

## **New era beckons at UK's largest online valve supplier**

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**Gary Hopkinson, founder of [Valves Online](#), has announced his retirement, planned for the end of this year. In March, the UK's largest online valves supplier underwent a business acquisition by R&G Fluid Power Group. Gary has been assisting the transition while Valves Online is set to retain its successful business model. The online supplier has built success by providing specialist flow control products for specific applications, as well as a build-on-site service. Supplying premium liquid and gas control solutions, Valves Online has a close relationship with Bürkert that is set to continue.**

Gary founded Valves Online in 2003 in the wake of the dot com revolution, with the company going on to become the UK's most well-known online valves supplier. Carrying a broad range of valves, instrumentation and associated flow control components, Valves Online has an extensive stock and provides same-day availability. This crucial service enables end users UK-wide to prevent critical application downtime. This is enhanced by on-site valve assembly, including testing, that ensures product quality on delivery.

This supply capability, combined with the in-house expertise of Valves Online, has enabled the company to establish itself as Bürkert's primary arm in the south west to serve system integrators and end users. Valves Online provides products from across Bürkert's entire portfolio. Furthermore, thanks to the close relationship

between the two companies, the firm, based in Yelverton, Devon, can also give technical advice on complete systems, as well as offering on-site installation and maintenance.

### **Industry-specific valve systems**

“A significant change over the years is that valve requirements today are a lot more industry specific than they once were,” says Gary. “We receive enquiries from sectors ranging from hygienic to water treatment, and often they want complete systems. As a result, our partnership with Bürkert gives us the training and expertise to specify and install complex systems that require sensors, control modulation and wider instrumentation.”

At the same time, solenoid valves remain fundamental to many of Valves Online’s customers. This classic valve type, which was also crucial to Bürkert’s history, was a key factor in establishing the partnership.

“Even though many customers want larger systems, on/off-type valves are still very important to our market. The quality of Bürkert’s products, from solenoid valves through to its instrumentation, has always been premium level. Providing the best performing, most durable products has helped set Valves Online apart,” adds Gary.

However, it’s not just product quality that has maintained cooperation between the two companies. “The relationship between the people at Bürkert and Valves Online has been so important to ensure a successful bond,” says Gary, who originally worked in-house for Bürkert itself over 30 years ago.

## **Relationship of trust**

“The team at Bürkert has changed over the years, but the culture of the company has always ensured that we’ve had a great relationship. As Valves Online has grown its market share over more than 20 years, we could have moved closer to other valve manufacturers. While we provide a range of brands, we’ve always remained closest to Bürkert, and this has mainly been down to the fairness and trust we share in how we both operate,” says Gary.

After qualifying as a mechanical draftsman at Manchester Polytechnic, Gary’s career took him to southern Africa, designing systems for power generation. Following his return to the UK and a period gaining brand-specific knowledge as an engineering consultant at Bürkert, Gary’s first venture was setting up the Euro Process distribution business that focussed on liquid and gas flow control projects.

Identifying the opportunity to expand sales nationwide with the emergence of the internet, Gary and his wife Sharon, who manages the company’s finances, decided to make the leap. Able to supply the market from anywhere in the country, Gary and Sharon moved to Devon, an area Gary already knew well from projects in sectors such as food & beverage.

## **The established team continues**

“Sharon and I are very fortunate to be supported by an excellent team that we have worked hard to develop over the years,” says Gary. “Looking to the future, and working within the group, Valves Online will be lead by Simon Kelly. Simon will be responsible for the technical aspects of the business alongside Richard Smith who

will be heading up responsibility of the website, quality and marketing. They will work together complimenting each other and enabling Valves Online to expand further in both UK and international markets.”

Sharon is also retiring alongside Gary. Sharon’s role as Financial Director is replaced by Judith Price, who is already well integrated into the position.

Although Gary and Sharon are moving on, the team they have built will continue to serve Valves Online’s customers in the south west and nationwide with the same dedication.

“We have customers that have been with us since the days of Euro Process,” says Gary. “The quality of the product is crucial, but it’s about the people and the relationships. Our customers have stayed with us because of the quality of the team and the trust they share.”

**Image captions:**



**Image 1:** Valves Online was founded in 2003 and has become the UK's most well-known online valves supplier.



**Image 2:** Gary Hopkinson, the founder of Valves Online is planned to retire at the end of this year.



**Image 3:** In March, the UK's largest online valves supplier underwent a business acquisition by R&G Fluid Power Group.

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## **About Bürkert**

Bürkert Fluid Control Systems is one of the leading manufacturers of control and measuring systems for fluids and gases. The products have a wide variety of applications and are used by breweries and laboratories as well as in medical engineering and space technology. The company employs over 2,200 people and has a comprehensive network of branches in 35 countries world-wide.

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