

## **Dunlop Systems and Components: Steeped in history, braced for the future**

For a story as remarkable as the Dunlop one, it needed a setting that reflected the company's history of invention, innovation, industry and resolve. Coventry, though better known by most as a city pummelled by the Luftwaffe, and more recently as home to a football team whose fortunes have crumbled alarmingly, a scratch at the surface reveals a place with breath-taking history. It was chosen as a stronghold for tactical Roman military bases, housed a prison for Royalist detractors during the English civil war, and pioneered the industrial world in ribbon weaving and watch-making. During the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was leading the pack in yet another industry, bicycle manufacture. It is during this period that a quite extraordinary Scotsman arrived on the city's doorsteps from Belfast, with an invention that would change the course of transport history forever.

His name was John Boyd Dunlop. Inspired by his son's complaints that his tricycle hurt his bottom when riding over cobbles, Dunlop set about making a tyre, that rather than being made from solid, hard rubber, was instead made with a thinner material, and inflated with air. And thus, the world was presented with pneumatic tyres, by far the most ground-breaking wheel-based discovery since the first ancient Mesopotamian attached two vaguely circular pieces of stone to the underside of a makeshift carriage.

Before long, the Dunlop Pneumatic Tyre Company was born and from here, the company, under its various guises, not only flourished but did so shattering records along the way. In 1927, at a blistering 207mph, Captain Malcolm Campbell set a new land-speed record, one he broke again four years later. Both times his vehicle was fitted with Dunlop tyres. In 1962, they were the first tyre manufacturer to begin working on the problem of 'aqua-planing', in 68' won the first ever London-Sydney marathon, a gruelling 16,000km trek across various continents and terrains, and in 98' their pioneering Dunlop Self-Supporting Technology (DSST®) system, allowed drivers to continue their journeys on flat tyres. Along the way, they made a habit of collecting Le Mans victories as if they were stamps.

This formidable history has become the blueprint for the brand we know so well today. The obsession with invention and reinvention, the impenetrable desire to win, and the unwavering drive to be industry leaders. In 1924, under the stewardship of Sir Eric Geddes, Dunlop diversified and used its wealth of expertise and business acumen to begin producing tennis balls, rackets, and clothes still visible on today's high streets. This vision and readiness to diversify took on a contemporary expression in 2007 when the now Chief Executive of Dunlop Systems and Components, Chris Davis completed a management buy-out of the Dunlop business from Trelleborg, a Swedish founded but now global player in the engineered polymer seals market. Dunlop began making more than just tyres, and sought to carve a niche in developing specific automotive mechanisms.

Since then, this arm of the business has continued the company tradition of innovation and invention. Now operating from their award-winning, purpose built facility in the company's true home of Coventry, Dunlop Systems and Components undertake expert testing of automotive components in custom-built laboratories, and develop new technologies. Their LOADSAFE® system for example, is a game-changing device that accurately measures minute deflections in suspension springs allowing users to measure exactly the weight of cargo being loaded onto a vehicle. A device that prevents unnecessary stress to the vehicle, not to mention the threat of excessive weight related accidents.

With recent and substantial investment, the company is eagerly looking to the future with plans to triple business by producing high quality suspension related products, and taking them into Chinese and other Eastern markets.

Such ambition should surprise no-one, especially those who know of Dunlop's historic achievements and contributions. A name forged in the factories of Coventry, England but whose reach today extends to vehicles in every corner of the globe.