

## The Marble & Granite Centre celebrates 20 years of trading with an invitation to its open days

Leading stone wholesaler The Marble & Granite Centre has celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary by inviting customers in to enjoy the company's hospitality at open days at its Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire, premises.

The Marble & Granite Centre was established by Stephen Pike to supply top quality stone to fabricators. He chose the location of his premises carefully within the M25 to give the company access to London as well as the national motorway network for distribution of the stone nationwide.

At the open days, Stephen welcomed his guests by saying: "I am often asked: What gives you the biggest buzz about the stone industry? I say it's very simple: The people. And a lot of those wonderful people are here today, both from among our suppliers and our customers."

Lately The Marble & Granite Centre has added Dry-Treat stone care products and the new sintered stone Lapitec to the ranges it sells, and there were representatives of both companies at the open days – David Coster was there from Dry-Treat and among the Lapitec representatives was Michele Ballarin, the company's Director of Sales & Marketing from Italy. They spoke to visitors about their product ranges, and there was the unveiling of the latest colour from Lapitec.

The Marble & Granite Centre has shied away from supplying many stone care products and man-made materials because Stephen wanted to be sure there was no danger of any such products tarnishing his company's reputation for supplying quality products. But Dry-Treat and Lapitec are brands he is confident maintain the high quality his company has always prided itself on.

His decision to represent Lapitec has raised a few eyebrows, and Stephen said at



Above. Michele Ballarin from Lapitec (left) and Stephen Pike of The Marble & Granite Centre present Rossi UK with its certificate as one of the first Approved Fabricators of Lapitec.

Below. Stephen Pike cuts the 20th anniversary cake.

Bottom left. David Coster of Dry-Treat and Terry Hoy of The Marble & Granite Centre demonstrate their products to visitors at The Marble & Granite Centre open days.

Bottom right. The latest colour in the Lapitec range is unveiled.

the open day: "Some people have said 'What's Stephen doing getting into a man-made product? He's always said he has marble dust in his veins'. The reason I am selling Lapitec is because it is 100% natural. It's a safe product to work with and I know I'm not leaving any problems for future generations to deal with."

What he means by Lapitec being natural is that the components are all natural minerals. They are combined at the molecular level in a sintering process using heat and pressure. There is no petrochemical resin or other binder used, so at the end of its life Lapitec can be safely crushed and used as aggregate or discarded to inert landfill.

In order to ensure installation of Lapitec is as good as the product itself, a network of approved processors is being trained. Lapitec is dense and strong and does require special tooling to work. The first of the processors to have successfully completed the training were among the guests at The Marble & Granite Centre open days, when they were presented with certificates verifying their status by Stephen Pike and Michele Ballarin.

● For a report on trends in natural and engineered stone turn to page 22.

