



WFC's Phil Waggett, left, and Steve Howle look back at past projects from their portfolio. They are currently fitting out two restaurants at the Shard (below)

# Putting the wow-factor into £4.5m Shard eaterie fit-outs

BY CATHERINE BARNES

A Westcountry specialist in commercial fit-outs is putting the finishing touches to a £4.5 million project at the Shard.

Newton-Abbot based WFC Contractors was commissioned to create the interiors for two restaurants on the London landmark's 31st and 33rd floors, on behalf of a Hong Kong-based restaurateur.

Aqua London will serve modern British food, whilst Hutong will offer northern Chinese cuisine.

WFC director Phil Waggett said that the 35-strong company had been awarded the 12-week contract after an initial approach secured through client recommendation and a growing reputation within the sector.

He said the works had presented logistical challenges including getting materials and tradesmen up to the site, explaining: "The loading bays, entrance and lifts are all shared by numerous other contractors carrying out works to the other 70 floors.

"The 32nd floor is also a restaurant, with a balcony overlooking Aqua, and already open to customers."

During the fit-out, the WFC team has also had to integrate the restaurant's services with the Shard's "rigorously specified and protected" central building management systems.

"It is contracts such as this that we relish," said Mr Waggett.

With its design processes based in-house, the company outsources its contractors. The downturn led it to downsize and eventually close its joinery and metal workshops in 2011.

Prior to the recession, the business employed 100 staff. It was established by Mr Waggett and his business partner Steve Howle's respective fathers, Brian and Lloyd, in Torquay in 1976.

With the leisure industry market at the "sharp end" of the economic downturn, the company still actively seeks contracts close to home, but has seen much of its new business come from the capital.

Here, it has seen the projects it undertakes evolve from the large-scale nightclub and casino fit-outs that were commissioned prior to the recession, to prestige eateries for high-profile chefs and trendy boutique bars.

In December, WFC won the National Association of Shopfitters' leisure category award

**'High profile jobs are having a snowball effect'**

Phil Waggett



and Lutyens Grill in Fleet Street. As with the Shard project and the Delaunay, much of WFC's work in the city is coming via client recommendations.

"High profile jobs are having a snowball effect," said Mr Waggett. "People see your signs around. And although it's a large city, it's a small industry and we are getting the calls. It's lovely to have the work coming to your door, rather than the other way around."

WFC has been turning over around £16 million annually for the past couple of years and is on track to exceed this during 2013.

The contemporary edge of the projects it works on means that clients can call within three to four year period of completion, to commission a new fit-out or revamp to keep their premises looking fresh.

WFC also maintains a focus upon the fitness industry, with contracts including a long-held relationship with David Lloyd Sports centres and Fitness First, to look after their facilities across the country.