



Innovation of the Year

For the third time, a component of the Tannery of the Year programme for 2016 was the Innovation Award. As in previous editions of the competition all of the finalists have displayed serious commitment to innovation. We chose two examples of this inventiveness for each of the eight finalists and invited a special panel to choose the most outstanding example of all.

Tannery of the Year finalists all demonstrate a series of qualities. They care about the environment, look after their workforces, they hold their heads up in society and take seriously their responsibilities for sharing resources with people, old and young, in their communities. They meet their obligations and pay their way. They are open and honest, happy to let the *World Leather* team and, by extension, the whole industry see behind the scenes in their operations and share their stories with a global audience. They are good corporate citizens, all while continuing to make beautiful leather.

However, tanners could not produce leather today without a strong commitment to research and development, investment in new technology and global support networks of supplier organisations. Underpinning all of this is a wider spirit of innovation. Tanners are creative, imaginative people who like to try new things and come up with new ideas when facing up to the challenges that their work presents them with all the time.

As our team has moved round the world, it has seen at first hand examples of this commitment to innovation from each of the finalist tanneries; these are not simply the use of off-the-shelf products or equipment, but reflect carefully considered solutions to problems. They are not limited to any single part of production. There are applications in areas of product development, machine adaptation, environmental applications and management systems.

These 16 examples cover many aspects of leather manufacture, including making the best use of resources, handling materials correctly, health and safety and environmental matters. None of these methods have simply been purchased as standard, and all can be attributed to the ingenuity of tanners. These examples are sometimes unique to a single organisation and may involve significant cost, but often the measures taken are low-cost and basic. Nevertheless, this is innovation that could be applied to many other situations.



Kings International managing director, Taj Alam (left), receives the Innovation Award for 2016 from World Leather's technical editor, Richard Daniels. CREDIT: WTP

Details of all 16 examples of innovation are in the pages that follow. Each listing includes a reference to the issue of *World Leather* in which full reports on each tannery appear; these reports contain extra detail of the tanners' commitment to innovation.



INNOVATION AWARD WINNER 2016

Energy-free air extraction from drying areas: Kings International, Unnao, India

The Award for Innovation 2016 was presented to Kings International, Unnao, India, for its use of a series of small wind turbines across the roof of its drying area. As these are rotated by the prevailing wind, fans attached to the mechanism help remove air from inside the building, speeding up the drying of hides. All of Kings International's hides are dried naturally in the roof areas of the tannery so the process was already energy-efficient, but the judges for the Tannery of the Year Innovation Award for 2016 thought the use of wind turbines a super idea for speeding up the drying process.

(WORLD LEATHER, FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016)



Salting equipment for sheepskins: Atlantic Leather, Saudarkrokur, Iceland

Sheep skins for salting are placed on this conveyor belt, then spread as they pass beneath the two rotating brushes before automatic salt application. This is followed by sorting and grading on a conveyor set behind the brushes, the machine being built to Atlantic Leathers specification.

(WORLD LEATHER, JUNE/JULY 2015)



Holding small skins in place for drying: Atlantic Leather, Saudarkrokur, Iceland

The main production at Atlantic Leather is converting fish skins into leathers for bags, belts, hats, purses and other high value luxury goods. After wet processing, all of the fish skins are stretched to shape on horizontal wooden boards, which are then placed vertically into drying cabinets that have been made by the company. The skins are held in place on the boards using staples that are closely spaced around the skins, being fired from a hand held gun powered by compressed air.

(WORLD LEATHER, JUNE/JULY 2015)



Avoiding accidents when unloading vehicles: Couro do Norte, Belem, Para, Brazil

Hides and materials are delivered by truck directly into the tannery for unloading. A pylon has been erected within the building so that a pair of horizontal cables is stretched above the top of the loaded vehicle to fittings built into the factory wall. The team of workers unloading the truck have to attach themselves to these cables using clip-on safety lines that can run along the cables. This is to prevent them falling to the floor if they slip when working on stacked goods that provide a potentially hazardous working surface.

(WORLD LEATHER, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015)



High level drum guarding systems: Couro do Norte, Belem, Para, Brazil

The drum guarding systems that have been installed are exceptionally secure. It is responsible practice to ensure that the front loading and rear service areas are thoroughly secured for all drums, and in this example, close steel fine mesh guarding with sensors is fitted that stop the drum rotating if the gates are opened. However, the system has been extended to include each individual drum side, belt drive, motor and gearbox. This attention to detail includes the axles and water supply lines where the guarding extends away from the drum. It is not possible to touch any part of the drum or associated equipment when it is in motion.

(WORLD LEATHER, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015)



Rainwater harvesting: Kings Tannery, Kings International, Unnao, India

Kings tannery has invested heavily in a rainwater collection scheme. This does not collect water for direct use by the tannery, but directs it via a series of soak-away's directly to the groundwater. There are many different sections of roof to service, and to date the harvesting is across a 35,000 sq.ft area. This is returning more than 7.5 million gallons of water to replenish the aquifer, and new buildings under construction will add to this volume.

(WORLD LEATHER, FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016)



Tannery of the Year 2016: Results



Eye care:

Meihua Leather Co., Xinji, Hebei Province, China

In addition to attention to eye care, with eye washing facilities located within the tannery, these have also been placed outside the main manufacturing areas. This includes external areas where they are clearly identified.

(WORLD LEATHER, OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015)



Avoiding bar screen arrangements:

Meihua Leather Co., Xinji, Hebei Province, China

It is not always easy to screen wastewater in drainage gullies as these are always set below ground level. Fixed grids are mainly used for this purpose, but need regular manual cleaning to prevent blockages. This has been overcome in this example by fitting a narrow self-cleaning screen into the drainage channel at ground level. Here, the feed is directly into the open end of the screen with the solids deposited to the side at floor level.

(WORLD LEATHER, OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015)



Assisting hide presentation to limed fleshing: Tarnsjo Garveri, Sweden

The limed hides are loaded in stainless steel containers, then raised by forklift and placed on the mezzanine that supports the single out-feed fleshing machine. Between the load and the machine a stainless steel table is placed that can be rotated horizontally. The hides are slid across this and offered to the lime fleshing operation, but on out-feed the hides are guided back onto the table by the operatives. The table is then turned 180°, so that the remaining half of the hide can be fed directly into the machine. This avoids the heavy manual turning of the hide that is typical of single machine operations.

(WORLD LEATHER, JUNE/JULY 2015)



Flexible drying arrangements:

Tarnsjo Garveri, Sweden

This example of innovation is about the rapid conversion of a room used for storage into a drying room when additional drying capacity is required. In this event, heavy vegetable tanned sides are suspended from non-intrusive permanent wall fittings on the left, whereas on the right sets of five extended arms are lowered from the vertical position to the horizontal as shown for hide attachment. The suspension clip can be fitted at many points along each arm to ensure the correct tension along the backbone.

(WORLD LEATHER, JUNE/JULY 2015)



Rationalised soaking of dried hides:

White Nile Tannery, Khartoum, The Sudan

Some of the hides processed in this tannery are air dried. These need a pre-soak in pits to soften and enable drum loading for continuation of the soak and the unhairing liming process. To rationalise the loading/unloading of these pits, the hides are placed in nets suspended from a frame, with movement provided by a hand operated hoist.

(WORLD LEATHER, FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016)



Accommodation for the workforce: White Nile Tannery, Khartoum, Sudan

A solution to housing foreign workforce is being brought about by converting containers into living accommodation. This is the first unit to be made by White Nile tannery, and is insulated and fitted with air conditioning. This exercise is considered a success, and more units are to be made and placed in a designated area on site.

(WORLD LEATHER, FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016)



Easing access for stacking: Wickett and Craig of America, Curwenville, Pennsylvania, USA

Part of the processing at Wickett and Craig is performed in elevated high capacity paddles. These are discharged through gated paddle ends directly into stainless steel containers. The rate of discharge is very rapid, so to ensure that the hides do not spill out onto the floor the sides of the containers are raised using a series of retaining plates. Once the container load has drained the plates can be lifted from holding-lugs for easy access on stacking.

(WORLD LEATHER, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015)



Basic knife safety: Wickett and Craig of America, Curwenville, Pennsylvania, USA

The use of knives is common within tanneries. Many of the accidents occur as accidental stabbing injuries as the knives tend to have tapered or sharp points. Wickett and Craig purchase all of their knives with rounded or square cut ends, and this eliminates this real hazard which is often overlooked. If the leather needs to be cut using a point, then heavy duty plastic bodied knives with short retractable blades are used.

(WORLD LEATHER, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015)



Self-sufficiency in electric power: Zhejiang Dazhong Leather, Haining, Zhejiang Province, China

It has been the intent of Zhejiang Dazhong Leather to become as energy self-reliant as possible. To meet this ambition a 50,000m² of photo-electric panels has been installed across the roof of the tannery for the generation of 5 GWh of electricity. This is a venture between the tannery and a partner, with the energy feeding directly into the national grid. The tannery then buys back approximately 80% of this energy at reduced price, being sufficient to meet the entire electrical demands of the tannery.

(WORLD LEATHER, DECEMBER 2015 /JANUARY 2016)



Avoiding odour from the effluent treatment plant: Zhejiang Dazhong Leather, Haining, Zhejiang Province, China

All parts of the effluent treatment plant where airborne odour can occur is surrounded with a steel framework, which is then covered with a custom made tight fitting heavy duty plastic cover. This is held in place by tensioning around the edge of the cover, and ensures that no wind borne odour can arise from the plant. In addition, air is continuously extracted from within the covered areas, then washed using two scrubbing units before air is discharged to atmosphere, the washing waters being finally processed in the effluent treatment plant. 🌱

(WORLD LEATHER, DECEMBER 2015 /JANUARY 2016)



Judging panel

Judges for the Tannery of the Year Awards 2016 were kind enough to give up their time in the build-up to the final in Hong Kong in March to read all eight detailed reports, as published over the previous year in World Leather, and, on the day of the final, to hear presentations from each tannery.

The judges for the 2016 final were Dr Dietrich Tegtmeier, representing the International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies (IULTCS), Kim Reid, human resources expert and executive coach, Paul Pearson, representing the International Council of Tanners, Elton Hurlow, representing industry body the Global Leather Co-ordinating Committee and, chairing the panel for the fifth programme, Steve Jesseph, who works for leather, textile and apparel sector consultancy firm ICG.

Good works bring benefits

Mr Jesseph, who was a judge in 2010 and chaired the panel in 2011 and 2014, has said that Tannery of the Year judges frequently become “dumbstruck” by the commitment tanners show in the course of the competition. And to show that this commitment is also making an impact on buyers of leather, he has said that, with his help, the first global winner of Tannery of the Year, the Ethiopia Tannery Share Company, came to the attention of a major US work glove brand, Wells Lamont, because of Tannery of the Year. As a result of a partnership the two companies went on to establish, the tanning company set up the Pittards Products Manufacturing unit in Addis Ababa, which currently makes more than 5,000 pairs of gloves per day, using the tannery’s leather, and has ambitious expansion plans. Steve Jesseph made clear that Tannery of the Year was the start of this success story. Pittards chief executive, Reg Hankey, has also spoken of his company’s new partnership with Wells Lamont to demonstrate how beneficial the programme can be. “We are an old company,” he said, “but Tannery of the Year gave us a new confidence and made us appreciate that the key to success is to have a long-term strategy centred on two things: relationships outside the company, and employees. Fundamentally, that means trust.” He explained that Pittards now has 1,400 workers in Ethiopia, but five years from now, it expects to have 6,000.

“The good works you do matter and matter a lot,” Steve Jesseph told Tannery of the Year finalists. “You are truly an amazing group of people.”

Congratulations from IULTCS

Dr Dietrich Tegtmeier, president of IULTCS, said in the build-up to the Tannery of the Year final that corporate responsibility and sustainability are important enablers for strategic growth, adding that only a company that incorporates these factors seriously into its path forward will have a chance to succeed in long-term customer relationships with brands and original equipment manufacturers.

“This is the big achievement of the modern industrial world,” he explained. “As we all know, this is part of a process of change and not a simple adjustment; it requires a willingness to think in a new way and the courage to trust in new set-ups.”



Chairman of the judges' panel, Steve Jesseph. ALL CREDITS: WTP



Dr Dietrich Tegtmeier of IULTCS at the 2016 Tannery of the Year final.

In his opinion, the Tannery of the Year initiative rewards voluntary “rethinking” in a sustainable manner and operating in a responsible way. “All participants have demonstrated that it is possible – despite cost pressures and business stress – to focus on change and to implement sustainable solutions in their tanneries,” he concluded. “In many cases it could even be shown that sustainability initiatives do pay off and are no longer additional cost factors. This is the way to go. Thank you, all; this is the encouraging vision of leaders in the industry.”



Tannery of the Year 2016: Results

ICT encourages positive stories

Likewise, Paul Pearson said the International Council of Tanners (ICT) was delighted once again to support the Tannery of the Year Awards and to participate in the judging panel. "Two of the core roles of the ICT are to promote the image and understanding of the industry worldwide and to encourage good governance in the sector," he said. "We firmly believe that the industry has a very positive story to tell and that we should take every opportunity to tell it."

The nature of the industry and its global distribution means that it also faces clear social challenges, and, again, there are plenty of examples to illustrate how these challenges can be, and are being, addressed, he explained. And while the industry faces a challenge in terms of its environmental performance, in many parts of the world this has been successfully addressed, Mr Pearson said, adding: "Our experience is that the leather industry is often at the forefront of implementing environmental technologies because of the challenges it has had to overcome. We see the Tannery of the Year Awards as an occasion to celebrate these successes and to demonstrate, share and promote best practice in the industry worldwide."

Human touch

The judging panel at the 2016 Tannery of the Year awards once again included Kim Reid, a coach to senior executives in industry and in the charity sector. Her work consists of helping her clients increase their effectiveness and impact as leaders, encouraging them to build up their leadership capability, emotional intelligence and performance. Before becoming a full-time coach, she spent 30 years in corporate life working predominately in the aviation and defence sectors in a number of senior human resources roles.

She worked most recently with British Airways as head of talent, leadership and learning, during which time she introduced a high performance leadership system for 900 managers. She launched a structured coaching programme as well as a cloud-based learning platform so all BA employees across the globe could access corporate learning and development. She also took part in BA's charity programmes, visiting Uganda in 2009.

Excellence is no accident

Most tanners work hard to make good-quality leather and to deliver a product that meets their customers' requirements, they strive to look after their employees, appropriately treat their discharge streams, and to be good corporate citizens in their communities, said Tannery of the Year judge, Elton Hurlow, of the Global Leather Co-ordinating Committee, in the build-up to the 2016 final.

"Some tanners do these things exceptionally well," he added. "Excellence in a company is not an accident. It stems from consistent organisation behaviours. Great companies have a clear vision of where they want to be. They have the right people in place doing the right things, in the right way, consistently. Tanneries that participate in the Tannery of the Year awards are nominated because they are perceived by their peers in the industry as organisations that excel. These are benchmarks for our industry, examples of what our industry can be."

Tannery of the Year helps drive positive change in our industry, Mr Hurlow added, by allowing tanneries to share their stories of success and this helps create positive role models for our industry. 🌐



ICT secretary, Paul Pearson



Human resources and leadership expert Kim Reid at the Tannery of the Year Gala Dinner in Hong Kong.



The Global Leather Co-ordinating Committee representative on the judging panel, Elton Hurlow.



Ongoing reports, ongoing celebration

World Leather is proud to have brought the fifth programme of Tannery of the Year to a successful conclusion with the spectacular 2016 Gala Dinner. The magazine is grateful for the important support it received from sponsor Buckman, and to APLF, the International Union of Leather Technologists and Chemists Societies, the International Council of Tanners, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the China Leather Industry Association and its Brazilian counterpart, CICB, for the practical help and advice they have given and continue to give.

Tannery of the Year, was launched by *World Leather* in 2009, having planned the initiative since attending the seminal World Leather Forum event in Paris in 2007. The clear message from the Paris event was that the leather industry, often very reticent in the wake of unfair criticism and inaccurate reporting in mainstream media, has a lot to be proud of and a huge number of positive stories to tell. Even today, almost ten years on from the Paris event, campaign groups, television companies and some big consumer product brands have painted a less-than-accurate picture of the leather industry, but the response from the industry itself has, largely, been silence.

As well as presenting factual, scientific-based arguments to counter misinformation in our far-reaching and free-to-share series of essays 'Nothing To Hide', *World Leather* feels strongly that, more than ever, it's important for the industry to have a platform for sharing positive stories, with the industry itself, but also with the outside world.

Thanks to the enthusiastic response, the generosity and the openness of tanners around the world, we now have a series of 46

in-depth reports (of around 5,000 words each) that show tanners in all parts of the globe to be organisations that care about the environment, look after their workforces, take seriously their responsibilities for sharing resources with their communities, meet their obligations to local and national governments, are committed to strong, positive relationships with customers, colleagues and suppliers, and apply a spirit of entrepreneurship and innovation to making beautiful leather. Tannery of the Year has been able, naturally, to generate valuable positive publicity for individual tanning companies and, by extension, for the industry as a whole. As well as local and national newspapers and magazines and television companies, governments have taken a keen interest in the successes we have been able to highlight. There have also been important instances of Tannery of the Year opening doors for tanners with new customers, leading to valuable new contracts and business relationships.

All of our reports are in the public domain; they constitute a veritable goldmine of information on the size and scope of the leather industry today. They are also valuable as eyewitness accounts of the true state of affairs in the industry on every continent and, as such, are unique.

We intend to keep building on this. We know that new ideas and new stories of innovation, creativity and inventiveness in the face of challenges will continue to flow. We also know that example after example of kindness and solidarity from people in the global leather industry will continue to come to light; this is the material we intend to find and to publish in future reports before inviting the industry to gather again to celebrate its achievements. 🌐