

**State of the art – Swiss robotics at the Scheppach factory**

# Customer comes first

**The secret of success for a small company is to listen to your clients. Ask Scheppach if you don't believe**

**Colin Eden-Eadon**

If opportunism is the way to get ahead then Scheppach can be said to be an excellent example of what happens when you look on your own doorstep first, to see what the neighbourhood might need. For it was rural Germany's forestry and farming industry which was to play a

key part in this relatively small company's early success.

The company started by producing farm-based timber machinery, such as portable saw benches that necessarily had to be driven off tractor power, small woodlands not usually being connected up to the grid.

Someone at Scheppach must have had a lightbulb moment when it was realised that log splitters would be a godsend to the many homes that relied on logs for fuel. Robustly built to withstand the rigours of farm and forestry life, they are still even today one of the largest volume sellers in the company's range, with at least half-a-dozen different models, many with sophisticated hydraulics.

But that was then, and Scheppach built upon early supply-and-demand >



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**Machines like this made it all possible for the company**

resourcefulness to develop the CAD-designed machinery ranges that now take pride of place in home and school workshops in the UK, Ireland, Scandinavia and Malaysia.

## DESIGN & BUILD

The machine tables for the main Scheppach range in its distinctive blue and yellow livery, are cast in Germany and milled at the factory, as are the bases. These are laser-cut and folded with the latest CNC cutting technology.

Once in their component parts, they are welded together robotically. The bases are then spray powder-coated using 12 nozzles, and baked.

Every machine is given a serial number and this is continually checked on computers at the assembly line against the tolerances required on the shop floor as it goes through production. Some tooling and parts are out-sourced and manufactured in China to specification.

## RANGE

When Scheppach bought Kity Woodworking Machines in France back in 2004, they developed their budget range, Woodster, which is entirely built in China

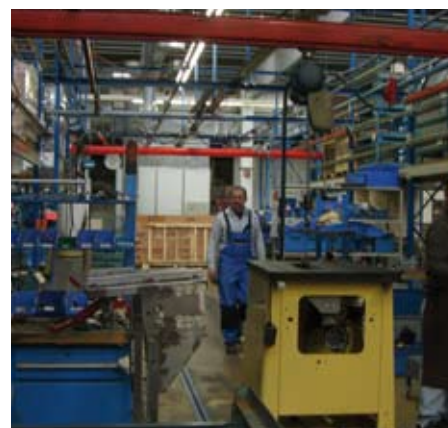


**Once welded, the machines are powder sprayed**

and is worth in the region of a cool 20 million Euros a year. Quality control is very high – reliability on the Woodster range is 96% whilst on the German-produced machines it is 98.5%.

In all, across their whole production, the company builds a wide range of machines throughout the year.

This includes products like the Tiger 2500 Wetstone Grinder that I recently tested in F&C133 page 60, which is also built in Germany. There is generally one week's production in stock, which enables the company to fulfil orders very quickly.



**Computers on the factory shop floor track the quality control**



**The Basato 5 on an assembly line**



**The machines are baked to harden the coating**

## PROFESSIONAL

But no successful business can afford to sit on its laurels, so what is Scheppach working on now? When I was visiting, the latest range of professional saws – part of the re-branding of the IXES range – was taking centre stage on the factory floor, and very impressive it looked too, sporting cast-iron saw trunions and rise-and-fall and tilt on the same side for user-friendliness.

Included in the new range is a spindle moulder and an even bigger bandsaw – the Basato 7.



One of the new range of saws being checked



The new saw cast iron internals were designed on CAD in Germany, as is everything Scheppach produce

So it goes without saying that I was really rather impressed with Scheppach as a company, both in terms of production standards and the commitment of staff. Having introduced their Quality Management System, the standard of technology is confirmed with Certification DIN EN ISO 9001.

The foundation of their new product development stems from the demands of the customer. With careful consideration, suggestions can become reality on products in as little as four to six months.

Keep listening, I say. **F&C**

## New Distributors like them too

With other investors, NMA acquired a substantial shareholding in the Scheppach manufacturing company in order to guarantee consistency of supply and after sales service to the many thousands of UK Scheppach users. Here's what Neil McEwen, Chairman of NMA, says: "It is nearly forty years since I returned from a visit to Germany with two flat-packed circular sawbenches in the back of my estate car. This was an era when most woodworking machines were heavy beasts, all being made of solid cast iron. Introducing a 12in circular sawbench with a retail price of £56 was to create a totally new concept in woodworking machinery from which I suffered years of light-hearted abuse and ridicule relating to my 'Mickey Mouse' machines.

"In 1970 I began a commercial relationship with the Scheppach Company of Ichenhausen which continues to this day, Scheppach now being the market leader in its field and NMA being Scheppach's largest single customer."

Robert McEwen, UK Sales Director for Scheppach, says: "Scheppach sales have, over the years, gone from strength to strength, and it is our aim to have Scheppach as the No.1 woodworking machinery brand of its kind in the UK."

## New items to watch out for from Scheppach in 2008

- The Forsa 9 Panel Saw with 4.8kw motor and 107mm depth of cut, an impressive 3200mm stroke on the carriage and split pre-scoring attachment.
- The Basato 3 Bandsaw with 200mm cutting depth.
- The TKU Site Saw with 100mm depth of cut using a 300mm blade running at 4,000rpm from a belt driven motor.

As and when these products are released, you can be sure F&C will keep you up-to-date with the latest news.