

BUGATTI WORKING FROM HOME — FACILITY MANAGER PATRICK BURK



Bugatti's first employee continues to look after the site in Molsheim

Patrick Burk starts his tour every morning at seven o'clock sharp. Leaving his house, he passes the Remise Nord, the Château and the Remise Sud. After a quick glance over to the woods to check on the 14 fallow deer there, he carries on to the Orangerie and finally to the Atelier. As the Facility Manager at the Bugatti production facility in Molsheim, the Frenchman has been looking after this exceptional site for almost 20 years — the place where equally exceptional hyper sports cars such as the Chiron¹ and Divo² are built. Since the 20th of March, however, production work has been largely suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As far as possible, employees are working from home thanks to digital work processes.

But not Burk. The 58-year-old Frenchman is the only employee to actually live on the premises: he resides behind the Château and the Remise Nord. As the Facility Manager and Security Officer, he continues to look after the site seven days a week. The grounds extend over an area

of 23 hectares and comprise six buildings. Molsheim's first employee tends to the exotic plants such as citrus fruits and palm trees in the Orangerie as well as the game animals that live on the site.

But things are rather different these days. "It's a strange feeling to be almost alone here on the grounds. You can't compare it to the Christmas holidays either. There's never been anything quite like it before," says Burk. France is under lockdown, with police imposing heavy fines for unnecessary trips by car. No visitors, no incoming goods — there are virtually no employees on the Bugatti premises. Cameras monitor the entire grounds day and night.

In normal times, Burk encounters the first employees to arrive when he's doing his morning rounds and has a brief chat with them. He has become friends with many of them over the years. "It's hard not seeing colleagues for weeks on end. We've got a fantastic, young team here, and I very much hope that they and their families will all come through these difficult times in good health," says Burk. But there is one thing that has improved in recent weeks: "Trees and flowers are budding earlier this year, other bird species such as storks and cuckoos are in the trees, and we have rabbits in the forest again," says Burk enthusiastically. Nature is defying these turbulent times and spreading out over the Bugatti grounds.

No wonder: there are currently only a handful of employees moving around here. "These include security personnel, cleaners, gardeners, HR staff and IT staff," says Burk, who now takes care of almost everything at the production site. Bugatti President Stephan Winkelmann drops in at least twice a week to keep up-to-date on the latest developments, too. If a delivery arrives despite the lockdown, Patrick Burk is there to accept it. "I can use the forklift to unload a truck, that's not a problem," says the Frenchman. As a trained paramedic and firefighter, Burk is responsible for occupational health and safety as well as fire protection in normal times, too.

On his tours of the buildings, he regularly switches the lights on and off, checks the ventilation and runs the taps and flushes so as to prevent corrosion and ensure the time-honoured buildings are kept in good condition. "Having been here nearly 20 years, I'm very familiar with the facilities, so I instantly notice if anything is different," he says. Cleaning staff continue to clean the rooms, disinfecting items such as switches, stairs and door handles where it seems necessary. In the Atelier, Burk makes the most of the downtime to carry out maintenance work. "At the moment it's easier to carry out maintenance and repair work on some of the equipment such as lifting platforms and the ventilation system. We can turn the power off without disrupting anyone's work," he says. There now all kinds of jobs he can bring forward, and he can easily arrange appointments and compare offers. "I'm proud to be able to take on responsibility for the Atelier during this period and get everything prepared so that production can hopefully re-start again soon. When the Atelier goes back into operation, everything will be perfect as usual," he says. Until that happens, he will continue to go on his rounds every day — and he's already looking forward to the day he can welcome lots of colleagues again.