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A CUT ABOVE

Get to know NCMT – the
UK-based distributor of
Japanese-made machinery



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Established in 1964, NCMT offers high technology machine tools and best-in-class engineering solutions for metal cutting and grinding applications. Though its history is old, the latest iteration of the company is relatively young: a management buyout took place in March 2020, which was, from this privileged place of hindsight, remarkable timing for those walking into their new positions.

Recently, *Manufacturing Today* sat down with two of NCMT's latest owners – Jonathan Smart, Managing Director and Ian Horton, Sales Director – to reflect on the last two years as well as the bright future that is evidently ahead of them.

As an innovative leader within a recognized niche, NCMT is specialized in demanding fields of engineering – fields from which, according to Jonathan, many other machine and tooling suppliers shy away. “Japanese-built machines are the best in the world, and we have the two premier brands in our stable: Okuma and Makino,” he begins. “That is where we are, and that quality and diversity of product firmly separates us from our competitors.

“Moreover, with nearly six decades of company experience, we have an incredible range of technical ability and a fantastic engineering team who are able to support us at all times,” he continues. “The new directors, myself and Ian included,



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are not new to any of this, either. We have demonstrated an enthusiasm for the product – and the company as a whole – and between us have clocked up many decades at NCMT.”

“Indeed, it has not been a typical buyout, where someone just walks into the business and decides to make a load of changes,” adds Ian. “There is still the history of the company here; our idea is to maintain what NCMT has done for its customers in the past, while also taking the business forward. We have our own fresh ideas and approaches to various tasks, so it will be the same NCMT for customer service, but hopefully with some improvements as well.”

Along with aftersales support, including but not limited to training, back-up, technical expertise, and responsive engineering aid, NCMT’s 100-plus-strong team has carved out a robust reputation by delivering a world class, tried-and-tested product. As mentioned previously by Jonathan, NCMT distributes two primary brands: Okuma and Makino.

The former range includes turning (single, twin, and triple turret), multi-tasking (horizontal and vertical lathe), milling (five axis and double column), grinding (internal and external), additive, and automation (automatic pallet changers and ROID Series) machines. The latter includes milling (horizontal 4 and 5, vertical 3 and 5, and graphite milling), grinding (G5 and G7), and EDM (sinker, wire, and hole drilling) machines. Between the two technically superior brands, NCMT has every customer covered when it comes to metal cutting and grinding processes.

“From an automation point of view, the build and quality of these machines is integral,” explains Ian. “If a machine is going to be running 24-hours-a-day in a production environment, then it needs to be reliable. Fortunately, the machines manufactured by Okuma and Makino that we stock are the best in the industry.

“Recent investments, moreover, take these machines even further,” he adds. “Okuma and Makino are always looking towards the future in what they do; however, more specifically, from the Okuma brand, we are talking about the world’s only single-source machine tool. Put simply, that means almost everything on an Okuma piece of kit is built by Okuma; the company is at the fore of technology because it does not rely on the ability of external suppliers or third parties. If something new in the industry comes out, then you can bet it has been Okuma leading the way from the front – other companies tend to merely follow.”

However, that is not to say that NCMT simply passes on these high-end pieces of technology to its customers. In fact, as Jonathan informs us, the company has been directly involved on a technical level with Makino in the development of new products.

Kyocera SGS

Kyocera SGS Precision Tools Europe (Kyocera SGS) is proud to have been working with NCMT for over a decade on a multitude of challenging projects in both the aerospace and medical sectors. By working in close partnership with the NCMT engineering team and their customers, Kyocera SGS has been a key component in the success of its most demanding milling projects.

Our solid carbide special tools, created using unique geometries, coatings and tooling solutions, combine to deliver the high quality and reliability of component production for which NCMT machine tools are renowned.

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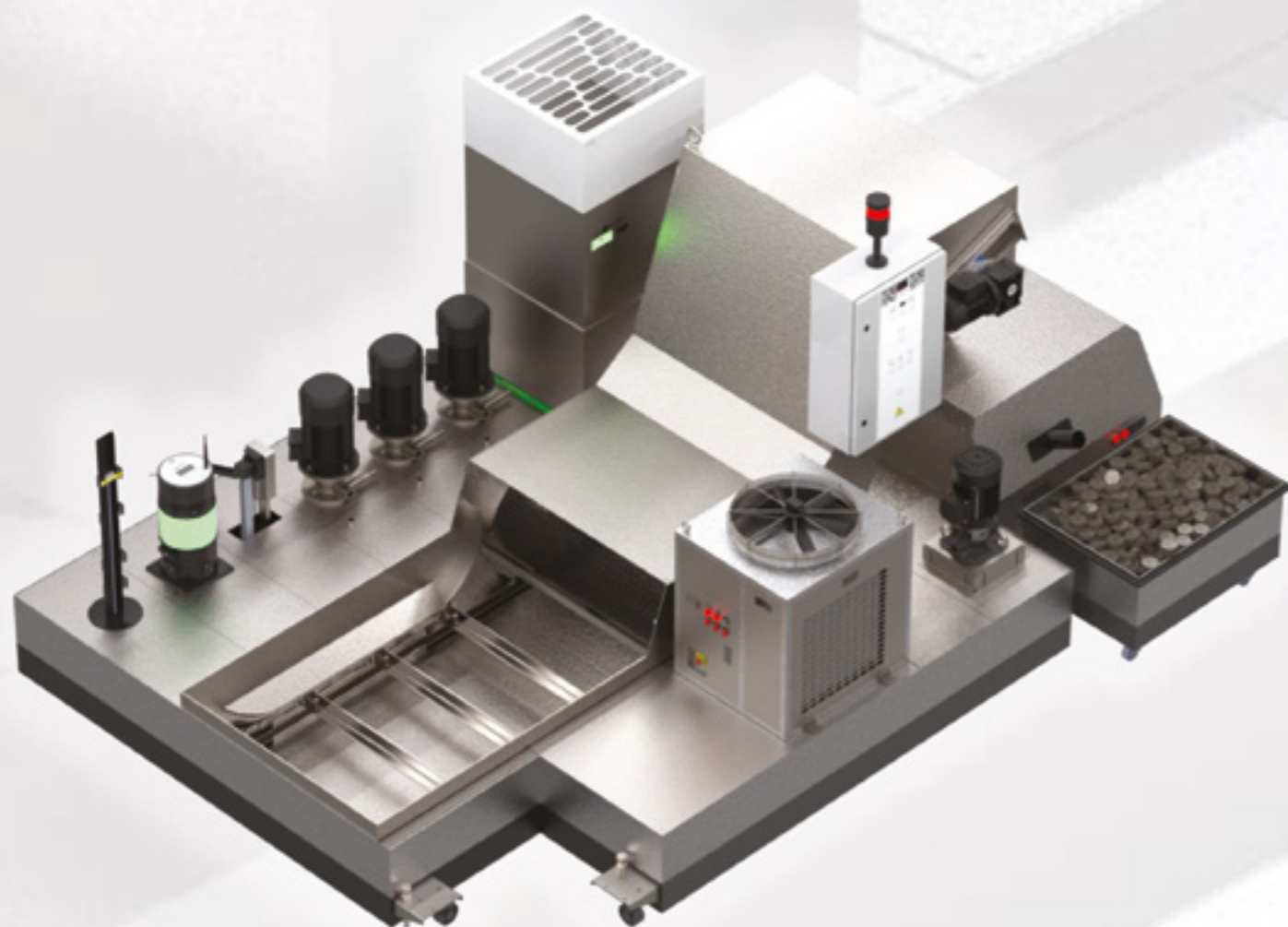
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“The Makino Viper G Series was developed in a collaboration between NCMT, Makino, Rolls Royce, and Tyrolit, a grinding wheel manufacturer,” he reveals. “There was a gap in a the market since Rolls Royce needed a new machine, and the brand came to NCMT so that we could have Makino develop an appropriate piece of kit for a new range of products. We acted as a driving force on that project.”

Relationships are key in any trade. A strong bond between company and external supplier, vendor, customer, and commercial partner ensures success on every level. With NCMT, it is no different.

The company has, for instance, worked with Makino since it opened its doors in 1964 – long before the Japanese firm’s European or North American divisions even existed. “Internally, when we go to Makino meetings, we are referred to as Makino NCMT, even though we are actually two completely separate businesses,” reveals Ian. “That just goes to show how strong the relationship is.

“Likewise, from an Okuma point of view, we have been working with the brand since 1976, and also have a very long-standing, highly productive relationship with the team over there,” he goes on. “It was only recently that we were sat down with the President of Okuma Japan and the President and Vice President

of Okuma Europe. Indeed, these are not fly-by-night relationships; rather, they are living, breathing, collaborative partnerships that are built on trust and best-in-class engineering. Decades of work attest to as much.”

The wheels are firmly in motion at NCMT. Following the buyout in early 2020, the company has got through the pandemic (in all its various waves) and come out the other side arguably stronger. Most recently, for instance, the company has moved into a new facility in Leatherhead, Surrey.

“Having been located at its previous facility for 41 years, it is safe to say that it has been all hands on deck since the move,” details Jonathan. “We had to clear out four decades worth of stock: some was very old! Unusually, we have taken on a smaller facility. Our previous location was our sole site back when we first arrived; however, today, we have more than one, so we are adjusting



**...we are on
the right track
to getting there**



accordingly. From a showroom standpoint, we have now started to upgrade our primary location in Middlemarch, Coventry, which was built 22 years ago. So, again, there has been lots to tidy up and modernize!”

As our conversation draws to a close, we begin to talk about the future. For Ian, there is nothing like the endless opportunities that are afforded by strong sales and continued growth. “We have had an incredibly good start to the financial year, and I want that to carry on as we look ahead,” he says. “If we continue to grow both the Okuma and Makino brands, then we will be able to achieve that. However, we will then need to match that growth by expanding internally, meaning more salespeople to keep the momentum going. We want to bounce back to pre-pandemic figures, and we can firmly say that we are on the right track to getting there.” ■

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