis writes. "But there was also a lot of work for us on the site itself, such as here, where we needed to fence off the cable car terminal. The cable car transports visitors to and from the city centre, and was built especially for the Bundesgartenschau." Great photo, Denis, once again demonstrating that even a simple mesh fence can look great!





Michael@Zaunteam

Michael Baumann of Zaunteam Main-Rhön in Euerdorf, between Fulda and Würzburg, sent us this photo of a stainless steel gate. You don't see this sort of thing every day. "The customer came to us with a pencil sketch," Michael writes, "asking whether we could make something similar. We did just that, in our own workshop." It's turned out beautifully, Michael! Thanks for the photo.



Basri@Bever

Last summer, Basri Esen of Bever & Klophaus in Schwelm holidayed in the Turkish resort town of Çeşme, near Izmir. He spotted this gate there, with its built-in logo. Thanks for the photo, Basri.



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PINTENMATTE 6



Photo of the month

The photo of the month comes to us this time from Urs Vogel of gate installer Ema-Tech, based in Nottwil near Lucerne in Switzerland. "A painting business in the nearby village of Willisau wanted an artsy kind of gate, something that shows that it's an innovative company that's prepared to think outside the box," he writes. "It was a very special project – the painter, the artist and a whole team from Berner, the manufacturer, worked on it for over eighteen months." It's extraordinary, Urs. This month the construction radio will be heading to Nottwil.



Bever expands sales team



Stephan
Meier

Martin
Panther

German lock manufacturer Bever & Klophaus, from Schwelm near Wuppertal, expanded its sales team last autumn. The team now comprises five representatives, each with their own region to cover. “Other companies in the industry are cutting back on sales reps now that there’s less construction going on, but for us it’s the other way round,” sales director Basri Esen says. “People like to buy directly from other people, and especially in our

industry. On top of that, we have an extensive range – the differences between locks are often in the details, which means that customers’ questions are often very technical. So it’s good for them to have a contact person in their own region, someone who’s able to come over immediately to explain something, or to look into which solution is required. That’s why we’ve been looking for two true industry experts, each with decades of experience in the sector.” Stephan Meier is the new man

for Northern and Western Germany, while Martin Panther is responsible for customers in Baden-Württemberg. “So now we’ve got the map of Germany fully covered,” Esen goes on. “It means that the existing team doesn’t have to travel quite so far now, and that overall we’ll have more time for our customers.” ■

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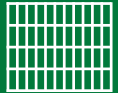
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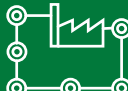
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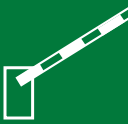
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Hadra builds new branch near Bremen

Hadra, a German fencing wholesaler from Winsen an der Luhe near Hamburg, is constructing a large new branch in Wildeshausen, near Bremen. On completion, the company will have 4500 square metres of storage area and 800 square metres of office space.

“We’ve grown fast in Wildeshausen,” commercial manager Patrick Angres says. “It’s mainly because we do all our sliding gate distribution there, but also because we’ve continued to add many different items to our range in recent years, for example a range of aluminium fencing. It means that our current location is far too small now. We’d already had to rent additional space here and there on the industrial estate but obviously that’s a logistical nightmare, which is why we’re now building a completely new branch.”





Patrick Angres

WILDESHAUSEN

The branch in Wildeshausen is one of Hadra's seven branches, besides locations in Hamburg, Teterow (near Rostock), Queis (near Leipzig), Langeneicke and Geseke (near Dortmund) and Philippsburg near Mannheim. "We rented the location from a building materials dealer," Angres explains. "We had plenty of space to start with, but over time it became more and more difficult. So this spring we bit the bullet and purchased a 2.5-hectare site on the other side of the motorway, right next to the exit."

NEW BUILDING

At the new location, which should hopefully be completed before next summer, Hadra will have enough space to keep on growing for a while yet. "Obviously we have plenty of storage space there," Angres says, "but other things will be added, such as container docks. Part of our range – in particular garden gates, welded mesh on rolls and some post anchors – comes from Asia or elsewhere in the world, and the new docks will enable us to unload those materials much more quickly. We'll have an overhead crane there, so we can load sliding gates onto trucks from above. In addition, we'll have all our staff from logistics, engineering and sales together in the same office, which will save so much unnecessary walking back and forth or playing phone tag. The new office will also have a showroom and a training room, where we or, for example, trainers from Holler or AES will be able to provide our customers with technical training. All of this means that the new site in Wildeshausen is another big step forward." ■





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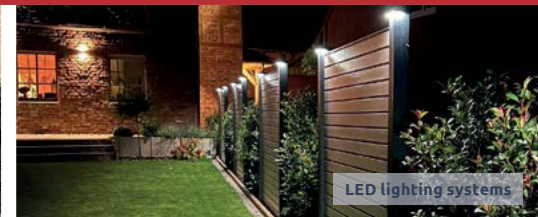
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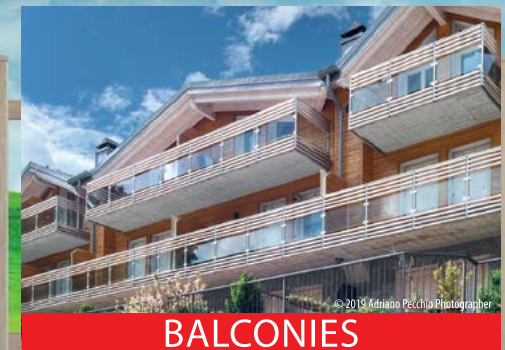
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MADE IN ITALY

Aligates introduces new curved top gates

Aligates, a British aluminium gate manufacturer based in Warrington, Cheshire, is expanding its range to include swing gates and sliding gates with a curved top beam. All swing gates in the range with a passage width of 5.5 metres or less are now available with a curved top, as are sliding gates up to 5.2 metres passage width.

It's something we've wanted to do for a long time," sales manager Kevin Brooker says. "Our gates are regularly used as a high-quality alternative to the classic wooden entry gate. These types of gates often have a curved top, so we wanted to be able to offer that on our aluminium gates as well. We spent 3 years working on development, and last summer we were finally able to present the first models."





HIGH-END

“The reason for the long development time was because we manufacture everything ourselves,” Brookes goes on. “That was our philosophy when we started manufacturing aluminium gates almost 10 years ago, and we’ve always kept to it. It means that we have full control over every step of the manufacturing process, and we know for sure that we’re supplying a top-quality product. We make the moulds for the aluminium extrusions ourselves, we have our own powder-coating facilities, and all the sawing and cutting work is done with CNC machines so it’s accurate to a tenth of a millimetre.”

BONDING

“For the same reason, we bond the extrusions together, rather than welding them,” Brookes explains. “We do this using a bonding process designed for the luxury car industry – Aston Martin and Lotus use the same technique. The reinforcements for the automation and the corners of the frame are joined together at the same time, and immediately form a robust frame. The corners have a holding power of more than 180 kilos per square centimetre (2600 pounds per square inch), making them stronger than the traditional welded gate leaves. The big advantage of bonding, besides the extreme strength, is not only that no welding seams are visible but also that you can combine sections of various colours, because the bonding is done after powder-coating.”



MODELS

All the swing gates in the range with a passage width of 5.5 metres or less are now available with a curved top beam. There are two variants: the standard curve, and a swan neck. The swan neck starts and ends with a straight line, a little like a stretched-out 'S'. Both upper beams can be installed the other way round if desired, meaning that the customer can choose to have the gate higher in the centre than at the gate-posts, or the opposite. Customers can order the sizes they require, as all gates are built to order.

CURVED TOP

Aligates manufactures the curved-top gates in its own factory in Warrington. "There we have special profiles extruded for the purpose, using a type of aluminium that's not quite as hard as the extrusions we normally use," Brookes says. "We then roll those profiles into the right shape ourselves. We purchased a CNC-controlled roller in Germany for the purpose; it ensures that all the curves look the same. After that the profiles go into the oven to harden the aluminium further. Then they're powder-coated and we make them into gate leaves."

APPEARANCE

Like all other profiles, the curved top profiles can be coated in a wood-grain pattern. "We sublimate the profiles ourselves too," Brookes says. "We do this on our own sublimation line, where we pull the patterned film onto the profile using a vacuum. The line can process both curved and straight profiles, so customers can order the curved profiles with a wood-grain pattern immediately. All in all, this is a major addition that we're extremely proud of—the curved profiles give fencing installers a very different gate to offer their customers." ■





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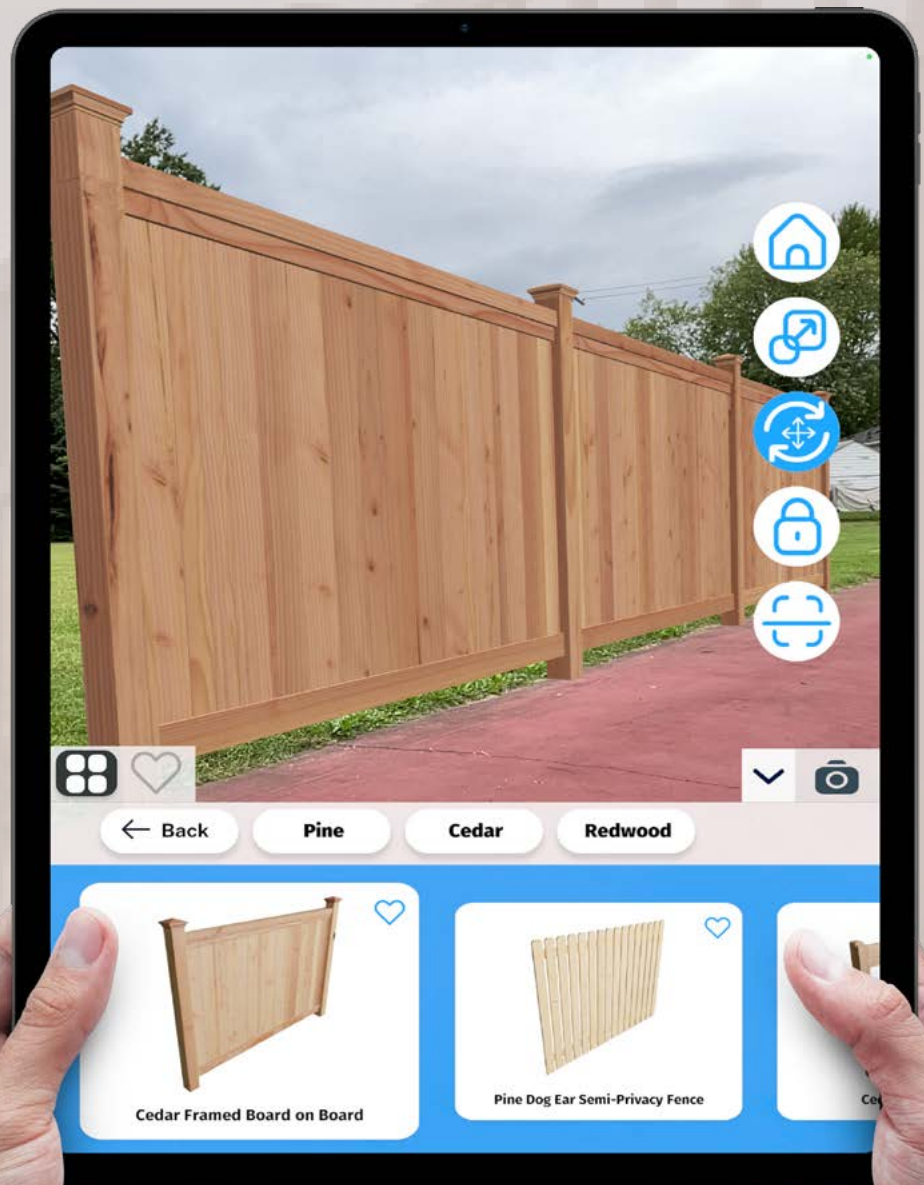


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RealityFence releases universal AR app

RealityFence, a software development company from West Bloomfield, near Detroit in Michigan, launched a new app in September that allows you to easily show customers the fences you sell. The app uses augmented reality (AR) to show how the fences look in the real world. With the app, RealityFence aims to make the sales process easier.

“My grandfather Terry Gladstone owned a fencing business for 20 years,” says creator and co-owner Drew Baskin. “I’ve been going there since I was little. When he started getting a bit older, I’d often drive him to the customers and I noticed that when you show people the photos in a catalogue, they often have trouble imagining what the fence is going to look like in the end. You can see the uncertainty on their faces. But wherever they can just point to a neighbour’s fence, it’s the other way round: you can see how certain they are. Then they’ll say, ‘I want a fence like that,’ and within five minutes you’ve got the order. Once I realised that, I knew I was going to build an app to show customers what the fence they’re buying is going to look like in their own garden.”





REALITYFENCE

Baskin, who was already programming and developing at the time, enrolled in various augmented reality courses at MIT, Wharton University and the Tandon School of Engineering of New York University and began work on developing the app. He approached his former high school teacher and mentor Adam Shireman, whom he knew had experience selling software, and together they started the RealityFence company and app. *"With the RealityFence app, you can put a fence in your customer's garden with just a few taps of your finger,"* says Baskin. *"Then you show them your iPad screen and they can see what they think of it right away."*

FAST

The app is emphatically not a configurator – which would require you to draw the fence across its full length or around the entire garden. *"You'd need to work on that in the customer's garden for half an hour or more,"* Baskin says. *"Our app is designed to help the customer to make a purchase decision fast. Every type of fencing is available in the app in a length of 10 to 12 yards¹ – that's three or four elements or sections. That's enough to fill the iPad screen when you're with the customer looking at the fencing line from a distance. The customer can see what the fence is going to look like and knows immediately whether it's what they're after – or not. And after that you can show them different alternatives, very quickly: first mesh, then vinyl, then wood. If the customer likes the look of wood, you then show them different models of wood fencing. With or without an arch, with horizontal or vertical planks, you name it. Usually the customer makes a decision right away, but if they want to think it over then you take a photo of their favourite two or three options, which you can then email to them. Your name and phone number are at the bottom left of the photo, so the customer can easily get in touch once they've made a decision."*

1) 10 yards is 9.14 metres

TYPES OF FENCING

RealityFence's fencing library mainly includes US fencing types so far. "We started with the bestselling types of fencing in the USA," Baskin explains. "So far we have mesh fencing, vinyl fencing, aluminium vertical bar fencing and many types of wooden fencing in the app, with around 140 different models in total. But we have an amazing team of 3D artists who are working hard to add new fencing types to the library. There are new ones every week." For all models, the emphasis is on ensuring that they look as realistic as possible. "Obviously it's not just about the shape and the measurements; customers want to see exactly what they're paying for, so we make sure that the surfaces of all sections, slats and boards look as true to life as possible. When you see a cedar fence in the app, the wood grain and the colour look exactly like they do on a real cedar fence. That way the customer knows exactly what they're buying."

VERSIONS

Several subscriptions of the RealityFence app are available. The Pro version allows you to choose 30 types of fencing from the library. In the Pro Plus version you can choose 50, which can be shared with five different users. "The main reason to opt for Pro Plus is that you can then provide drawings and specifications for your own fences," Baskin says. "Our team of artists use them to create 3D models, which you can use in the app within just a few days." The RealityFence app works best on tablets and phones that have a lidar² scanner. "iPad Pros from 2020 and later have lidar," Baskin says, "and so do the iPhone Pro models from iPhone 12 onwards. With lidar you can position the fence very precisely where you want it. But the app can also be used on other modern phones and tablets that run either Android or iOS." ■

2) Lidar (also written as LIDAR, LiDAR or LADAR) stands for 'light detection and ranging' and is a method of determining distances by aiming a laser at an object or surface and measuring the time it takes for the reflected light to return to the receiver.





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Zaunteamers celebrate with trip to New Zealand

When there's a special anniversary, Swiss fencing franchise Zaunteam goes all out to celebrate. For example, a year ago we reported on a long weekend they spent in the Alps to mark the tenth anniversary of five different branches. Then in 2023 Christian Saller (Zaunteam Obere Donau-Bodensee) and Maik Schäfer (Zaunteam Fenzhöfe Oberwälden) celebrated their 20th anniversaries, Thomas Konzelmann

had worked for the business for 22 years, and the branches run by Stefan Zeller (Zaunteam Nordwest) and Christoph Spahni (Zaunteam Spahni) were marking 25 years in existence. So to celebrate these very special occasions, Zaunteam founder Wädi Hübscher treated all five to a trip to New Zealand – which for many is the fencing capital of the world. Hübscher himself filed this report.



On 28 October the big day was finally here and our group flew from Zurich via Singapore to Auckland, where we arrived after a total of 22 hours in the air. We immediately jumped into our hire car, with visits scheduled to a fencing company and the manufacturer of Revolution Postdrivers.

The trip's first highlight was a tour of the factory at Gallagher's headquarters in Hamilton, where modern machinery is used to make W-insulators and, of course, their field fencing, along with many other products. On our way across the North Island we visited other manufacturers such as Taragate, Robertson Engineering and Kiwitech, as well as some fencing installers, all of whom gave us a very warm welcome.

One unique experience was the visit to the 480-hectare farm belonging to former professional fencing installer Paul Van Beers, a multiple New Zealand fencing champion who competed against Zaunteam's Swen Blumrich at the 2008 Swiss championships. In addition to sheep and cattle, the farm has a massive hunting area with red deer and fallow deer. Possum and wild deer control is an increasing problem.





We also visited various sights along the way. New Zealand is famous for its hot springs, so of course we couldn't miss a dip in the 41-degree waters in Taupo. We caught a ferry in Wellington and travelled to the South Island in 3.5 hours. Once there, we cycled to several wineries in the famous Marlborough wine region, then later in the day rode to a brewery and sampled some local products.

Another fencing professional took us to the Awater Valley, where we travelled to Upcot Saddle and visited two sheep stations covering more than 20,000 hectares. At the first one we were treated to a stylish morning tea, and at the second to a cold beer.

During our journey along the coast, we tried to get photos of marine mammals from an old whaling station. However, apart from a few dolphins, all we saw was a whole lot of water. We made up for it in the evening though with a lavish seafood dinner.





In Christchurch, New Zealand's second-largest city, we visited another two interesting manufacturers and had the opportunity to see different types of knotted mesh, barbed wire and fence staples being made.

After that we headed back to the mountains, to the pristine and incredibly impressive Upper Rakaia Valley, where a helicopter flight was planned as a surprise. The next day we took to the air again, but this time in an open cockpit biplane, which was truly an adventure. We continued our drive through the picturesque region with its many lakes around Tekapo and Wanaka, bringing us to a landmark in Cardrona that we just had to visit: the world's only bra fence, which raises awareness of breast cancer and collects donations for research.



On arrival in Queenstown, New Zealand's tourist magnet, we took up residence in Villa Zaunteam before heading straight for Skippers Canyon. The bus trip there was a white-knuckle ride reminiscent of a suicide mission. It's listed as one of the ten most dangerous roads in the world, and for good reason! The following wild jet boat ride through the narrow canyons of the Shotover River is hard to beat in terms of action, and we were happy to make it back to Queenstown safe and sound.



After a varied drive, our final day trip saw us heading for Otautau to visit Dirk, a friend of Thomas Konzelmann's. He and his wife Petra run a completely organic dairy farm, with no barn. They milk some 950 Kiwi Cross cows there. The extremely optimised processes mean that their competitiveness is unequalled. We were all extremely impressed by this business performance.

The return trip to Zurich, from Queenstown via Auckland and Singapore, was an intense one with a total of 28 hours in the air. But the many exciting experiences we had and the overwhelming impressions will stay with us, and with them the most fabulous memories of this unforgettable trip! ■



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Thibo shows off latest developments at Thibo Event

Last October the Dutch fencing manufacturer Thibo, from Beek en Donk near Eindhoven, held its Thibo Event – a cross between an open day and trade fair – for the first time. Held over two evenings, the Event gave clients the opportunity to talk to suppliers, learn about new developments and take a look around the business.

“Earlier in the year we became a Holler Gold Partner,” says Heino Thijssen, one of the company’s directors. “Holler is an Austrian sliding gate manufacturer with gates in the ‘Oberklasse’ – the heaviest models can be ordered with a single gate leaf of up to 25 metres passage width and up to 4 metres in height. We wanted to let everyone know about the new partnership, while also showing them the possibilities. Celebrate and seal the relationship. So we organised a fun and informative event and took advantage of the opportunity to show off the other things we do, including how things work behind the scenes.”

EVENT

The Thibo Event was held over two evenings, from 4pm to 8pm, so clients didn’t lose an entire working day. Visitors were welcomed to one of Thibo’s product assembly halls to look around and enjoy snacks and drinks. One of the items on display was a complete padel court, showcasing the padel cage made of glass walls and wire panels from Thibo’s range. Visitors had the opportunity to play a game of padel on the demo court, just for bragging rights. Managing director and co-owner Ralph Beukers gave tours of the in-house production facilities, and engineer Bas van der Ven showed off an Augmented Reality visualisation currently under development. It enables fencing installers to project the fences and gates from Thibo’s range onto a tablet, live at the customer’s premises.





AUTOMATED MODIUS

The presentation of the automated version of the Modius Design Gate was a highlight of the Event. *"We've adapted our existing Modius double swing gate for automation,"* Thijsen says. *"The gate leaves now have a rounded hinge housing, which on top of looking great is also extra-safe so fingers can't get trapped in it. We've built a specially-designed motor from Somfy into the hinge housing. It has bottom and top hinges, enabling the hinge housing to rotate on its own axis. All in all it creates a very clean design – all you see is the gate – and a very smooth opening movement. On top of that, the Somfy app makes it super-easy to operate. We're really proud of it."*

TYPE-APPROVED SWING GATES

Thibo also displayed automated and type-approved swing gates to the visitors. *"We created them in the months leading up to the event, in collaboration with BFT,"* Thijsen says. *"Customers are now able to purchase a complete and approved automatic swing gate. If they install these according to the instructions, they are in compliance with all laws and regulations without the need to conduct an additional on-site inspection"¹.* We also took the opportunity to showcase our range of construction fences. Along with the various transport accessories and access gates, it's bigger than a lot of people think. And finally, of course, it was a great opportunity for customers to get to know the internal sales staff that they normally only speak to on the phone.

1) We'll return to this in a future issue of *Fencing Times*.



PARTNERS

In addition to Thibo's own developments, there were also stands with products that Thibo sells wholesale or builds into other products. For example, Locinox was there with the Roadshow Van, which is full of locks and gate-closers. BFT had a stand with drives for swing and sliding gates, as did Cardin importer GPS Perimeter Systems. "We've been building Cardin motors into our sliding gate drive portal Matic-SL for over a decade now," Thijssen says. "They're also type-approved as a set, if you combine them with a sliding gate leaf within the correct specifications." Brivo Access Technology and Eagle Eye Networks Camera Surveillance also had stands at the Event.

SHOW TRUCK

Last but not least, sliding gate supplier Holler Tore from Graz in Austria attended the Event with its Show Truck, a trailer displaying all gate models and many options and accessories, all operational. "All gates look lovely in the catalogue" says Henk Sletering, the managing director of Holler Benelux. "Our gates stand out for their technical design; they're rock-solid. That's obviously reflected in the specifications, but you can only really get a feel for it when you've got the gate in front of you and can actually touch it. Then you see the difference immediately. Events like this one by Thibo are a good opportunity for us to show fencing installers exactly what we stand for. Naturally we wanted to help celebrate Thibo's Gold Dealership, too! Thibo has all the know-how for technical support here in-house, in addition to a big logistics network so they can deliver to fencing installers quickly and flexibly. We're able to reflect on two extremely successful days." The same applies to Heino Thijssen: "What's the saying again? Stagnation is decline, haha. We, and the whole team, work hard to ensure that we never stop developing. It's great to be able to show off the results." ■





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RAL Gütegemeinschaft Metallzauntechnik meets in Kiel

The 2023 annual conference and general meeting of German trade association RAL Gütegemeinschaft Metallzauntechnik, was held in mid-October. Members gathered for three days at the Atlantic Hotel in Kiel, on the Baltic Sea.



In keeping with tradition, the event kicked off on a Thursday with an evening reception, this time at the Kieler Brauerei in the city centre. Chairman Ulrich Harsch officially welcomed the members, after which the buffet opened. “The first night is always a popular part of the programme,” Harsch says. “Fencing professionals have the opportunity to get to know each other there, and to catch up with familiar faces. It’s a relaxed evening with a group of like-minded people – it’s always a fun night and goes by far too quickly.” The Brauerei closed its doors at 11 o’clock, with most members then heading to a bar opposite the hotel for a nightcap.

NEW MEMBERS

The Friday started off with the members’ Annual Meeting. Harsch opened proceedings with the announcement that the association had the privilege of welcoming three new members, coincidentally all from North Rhine-Westphalia: Josef Breitmeyer Zaunbau of Dormagen, Zaunbau Rosner of Bedburg, and Zaunbau Sascha Küster of Bad Honnef. “As a member of a trade association that’s affiliated with the RAL Institute, you show that you stand

for quality,” director Kai Uwe Grögor explained to us later during a phone call. “And not just for good quality in general, but for quality standards that conform to specific high RAL requirements. That gives customers confidence, and gives you access to bigger players. We offer a wide-ranging support package for this, with RAL logos for your corporate stationery, an advertising video for your website and, for example, boilerplate texts for specifications. Other membership benefits include a regularly updated handbook that gives answers to many technical questions, training sessions on standards and rules, and a handy calculator for determining measurements for ball catcher fence posts. And finally, our members are stronger together. If you encounter a problem, there’s always another member with relevant experience who can give you advice.” The association also has two new sponsors: fencing wholesaler Hadra and SichtschutzhHersteller Profex Kunststoffe bring the total number of sponsors to 27.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

At the previous meeting, the Board distributed weighing hooks and asked members to keep regular tabs on the weight of the twin

wire panels they received. In this way the association aims to determine whether the twin wire panels supplied to members are in line with the relevant specifications. With the results still trickling in, the association now wants to extend its field survey to include fence posts. For this reason, Harsch handed out small callipers at this year’s meeting. These will enable members to measure the wall thickness of the posts they have in stock. “The trend of making materials thinner and thinner so you can offer a better price is nothing new,” Ulrich Harsch says. “And there’s nothing wrong with it either; it’s a logical consequence of the law of supply and demand. After all, if the market demands fences at lower prices, that saving has to come from somewhere. But customers need to be able to compare apples with apples, so they can make an informed choice between low price and high quality. That can only be done when the quality of the material is in line with the specifications given, so this survey is very important to us. For this reason, I’d like to once again urge all our members to continue to take measurements regularly, and report the results to the association’s technical committee.”



RAMMING

Michael Jäger, chairman of the association's so-called Güteausschuss¹ (Quality Assurance Committee), then took the stage. He reported on the positive experiences the inspectors had had. Over the past year, the association's members – in line with the requirements of the RAL Institute – have had more frequent visits from inspectors to check that they are installing fences and gates according to the Güteordnung (Quality Regulations). Jäger told the gathering that the inspectors scarcely had to issue any warnings or revoke licences, and that almost all members had everything very much under control. The second item on his agenda came as a surprise to us: the association has set up a working group that is in the process of writing guidelines on ramming. *“For a long time ramming was unthinkable in Germany,” Jäger says. “There’s still hardly any doubt that making concrete foundations means sturdier fences, but we’ve certainly noticed that demand for rammed fencing is increasing. Initially this was mainly from the solar farm industry – in which the fence is really only there for insurance purposes and will never have any money spent on it – but recently it’s more and more often being done for environmental reasons too. To install a fence in concrete foundations, concrete needs to be manufactured and a lot of soil needs to be removed.”*

1) The Güteausschuss is the committee within the association that, under the supervision of the RAL Institute, sets out the norms and standards in the so-called Güteordnung (the quality regulations which the association's installers must adhere).

Kai-Uwe Grögor





“Both of these things impact the environment. In addition, in times of staff shortages, ramming is a good way to get more metres into the ground with the same number of people. What this development means for us as an association is that we need to engage with the subject, so that installers have something to guide them as well as knowing which standards and specifications a rammed fence has to meet in order to be of good quality. And also so that customers know what level of quality they can expect from their rammed fences.”

GENERAL BUSINESS

Managing director Kai-Uwe Gröger was the final speaker to address the meeting. He spoke briefly about the overall economic situation. The latest statistics show that the number of new construction projects is declining in all sectors, with the exception of logistics and storage. Additionally, the shortage of skilled staff remains a problem for many fencing installers and as of yet there is no real solution. Gröger proposed some new training courses, too: in the coming year there will be a course on using a template the association has created for the installation of swing gates; it enables you to calculate which specifications the posts and frames need to have for which dimensions and which type of infill. The next item on the agenda was a discussion of the budgets for the past and current years. These were explained by Gröger and then approved by the members. Gröger then reflected briefly on the most recent edition of Perimeter Protection in Nuremberg, which was also very successful for the association. Finally, Gröger announced the cities in which the conference is to be held in the coming next two years: in 2024 the association will meet in Bayreuth, then in 2025 it will be Erfurt's turn.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Following the official portion of the meeting, there were two guest speakers. First up was Dirk Stefan, who introduced the app Craftnote. Craftnote makes it easy for builders and installation companies – and thus fencing installers too – to ensure that all the information needed during a project makes it to the right people, and on time. The second speaker was Lukas Ikenmeyer of LAO Leitungsauskunft, a company that's mapping all underground cables and pipes throughout Germany. LAO offers a service in which fencing installers can, with just a few clicks, request data from all utility companies with pipes in the street in which a project is underway.



FORUM

After a short lunch break, those taking part in the afternoon programme were able to choose between a guided tour of Kiel and a so-called forum giving the opportunity for questions, answers and discussion. Peter Sterrenberg, a fencing installer and MZT Board member from Harrislee on the Danish border, has many years of ramming experience. He answered all questions from installers wanting to know more about ramming. Fencing installer Michael Thomas was there to answer questions about the most common mistakes made when delivering a project. The guest speakers from LAO and Craftnote were also available to answer questions, as were the association's Board members.

CABARET

In the evening, attendees were treated to a performance by Kerim Pamuk, a German cabaret artist of Turkish descent, who got the room laughing with jokes about both Germans and Turks. After that the buffet was opened and the attendees had the rest of the night ahead to discuss the past year with each other and look ahead to the year to come. Those who had missed the city tour in the afternoon had the opportunity to take it on Saturday morning, after which the conference was all over for another year. ■



Kerim Pamuk entertains the attendees with a short German-Turkish cabaret performance



First Fence to use new distribution hub

Fencing manufacturer and wholesaler First Fence, from Swadlincote in Derbyshire, will start using a new distribution centre in Hucknall, near Nottingham, in February. From then on it will be the company's base to supply its various branches across the country.

“Until now all our stock has been spread across our six branches around the country,” says managing director and owner Vinny Kotecha, “meaning that we’ve been driving materials back and forth on a regular basis. So we’re now setting up a new National Distribution Centre, stocking our entire extensive product range. Then we can supply the depots across the whole country from there.”

HUCKNALL

The new distribution centre is located in Hucknall, near Nottingham. “It’s close to our depots in Huthwaite and Swadlincote, while also being centrally located between all the major cities in England,” Kotecha says. “We’re able to reach all depots quickly from here, so if materials aren’t in stock at a particular depot, we can transport them there overnight. Once it arrives, it can be added to other materials from the order and we can deliver the full order to the customer the next day. Providing that fast service is how we’ve built up our business, so we’re doing everything we can to ensure that we’ll always be able to deliver quickly.”



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**NATIONAL
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CENTRE**





SOFTWARE

In order to make those fast delivery times possible, First Fence themselves wrote part of the order processing software. "When we started out in 2010, we wanted to do everything digitally right from the outset," Kotecha explains. "For starters, it means there's less chance of mistakes. Orders don't need to be entered and re-entered as often. But more than anything, processing orders digitally is much faster. Sometimes a forklift driver can have a packing list on his iPad within 5 minutes of the customer placing an order. The software knows exactly which products are needed, as well as when and where, and can issue internal transport orders quickly. From now we won't need materials to come from other depots – just from a single central hub – so we're currently making changes to the software for that."

SPACE

In Hucknall, First Fence has a 100,000-square-foot hall¹ on a site measuring 3.5 acres². "We can store all product groups there for which we offer same-day and next-day delivery," Kotecha says. "We have enough space outside that we can load and unload trucks at the same time, and then there's still room left over to park empty trailers. The new location is a big step forward – it's going to allow us to have quite a growth spurt." In addition to the large amount of storage space, the location will feature a small film and photo studio, where First Fence plans to take their product photos, as well as recording videos for the website and social media. The new distribution hub is scheduled to go into operation from February. ■

1) 100,000 square feet is 9290 square metres

2) 3.5 acres is 1.42 hectares or 14,200 square metres



Aluconnect – new producer of aluminium gates and fencing





Earlier this year in the Dutch town of Haps, located between Nijmegen and Venlo, the owners of Privacon Hekwerken opened a new factory for the manufacture of aluminium swing gates, sliding gates and fencing: Aluconnect. They intend to use this for meeting the growing demand for aluminium fencing and for responding flexibly to new trends in the market.

“We believe there are endless possibilities for the use of aluminium in site security,”

explains commercial director Koen Thomassen. “We saw that there were huge opportunities for improving on the existing aluminium gates in the market. That’s why we’ve developed a completely new concept based on screwed connections. That was key for us because we want to be in a position to supply sustainable products. Furthermore, we wanted to be flexible and able to offer our customers a solution for every requirement. We therefore built our own factory. At the moment, we have 25 people working there.

FLEXIBILITY

“Once we knew we were going to build that in-house factory,” Thomassen continues, “we were able to design a completely new range from the ground up. Starting from scratch is a huge advantage. It’s a lot of work, but you can harmonise all the products and then build extremely efficient production lines.” Aluminium profiles are delivered in long lengths at one end of the factory. “They’re already powder coated, which happens after they’ve been extruded. Then we cut them ourselves into standard sizes. Where applicable, holes are drilled, recesses are milled or threads tapped and then the profiles are stored on mobile racks. As soon as an order comes in, we take the correctly sized sections from the rack and can start production. This modular approach makes us very flexible, which we regard as super important. As a producer, you must keep on innovating and be ready to change along with the market’s changing needs. For the same reason, all gates are designed as empty frames and the infill consists of separate modules mounted in those frames. This will also allow us to launch new models quickly in the future and always respond to customers’ wants.”



General Manager Koen
Thomassen (left) and Operations
Director Lucas Walraven

DESIGN

Site security has typically been a traditional market but according to Thomassen, that's changing now. "If you follow the housing programmes on TV, you'll see that trends are succeeding each other more and more quickly," he says. "The garden is increasingly being drawn into the living room and that process has only accelerated since coronavirus. If you ask me, gates are finally getting the attention they deserve. The same is happening at our house too: the gate is used more often than the front door. That has to be a good thing, right?" To ensure customers have lots of options, Aluconnect has put together a design line of 14 different models: with narrow or wide infill profiles, with slats, with dense sheet infills and with combinations of these. There are gates that are identical on both sides and there are models where you can see through a gate from the inside to the outside, whereas from the outside looking in you can't see the property at all. "The ideal gate for your mother-in-law," jokes Thomassen, who emphasises that safety was also a key consideration in each product's design: "As an example, the hinge posts of the swing gate leaves are round. In this way, we're reducing the risk of a squashed finger to almost zero." In addition to design infills, there are also industrial gates with single-bar or double-bar infills. The gates are designed to facilitate a flexible choice for the infill above the upper beam; the profile of the upper beam can incorporate a security strip or a module with inserted bars.

SCREWS

Aluconnect didn't want just flexible models. Thomassen: "Manufacture too is organised in a highly flexible way. We decided early on that we wanted to screw the gates, rather than weld them together. Welding is expensive and not that environmentally friendly. Screwing is just as sturdy – or sometimes even sturdier and you don't see any welding seams. And it doesn't require a workforce of welders. As we screw the profiles together after powder coating, we will also be able to market bi-coloured gates in the future. It gives lots of extra opportunities." Aluconnect developed 45 different aluminium profiles for the new range. "We assembled a design team under the inspiring leadership of Jairo Veulings – an engineer who has been involved in the aluminium sector for many years. His team has developed the profiles so they can be clicked together as far as possible. A large number of profiles can be used for several purposes and easily combined. This allows us to produce incredibly efficiently, but at the same time extremely flexibly."



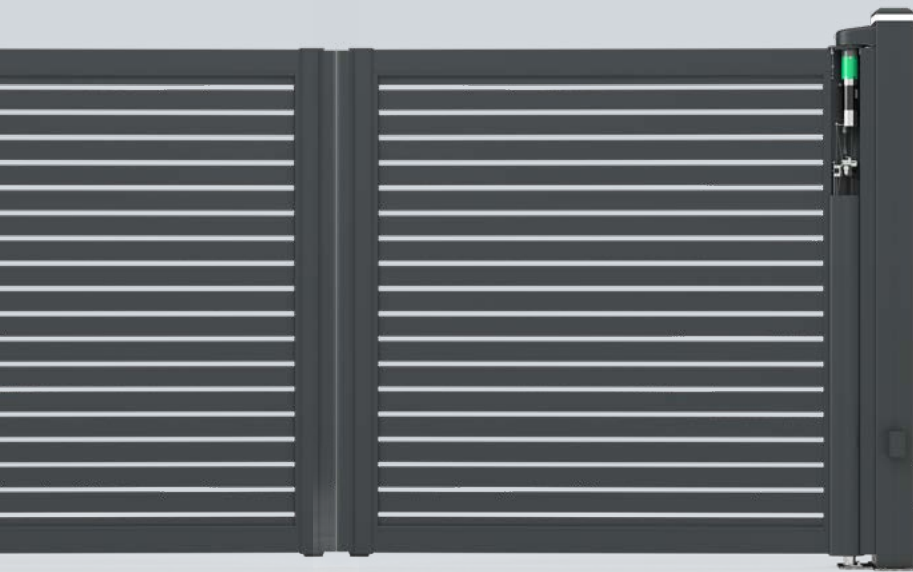
DETAILS

“Furthermore, we did our best to focus on the details as much as possible in the design,” says Thomassen. “The profiles are clamped and screwed together in such a way that they cannot rattle in the wind. The posts of the swing gates have rubber stops, which absorb the initial knock if someone – or the wind – opens a leaf with some force. There’s not a single place in the gate where water can remain. All profiles have holes for water drainage where necessary. So the possibility of frost damage is also ruled out. As standard, we supply with an all-round coating for increased scratch resistance, better UV resistance and greater colour and gloss stability. And lastly, all our models do of course comply with the Construction Products Directive and the automatic gates are also type-approved and fully compliant with the Machinery Directive.”

COLLABORATION

The design team worked closely with several suppliers on the development of the range. *“We believe in collaboration,”* says Thomassen. *“Through innovation, knowledge sharing and partnerships, we are utilising the endless possibilities for aluminium in site security. Therefore the locks, hinges and all the other hardware for the manual gates come from Locinox. Our engineers spent a lot of time sitting down with Locinox’s engineers to see how we could coordinate the products in the best possible way. As a result, we have a beautiful end product in which the hardware is concealed from view as much as possible. The same applies to the automatic gates. Belfox made a tubular motor for us that we can install in the hinge post of the swing gate leaf. The control unit for the sliding gates is fitted by Belfox in Fulda onto a special mounting plate, which we can then install in our guide post in a single operation. Suppliers – and customers too – have all been very supportive. That has been invaluable to us and it’s something we really appreciate.”*





DIMENSIONS

The new Aluconnect range consists of swing gates up to 2 metres high in widths up to nearly 5 metres. The maximum width for the automatic swing gates is 4.2 metres. For sliding gates, the maximum opening width is 7 metres for ones with design infills, and for ones with industrial infills these can be ordered with an opening width of up to 12 metres. As standard, the gates are supplied in one of four standard colours: moss green, pine green, anthracite or deep black, but they can of course be supplied in any RAL colour on request. ■

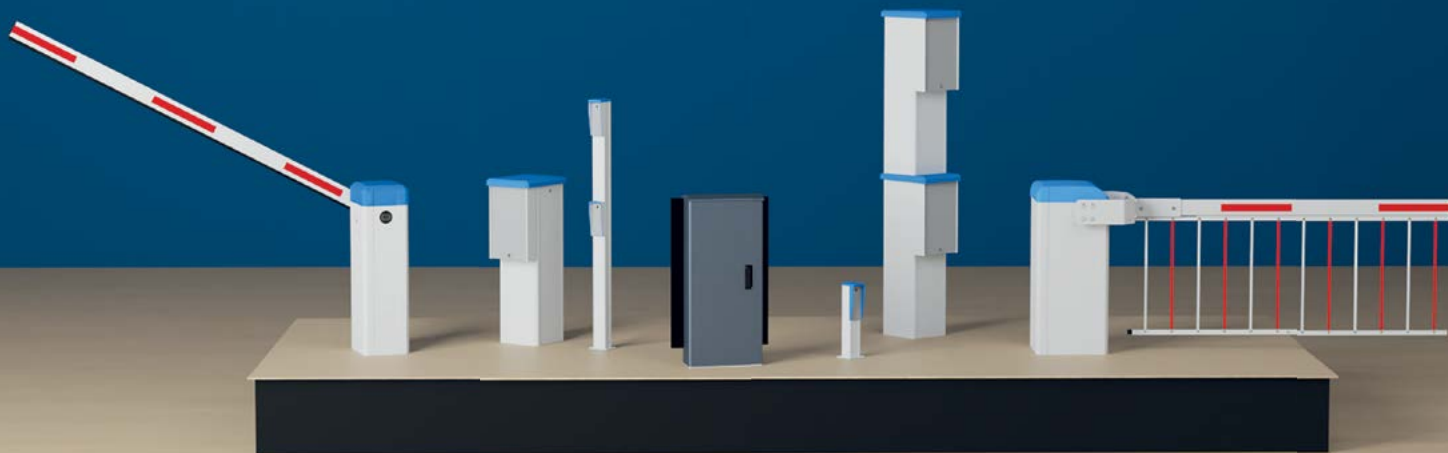






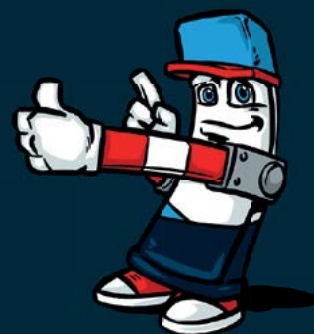
In addition to being a fencing installer, Livia Graf is a photographer. Whenever her guys finish off a project, she drives to it and takes stunning fencing photos. This is one of them.

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Perimeter protection with radar

Everything you need to know about perimeter detection, part 10: field detection with radar.



Rajmond Rondeel

Rajmond Rondeel has worked in perimeter security for many years. For Fencing Times, he writes about securing outdoor areas with detection systems. Do you have questions? Or a practical example - and are curious what Rajmond would have offered here? Send him an email at rajmond@fencingtimes.com



A

few columns back, I discussed field detectors: detectors that are set up inside the fence and on the actual site. They are the second layer of detection, after fence detection systems, and are important for high-risk locations or where the fence

is not high enough for the use of reliable fence detection. Field detectors are able to cover long distances easily.

That previous column mainly covered microwave detectors. These are field detectors with a range of some 50 to 500 metres, with a detection field of 3 to 10 metres wide and high. This is an invisible and unconquerable wall for would-be intruders. But these microwave detectors consist of a separate transmitter and receiver. This means installing two devices, each requiring a power and communication cable, so the infrastructure costs are high. However, field detectors with radar are available. While microwave detectors and radar are often confused and the terms used interchangeably, this is technically incorrect because there is a clear difference: a radar always consists of a single device. This device contains both the transmitter and receiver, so you only need to install and connect one device. This cuts the infrastructure costs in half. In this column, I want to examine the radar system as perimeter detection in more detail.

In a radar detector, the transmitter emits microwaves at a certain frequency. These waves are reflected by moving objects, which changes their frequency, and this changed frequency is then picked up again by the receiver. In physics this is known as the Doppler effect. You can observe this effect yourself when you hear a fire engine or ambulance coming towards you with the siren on. The sound frequency changes as the vehicle moves towards you and then moves away again. Although you yourself don't move, the siren's tone changes. This physical phenomenon means that the radar detector can measure the speed of a moving object. Modern cars that are fitted with adaptive cruise control use this technology too. A car using cruise control is able to maintain exactly the same distance and speed as the car in front. If the car in front slows down, the car using cruise control brakes too, even to the point of stopping. If we can rely on that, then we can also rely on such a detector being good at securing sites based on the same principles.

The microwaves emitted are reflected and then received back, meaning that they cover double the distance in comparison to the microwave detector. For this reason, the maximum detection distances we see for radar detectors are somewhat smaller. For radar detectors, we see detection distances ranging from 20 to 120 metres with a detection field of around 2 to 5 metres wide and high. You can't get past that unnoticed either. The radar, like the microwave detector, is not in the least bit sensitive to weather conditions.







Whether it's hailing, snowing, raining or foggy, it won't confuse the radar and detection will be just as reliable. To continue with the example of adaptive cruise control, it operates as usual in rain or snow too. When it's foggy it might even be handy to secretly latch on to the vehicle in front at an acceptable distance and speed. You need to keep an eye on your navigation system, though, to make sure that you don't end up in the wrong place. All kidding aside, hopefully my point is clear. The radar operates reliably in all weathers.

As the radar is able to measure distance, speed and volume, the alarms are reliable too. You can set the volume level fairly precisely, so you are able to distinguish between pets, adults and, for example, cars and trucks. If you then combine this volume criterion with distance, you can adjust the settings of a radar detector so that it detects people precisely up to the property boundary, and not beyond it. So imagine a radar detector that monitors the driveway from the garage door towards the entry gate. People who are walking on the pavement outside the gate will not be detected in that case, not even if the gate is open. But if they walk up the driveway, they will immediately trigger an alarm. However, the small family dog is able to run around in the garden and on the driveway without triggering the detector. The radar detector is a true problem-solver here – it's able to do things that other detectors can't do.

For example, you could programme the device so that all movement taking place between 15 and 20 metres from the device is permitted; the detector does not need to respond to it. This is ideal if, for example, there is an access gate there, which is often used even in a secure situation. You can then handle movement in this area differently.



This radar, which looks remarkably like outdoor lighting, has a maximum range of 120 metres and can be divided into 10 zones

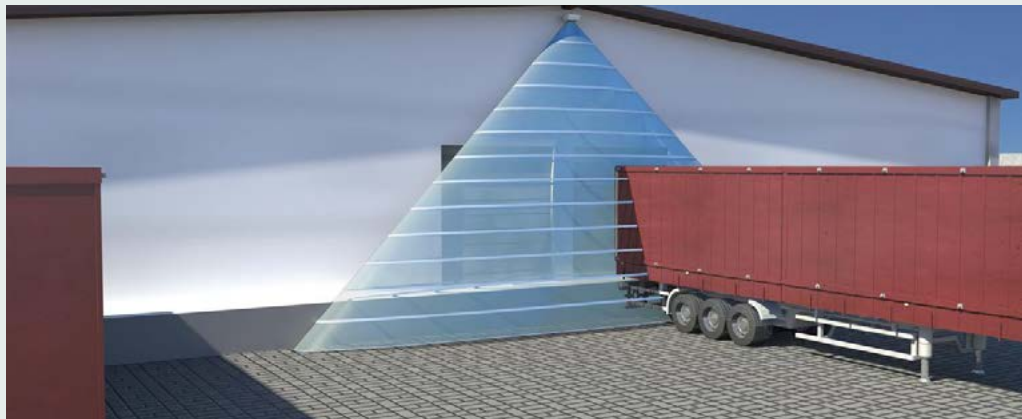
You can also make this dependent on, for example, a particular scenario. At night, movement in this zone is treated as an alarm, but during the day the movement is used as a signal to open the barrier or gate. The device can also be programmed to respond only to very large moving objects such as trucks, and not to people, or the other way around. In some situations this is even more important, for example in a port or customs transfer area. The radar detector is also able to detect the direction of movement, which opens up more interesting options. You could adjust the detector so that movement from inside to outside doesn't trigger an alarm, but the other way around it does. In that case you would be able to leave the premises, but not enter them without an alarm being sounded. And during another part of the day exactly the opposite could be true. This could be used in the world of psychiatry or something similar.

Because the radar is able to measure distance, you can use it to create ideal alarm zones. The maximum detection range can often be divided into multiple zones. For example, I know of a system that has a range of 120 metres that can be divided into 10 zones. The zones don't all need to be the same size, so the user can determine them individually. This enables you to link the various alarm zones perfectly with, for example, video surveillance. The alarm is accurate to 1 metre, so exactly the right camera can be used to verify the alarm.

There are also radar systems that have a range of 360 degrees. These are often housed in one of those spheres that you see in airports, at ports, on ships and military bases. They have a bigger range, from a few hundred metres up to kilometres. They cost serious money but – if installed high up – are able to provide security for large outdoor areas. And because you only need a single device, you save a lot on infrastructure costs. However, the site does need to be suitable. It needs to be somewhat open, without too many buildings or other obstacles. The intelligent systems are even able to track intruders, from the moment that they are initially detected. They can tell the video surveillance system exactly where the intruders are located. The cameras zoom in and, controlled by the radar, move with the intruders, keeping them optimally in view.

Security guards can then respond appropriately and as much evidence as possible can be recorded.

We'll be seeing many more developments to this system in the near future. For example, I've already seen the first images and tests of a drone, equipped with a camera and lights, which a 360-degree radar automatically sends to the intruders' location to make good aerial recordings and inform the intruders that they've been caught in the act. 'Star Wars 2.0', says this almost sixty-year-old. Whatever technological developments we're all going to witness in the future – be it a detection system that can replace security guards, or a fully autonomous driving car – one thing's for sure: it's not going to work without an intelligent radar. And that's why the radar detector is the detector of the future. ■



Win a barbecue with the Fencing Times



We move with the times here at the Fencing Times. For a while now we've been on Instagram, the photo-sharing social media app. Our account is @fencing_times, why not follow us?

We've come up with a fun idea to promote both our new Instagram account and our great magazine: the reader who submits the best

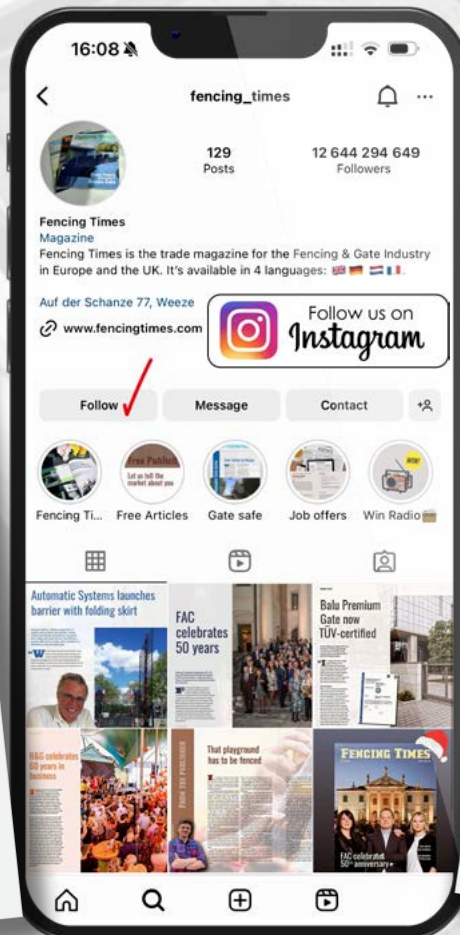
photo of themselves or a colleague reading the Fencing Times will win a handy portable barbecue.

You can photograph yourself reading the Fencing Times at the office, in the workshop, in your van, on the job site, or at home, on holiday, or even at the supermarket. The more creative, the better. The funnier, crazier or more unusual, the bigger the chance you have of winning.

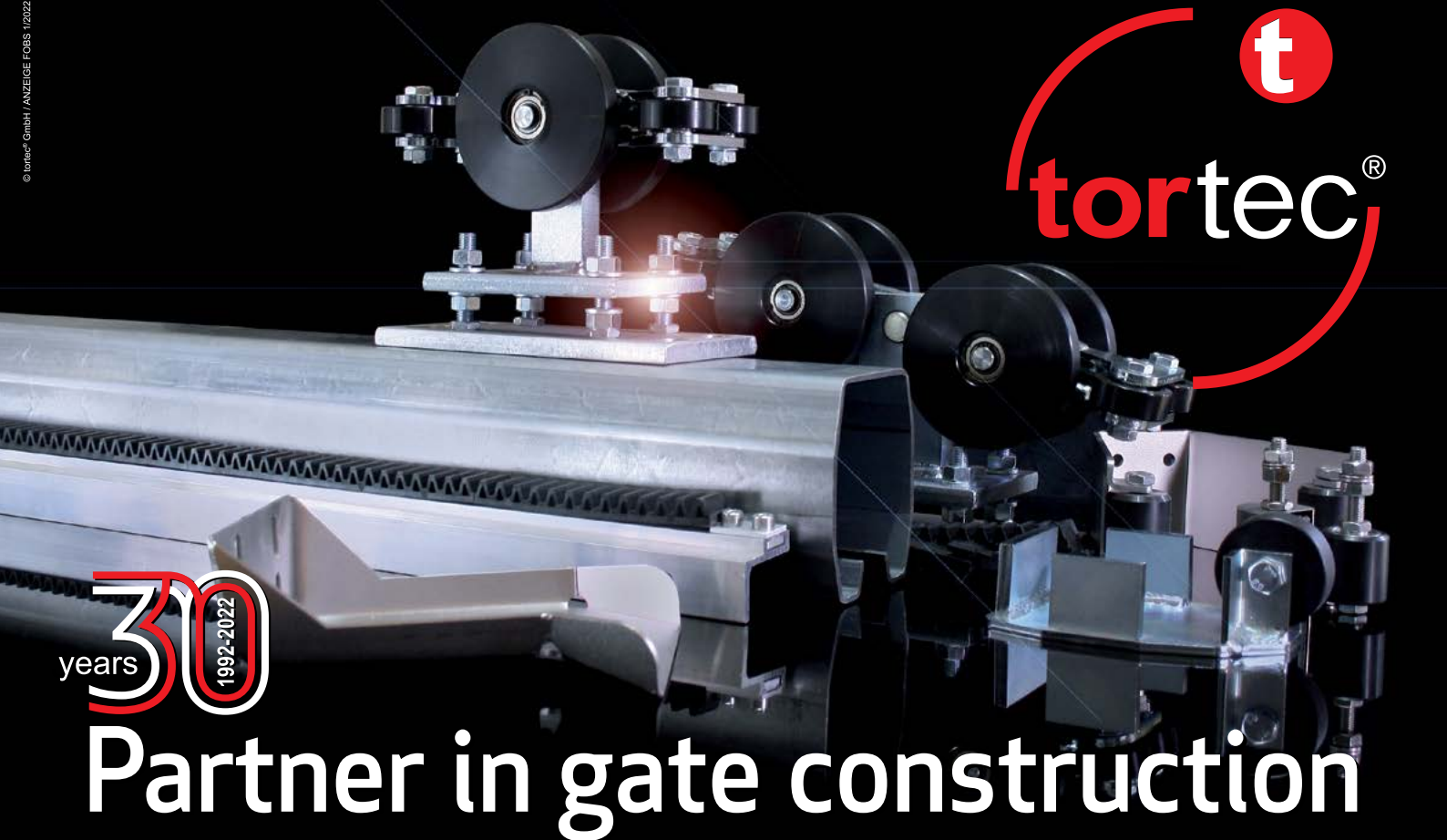
All photos submitted will be posted on the new Instagram account. The photo that gets the most likes by the end of 1 May will win a barbecue. Then you won't have to head for the chip shop at lunchtime, but can barbecue your own sausages while you're putting up fences. The winner will be announced in the June issue.

Send your best photos to us at foto@fencingtimes.com, or share them with us directly on Instagram. We don't make a big fuss about copyright and conditions; both you and we can use any submitted photos however we wish. You can send us as many photos as you like. Don't wait too long, because the longer your photo is up, the more time it will have to attract likes.

Oliver Boyd of AES in Northern Ireland knows how to put his work break to good use: drinking tea and reading the latest fencing news. Simon Zumbrunnen of Zaunteam in Switzerland went that step further and took the Fencing Times with him on holiday to Jordan, so he'd have something to read while bobbing around in the Dead Sea. Nice work, guys! Thanks a lot for inspiring this competition. Naturally your photos will be eligible to win the prize.



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Lots of wood at Paysalia

France's Paysalia trade show took place in Lyon at the start of December. Paysalia is a trade show for gardeners and landscapers (paysage = landscape), but given that these sorts of companies also install a lot of fences, the last decade has seen plenty of fencing and gate manufacturers among the exhibitors. This year was no different, with around 80 to 100 attending.





France always leads the way in terms of trends (this was the case with gabions, closed aluminium fencing, aluminium gates, and woven plastic privacy strips), so Paysalia is always a good gauge of the direction that fencing design is heading across the whole of Europe.

Once we'd visited the first stands, the thing that immediately stood out at this edition was the high proportion of wooden items. Fences with wood, fences made completely of wood, wooden gate infills, combinations of wood with steel or with aluminium, and fences made of another material but with a wood motif – France's fencing manufacturers are clearly going all-in on everything related to wood.

Another thing we noted was that the motifs laser cut in metal sheets are moving with the times: they're becoming more complex and varied. We also saw an increasing number of manufacturers combining different types of infill in one fence. And of course we also saw lots of new models and types of fences and gates; we'll share more on that in other articles.

Ever since Paysalia began, its organisers have had a policy (which we on the editorial team don't understand) of not viewing fencing as a separate industry. It doesn't even have its own category on the list of exhibitors. If you're a fencing professional and only interested in the fencing exhibitors, you're going to need good walking shoes, because the fencing stands are scattered across the site and you can't even look them up in the catalogue if you don't know the names of the companies.

For us as journalists, it means that we can't tell you exactly whether the trade show's fencing offering has been getting bigger or smaller over the years. We had the feeling that there were a few less stands with fences and gates this time than there had been at the 2021 edition, but it was just a feeling. Overall the trade show was – considerably – larger than the previous edition, with 1732 exhibitors (21 percent more than in 2021) and 38,101 visitors (a 32 percent increase). The next edition will be held in December 2025, once again at the Eurexpo in Lyon. ■



UKCA no longer required for foreign products

This summer, the UK government announced an 'indefinite' delay to the cutoff point for accepting the CE product mark alone on products manufactured outside the UK. These products will not need to be marked 'UKCA', providing that they carry the CE mark. This decision means that the government will recognise CE markings for machinery indefinitely, with the deadline for change – 31 December 2024 – now obsolete.

For our industry, this means that any product in a gate kit used to make a gate or barrier (for example safety devices, drives, operators, electrical components) will be permitted to carry the CE mark in place of the UKCA one, as long as the item was produced outside the UK. This is especially relevant to us given that most equipment in this genre is imported from the EU. Under the original legislation, EU equipment manufacturers would have been required to UKCA-mark every single product intended for the British market. This massive task is unlikely to have been actioned, thus rendering all installations non-compliant.

The indefinite delay only applies to products manufactured outside Britain. Products manufactured in England, Scotland or Wales will require the UKCA product mark from January 2025. Different rules apply in Northern Ireland. For products that can use a UKCA marking in Great Britain, these must meet EU rules in Northern Ireland, including a CE marking. British manufacturers who wish to export these products to the EU will need to register them for the CE mark too. The EU doesn't accept UKCA in place of CE, nor is it likely to do so at any time in the future. ■

The CE mark logo, consisting of the letters 'C' and 'E' in a stylized, bold font.The UKCA mark logo, consisting of the letters 'UK' stacked above 'CA' in a bold, sans-serif font.



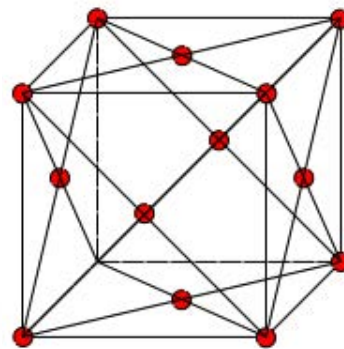
Austenitic crystalline structure with planar-centred cubic crystal lattice

What on earth? In a side article in issue 8 of the Fencing Times, we explained the differences between two different types of stainless steel: AISI 304 and AISI 316, also referred to in German as V2A and V4A. The main difference is that molybdenum, an element extracted from molybdenite, is added to AISI 316.

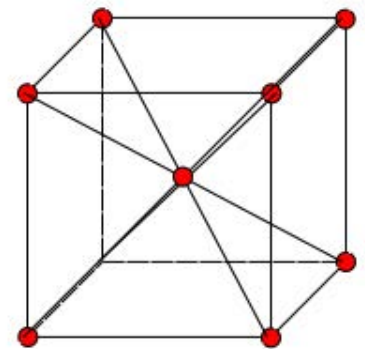
In that same article, we also tried to explain what 'austenite' means, as that is the source of the 'A' in the designations V2A and V4A. But as we never paid much attention during chemistry lessons, we got hopelessly lost in this. We only managed to get as far as "according to Wikipedia, both types of steel have an austenitic crystalline structure with a planar-centred cubic lattice." We promised to send a cream cake to any reader who could explain to us in simple language what that means.

Sjors van den Hurk of Heras accepted the challenge. This is what he wrote to us:

This is about the atomic structure. In steel, you normally have only two forms of atomic arrangement: cubic planar-centred and cubic spatially centred. Both forms are shown in the picture below:




cubic planar-centred



cubic spatially centred

It may be tricky to see, but in cubic spatially centred, the atoms are cubically arranged, with an additional atom in the centre of the cube. In cubic planar-centred, there is no extra atom in the centre of the cube, but there are extra atoms in the centre of the planes of the cube. A cubic planar-centred atomic arrangement has a bit more space in the middle of the cube, in which other elements can dissolve. When ordinary iron is heated, its structure changes from spatially centred to planar-centred. Use is made of this phenomenon for producing steel alloys. The special property of Austenitic stainless steel is that of already being planar-centred at room temperature.





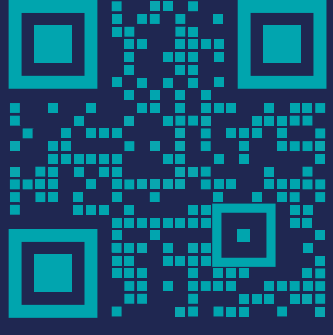
The fact that AISI 304 and 316 are austenitic is of no real consequence as there are other stainless steel types that are also corrosion resistant but not austenitic. What I think is more important in your story is why 316 has better corrosion resistance than 304 in applications with exposure to chlorine.

Let me start by explaining why stainless steel is proof against corrosion. The added chromium in the material reacts with the oxygen in the air to form a very thin layer of chromium oxide over the material. This oxide layer protects the underlying material from substances that may cause corrosion. There are limits to this protection of course, especially when it comes to contact with corrosive substances like chlorine. Without the oxide layer, corrosion-resistant steel will simply rust because it still contains a large proportion of iron.

In AISI 316, the addition of molybdenum to the alloy makes the oxide layer more resistant to corrosive substances. Adding between 2 and 2.5 per cent molybdenum makes the oxide layer thicker and it therefore takes longer for corrosive substances to penetrate that layer. In addition, molybdenum causes the oxide layer to reform itself faster. In a nutshell, that's why stainless steel is corrosion resistant and why 316 can withstand swimming pool water better than 304.

Thank you, Sjors. We're a lot wiser now. And so are our readers. ■

Find out more

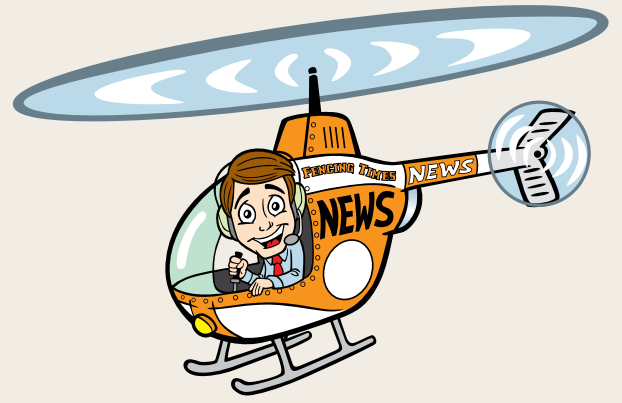


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FENCES IN THE NEWS



24 JANUARY 2024

Kool-Aid Man Challenge plagues US suburbs



America has a famous brand of squash called Kool-Aid, sold as a flavoured powder to which you add water. To promote the brand, marketers have devised a jug-shaped mascot known as the Kool-Aid Man. In old tv ads he came storming straight through doors or even through walls to deliver Kool-Aid to thirsty kids, usually shouting out the words, "Oh, Yeah!" The drink is extremely

popular in the US and every American knows the adverts, which have been running since the 1970s.

And of course something else we know about America – sorry, American readers – is that the quality of the fences they install there isn't up to European fencing standards. We have no idea why that might be. One possibility is the attitude of: "I've got dogs and guns to keep

intruders out; the fence is just there to keep the dogs in." In any event: what do you get when you take a cool tv advert of a mascot breaking through walls, and put it together with low-quality fences? Exactly: yobbish young people who may or may not shout out, "Oh, Yeah" as they bash their way straight through the fences. Just for fun. Ever since the first video of this appeared on social media years ago, new

reports of broken fences have been popping up across the country every weekend. While we don't necessarily want to argue that America would look better if all Americans installed twin wire fences with woven plastic infill around their houses, we can still see opportunities for fencing installers who want to take a European approach to selling fences there in the land of unlimited possibilities. ■

Moose calf rescued from barbed-wire fence



For our monthly dose of feelgood news, we now go to the Uinta Mountains in Utah in the western United States. Hunting guide Dave Beronio drives (hobby) hunters around the mountains and shows them the best places to hunt. During one such trip guiding a client through the wilderness last autumn, he spotted a young moose calf with its hoof trapped in a barbed-wire

fence. *"He had twisted himself into an awkward, immobile position,"* Beronio tells our fellow magazine-makers at Outdoor Life. *"His head was downhill, his left front leg was twisted up in the air, and his rear hind leg was caught between the left front leg and his body. If starvation or restricted blood flow didn't claim him first, nearby predators would have."* So Beronio set to work to free the animal.

It wasn't an easy job, not only because the creature was obviously in a total panic and was thrashing around violently, but also because the calf's mother and brother at first didn't realise that Beronio had good intentions and attacked him several times. And on top of all that, he only had primitive tools to work with. *"I normally always have pliers with me, but that day I'd taken a different pickup. All I had was a*

rock to prise in between the strands of barbed wire, and an axe to ward off the mother's attacks." Finally, after 20 minutes, the creature was finally free – and after another 10 minutes of soothing and cuddles, the moose calf was able to stand again and disappeared off into the forest with its mother and brother. Nice work, Dave. Let's just hope the calf doesn't end up getting shot by one of your clients. ■

Australian primary school gets a million for new fence

In Atherton in Far North Queensland, the board of the local State Primary School is celebrating being allocated 1.1 million Australian dollars¹ to build a new fence around the school. There have been a few break-ins and some vandalism at the school in recent years, causing unrest in the community. "We want to make sure our students feel safe at school," Emily Larcombe, who chairs the school's Parents' & Citizens' Committee, told local media. "We

want our teachers and staff to have security in their workplace and not be worried that their classrooms aren't safe over the weekends or school holidays." But that would seem to mostly be a PR statement, because immediately afterwards in the same article she says: "Our main priority is to improve the school fencing to stop the thoroughfare of people cutting through from the bridge to Woolworths straight through the school to Armstrong Street." We took a quick look on Google Maps: Woolworths is a supermarket, and on the other side

of Armstrong Street there's a large residential area. From now on the residents of that neighbourhood will have to walk about a kilometre out of their way, because the school is having a fence built for 1.1 million. Larcombe explains herself slightly better later on: she thinks that some of the crime is being committed by opportunistic criminals who, if they're no longer able to walk past the school, won't set about stealing or destroying things there. We on the editorial team have our doubts about that. But what we really want to know

is: What's that fence going to look like, if it's going to cost 1.1 million dollars? Will it be made of solid gold? Google Maps was still open, so we took a few measurements: if the fence is installed around the entire whole school, it will be about 750 metres long. At a total price of 1.1 million, that comes to over 1400 Australian dollars (roughly 860 euros) per metre. Nice work if you can get it. As of next month you won't be getting the Fencing Times anymore, as we're leaving to start up a fencing business in Atherton, Australia. ■

¹) 1.1 Million Australian dollars is approximately 673.000 euros, 647.000 Swiss francs or 580.000 British pounds



Canadian brown bear braves electric fence for a meal of honey

Here at the editorial office we had the idea that brown bears mainly ate meat and fish, supplemented by a bit of plant matter like tubers and roots. The only one who ate honey, we thought, was Winnie-the-Pooh. But we were totally wrong, according to video footage from a security camera somewhere in western Canada, which we

came across on YouTube. The footage shows a brown bear trying to outsmart an electric fence surrounding a group of beehives. It manages to get past the electric fence on two occasions. But then, when the bear tries to get a beehive open, both times it makes contact with the fence again in the process, getting such a fright that it flees. We looked into it right

away: bears definitely love honey. They have sweet receptors on their tongues that attract them to honey, and their keen sense of smell can detect honey even from over 1.5 kilometres away. And by the way, when a bear approaches a beehive, it's not just the honey it's after: bears also eat the bees and their larvae as well, which are excellent sources of protein. Out of all the

different bear species, brown and black bears have the biggest craving for honey. And once they've tasted it, they definitely want more. Polar bears and pandas are not known to eat honey. Every day's a school day. According to the description below the video on YouTube, the owner of the beehives has improved his fence to prevent it happening again. ■





According to a survey of 100 installers:

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