
Prince Charles visits Sheffield Forgemasters

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It is reported that Prince Charles of Wales took a close up look at some of the heaviest of British heavy industry when he toured a Sheffield steelworks to see how it had recovered from last year's devastating floods.

Mr Charles was making a second visit in 18 months to Sheffield Forgemasters International, which was one of the winners of last month's Yorkshire Post Excellence In Business Awards. In 2007, he went to see the damage for him just days after the plant was left under 5 feet of water when the Lower Don Valley was affected by the worst flooding Sheffield has ever seen.

He praised the 800 staff's efforts to return the plant to normal production and saw for himself how the company appears to be bucking the current trend of economic misery. He took particular interest in Forgemasters' 70 apprentices, chatting with many of them before posing for a group picture.

He told the staff that "I came back really because I know how important Forgemasters is not only to the local economy but also to the national economy, to the national effort. What you do here, what you produce here is of the highest possible quality and greatly in demand, as I've seen, by customers all over the world who expect and demand the highest quality and the get it from here in Sheffield because you have, I think, all these remarkable skills."

He added that "And it's so encouraging to see just how many apprentices there are coming from different schools in the area who again are providing these quite remarkable skills for which this area has been famous for so many years. And the other great thing for me is to see how many families, fathers and sons are working here. It's quite encouraging to know there is a hereditary Forgemasters business."

Mr Charles first toured the spectacular quarter mile long South Machine Shop before he was shown the furnaces which form some of the well known images of Sheffield steelmaking. He donned a hard hat and protective glasses to watch as ingots weighing up to 200 tonnes went through the 40 feet high, 1,220C furnace.

He also examined another red hot 180 tonne ingot being hammered into shape by a 10,000 tonne press.

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