

Machine Sales assists manufacturer

Machine Sales Ltd ● Tel 0113 256 8883

New, high precision CNC technology from Machine Sales Ltd has led to diversification for a Bradford maker of traditional garden furniture into the manufacture of 'display furniture', or logistic point of sale marketing systems, for garden centres. The investment has led to the establishment of a new and independent design and manufacturing offshoot for Peter Smith Garden Furniture Ltd that is fast building into a major secondary business. When engineering graduate, Nick Smith wanted to expand the farm-garden furniture manufacturing business, he knew that he would need to introduce some fairly heavyweight new technology on to the Bradford shop floor. So he asked John Wilson at Machine Sales Ltd what he thought was the best way forward from a production point of view — he outlined what he wanted to achieve in terms of output per capital investment and MSL advised him on what was needed, in machinery terms, to do the job.

In broad terms, Nick Smith wanted to take the leap from a tra-



The new Routech CNC machine is the engine of speed at the Smith family furniture factory in Bradford.

ditional joinery manufacturing culture, turning out space intensive built furniture pieces on a seasonal selling timetable, to a modern flat pack joinery regime that overcomes all the inherent problems.

Components that were made in traditional ways — elderly pin routers, etc — and mortise and tenon jointed for traditional character and build strength.

The streamlining initiative introduced a new jointing system based on longer, heavier and, therefore, stronger 80mm x 12mm dowels, which was developed jointly by Italian specialist, Omal in conjunction with UK distributor, MSL.

It has brought the Smith family furniture product offering into the modern age.

Electronically programmable precision drilling, gluing and dowel insertion as a mortise and tenon jointing alternative gave Nick Smith and his team the confidence to progress towards a transition to flat-pack manufacturing and to sidestep the logistical headaches of seasonal production, furniture assembly and warehousing.

The new technology drive also involved an impressive line-up of high technology CNC machinery from Italian makers, Routech and Morbidelli, which has so changed and improved output from the factory of one of Britain's leading manufacturers of rustic-style garden furniture and bird tables that managing director, Nick Smith, believes that it will probably double turnover of the 50-man shop floor in 2006.

'CNC controllability of both Routech and Morbidelli in the cutting and drilling of shapes and the assembly gains that we have made with dowel drilling, gluing and insertion by Omal mean that we can now produce an infinitely better product more economically and much faster,' says Mr Smith.

'Crucially, we can also now optimise the seasonal peaks and troughs that were always such a bugbear and eliminate high sea-



Four head Routech is turning out 2,000 seat back components in a two-session compared with 200/wk by previous methods.



Four heads working pendulum style, the Bradford factory has instantly doubled output of the best-selling products.

of garden and display furniture



has taken self assembly a stage beyond the traditional mortise and joint.

ad times of six weeks and more — now we can keep the factoring economically all year round,' he adds.

an engineer himself, Nick Smith was able to appreciate the advance of cutting, shaping and drilling technology first of the Morbidelli line and then of the Rotech model in terms of both precision and

recision is not the first thing that automatically springs to mind in connection with rustic style garden furniture, but actually it is vital if you want to do is manufacture components for boxing and ship-for home assembly. If the customer cannot make sense out of the components on his garage floor, the whole thing is a waste of his time and money — not to mention our reputation. You can't guarantee mortise and tenon joints for a perfect fit time after time, but you can with a new dowelling regime — and it's even stronger!' says Mr Smith.

Now the factory is making the arms, seat backs and frame components in Swedish red cedar and boxing them up for distribution against the orders as and when they come in.

Warehousing enough stocks of finished furniture in the winter months to meet heavy spring and summer demands was always a bugbear and although seasonal swings in sales remain, as they always have, the difficulty now is that the Bradford factory spends the winter months of the close season, producing easy-to-store components for shipment when season-demand begins to build.

Spliced seat backs are a key component of best selling models in the range and were made at a rate of around 200/wk by traditional methods.

With the four-head Rotech working eight individual splices on a pendulum basis, the Bradford factory can now turn 2,000 seat back panels in a day session.

With the new Rotech work

centre, we can make all the components for eight of our swinging arbour seats in an hour, easily doubling our output of this particular piece from 1,500 pieces/annum to 3,000 in this last season alone,' says Mr Smith.

'Moving towards a much slicker, components-based business, we can see a way to take the brakes off production for almost all of the products in our fairly extensive range — which is good, because in the past we have always been able to sell as much as we can make,' he adds.

The confidence boost that the new technology from Machine Sales Ltd has generated has also now led to diversification into the manufacture of 'display furniture' for garden centres — shop-fitting by any other name.

Display systems designed by Chris Rodziewicz for strategic garden centre marketing at the point of sale has meant the establishment of a new and independent design and manufacturing offshoot of the Smith family joinery business. This is fast building into a major secondary business.



Morbidelli has raised standards at Smiths for shaped and drilled components.



Nick Smith says that precision dowel insertion by Omal has enabled a new generation of stronger, more dependable jointing techniques.