

Case study: Haldane

Haldane delivers exciting staircases with Staircon



Summary

Haldane is a specialist UK manufacturer of timber handrails and staircases for both construction and private clients. In a traditional industry, it has forged a modern path, investing significantly in digital technology to help it grow and expand by delivering unrivalled quality and accuracy. It chose Staircon from Elecosoft to help it create powerful 3D designs for staircases that go far beyond the boring, straight, pillar-to-post staircase of old.



Haldane has built a stellar reputation for quality in delivering timber handrails for high-end staircases and balustrades.

In recent years, it has experienced a surge in demand for bespoke staircases, in addition to the elements such as custom handrails and newel posts that it has traditionally produced.

Paul Ramage is Senior Production Manager and heads up Haldane's fast-growing staircase business, designing and driving production of high-end and bespoke solutions for the most exacting of clients. The company uses Staircon software for stair design and production.

Production efficiency

Haldane has been working to lean manufacturing principles for many years and is focused on creating a highly efficient and effective production process. Its staircase projects are no exception.

Its investment in Staircon will enable it to streamline the design and production of its staircase division, whilst enhancing the value it provides to customers.

Paul explained: "We saw Staircon as the perfect solution to help our drawing process and improve the way we take our designs to production. With the growth in our staircase production, our old 2D system was simply holding us back and causing issues with the visualisation process."

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The original process required some imagination for both the designer and client, since drawings were only created in 2D: "One big benefit of working with Staircon is automatically getting a 3D view from your 2D concept. I used to have to create 3D drawings manually, which then had to be converted to .DXF format before they could go to production."

Design perfection

Haldane specialise in luxury bespoke staircases, which can feature highly complex components and transitions to bring the client's vision to life, often having to meet exact heritage or architectural design specifications.

The projects are rarely simple straight flights, often helical flights with flaring bullnose treads or splitting into multiple flights. They can serve multiple storeys, utilising timber alone or timber in combination with other materials such as glass or steel.

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Paul emphasised that design perfection is essential, which can take several iterations. "Before we used Staircon we could have to re-draw stairs from scratch whenever we had changes to make, or alterations were requested by the architect. Another challenge is that some architects' designs look great on paper, but need amending to work in practice. So, we have to send drawings back and forth a few times."

Now, changes can be processed much faster, as he continued: "If customer changes the width of stair I'd have to change every tread and every riser, to new sizes. With Staircon, I can just key it in and it makes all the changes automatically."

Reducing risk

A key element of any building project is ensuring that it complies with the latest Building Regulations – whether it is a rural self-build or a multi-million-pound London townhouse.

Paul is highly appreciative of the fact that the specifications are built into Staircon, saying "Having the Building Regulations built into the Staircon database provides us with complete peace of mind. If the design doesn't comply with regulations, the system provides a warning. We can either tweak the design or consult with the client if they might wish to get a special dispensation from the local authorities."

Getting the software up and running has been a smooth process, and Paul has called on Elecosoft technical support whenever he needed some help. He related that "Sarah from Elecosoft has been brilliant – she spent all the time I needed on training at the start and now, if I ever encounter problems, she either

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helps me right away, or will come back the next day with a short video to show me the solution."

Unlimited future

Investing in Staircon is only the latest move to ensure that the company stays ahead of the market. A steady programme of investment over the past 20 years has created a facility packed with the latest CNC machines, and upgraded all its design and drawing packages, to increase capacity and capability. Today it boasts the most advanced and flexible CNC manufacturing of any of its timber machining competitors, enabling it to manufacture using 5-axis CNC equipment and utilise its own 3DAT technology to improve precision, accuracy and speed.

Haldane UK's growing staircase business will take full advantage of this advanced manufacturing capability and the company is justifiably proud of the fact that it does not produce boring, standard handrails or staircases. Paul concluded by saying: "We can produce virtually anything in timber that a developer, contractor, architect or private householder might ask for. Sometimes ideas from architects don't have the structural strength they need, but with Staircon it will be easier to make our counter-proposals and tweak them until everyone is happy. Our staircases are just getting better, and better."

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Staircon: Software for design and manufacture of stairs