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INTO SOMERSET CASE STUDY – *ADVANCED ENGINEERING*

Ariel Motor Company

The name Ariel has been synonymous with vehicle production since 1870 and is one of the oldest marques in British motoring history. Thanks to the latest Ariel Atom sports car Mark 3, it is still also one of the most highly-regarded.

Crewkerne-based Ariel Motor Company, which restarted the brand in 1999, manufactures the lightweight, high-performance Ariel Atom which was designed from the ground up in Somerset by Ariel Director Simon Saunders. Described by Jeremy Clarkson as 'motoring nirvana' and 'the most amazing car of the century' the Atom claims several performance titles and can accelerate to 60mph in just 2.7 seconds!

Ariel's yearly growth has reflected their cars' performance, moving from a Somerset village to new, purpose-built, flagship facilities near Crewkerne. Simon Saunders says, "We make a product that is unaffected by geographic location, so we are here because we choose to be. I think it's a great choice. The local council provided us with very positive help in the redevelopment of our current site and we feel that there is a much more personal relationship between us than there would be if we were in an urban or city environment."

Ariel has always been able to find the skilled workers it needs. Mr Saunders explains, "We have slowly grown over the years and have never had a problem in finding skilled labour, even though we are incredibly picky about whom we employ. Working for Ariel is more than a job, it's part of a growing family... we have never once had an employee leave."

By 2007, over 400 Atoms had been constructed in Somerset with a production target at the new site set at around 100 vehicles per year. Some 40% of Atoms have been shipped to Europe, USA, Singapore, South Africa, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates and others - and demand is still growing.

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