

# Renewed fortunes

**C Dugard Machine Tools has come back strongly after taking a huge knock to its business a few years back. Andrew Allcock reports**

Following the 2001 '9/11' downturn and the failure of Yang, one of its largest Taiwanese suppliers, Hove, Sussex-headquartered C Dugard Machine Tools was hit hard. However, a new strategy has seen the company's fortunes revive, and following a successful Open House last year, it enters 2008, according to managing director Eric Dugard, "with a record order book worth over £7 million, even before further Open House enquiries are processed". He adds that the company has experienced an average 20 per cent year-on-year growth over recent years and that that looks set to continue.

With the failure of Yang, which accounted for about 300 UK unit sales annually and over 50 per cent of the company's revenue, Mr Dugard says: "We needed to look at a new product range for VMCs and lathes. Unable to find a single supplier in Taiwan for both, we partnered with Chevalier for the VMCs and ultimately worked with Focus for the lathes. Focus sprang out of Yang and we are a one-third shareholder in that factory along with Chevalier and ex-Yang management members.

"Right from the outset we had a big input into the design of the Dugard Eagle range, which has now replaced the business we originally lost." The range not only includes the original lathes and VMCs, but has grown to include Taiwan-built horizontal borers, bridge-type machining centres and larger lathes.

Chevalier, an established grinding machine manufacturer, for which Dugard is the UK agent, handles Dugard Eagle

sales in United States and South East Asia, with Dugard looking after Europe and Russia. And exports play a large part in the company's business. Of its £19 million turnover, around 20 per cent is export, but product is also shipped direct from Taiwan, for example, to Poland, Russia and, more recently, to the Middle East, and that is not included in this figure. In Poland the company has a 100 per cent owned subsidiary; in Russia it has partnered with a Russian distributor, and in Dubai it recently opened an office.

## EMO MILESTONE

But Germany, too, is a growing market for the company's Dugard Eagle range. The 2007 EMO exhibition was an important milestone for future international business. "Germany is a very discerning area to sell machine tools and we signed up new dealers in both the north and south of the country and are already taking orders for the Dugard Eagle range," says the managing director. "To us this recognises the brand's wider acceptance as a quality machine tool. We are now finding both in the UK and throughout Europe that our specification of spindle power, tool magazine and control options on a rigid machining platform puts us high on the spreadsheet when customers make comparisons."

The company's others sales come from its Hyundai-Kia (lathes, VMCs, HMCs), Akira-Seiki (VMCs, VTLs), Hedelius (Large VMCs, including 5-axis), You Ji (VTLs), TOS Varnsdorf (horizontal borers), Edel



(large bridge-type VMCs, including 5-axis) and Hanwha (sliding-head) metalcutting machines – plus sheet metalworking equipment such as press brakes and shears from Ermaksan plus the Chevalier grinding machines already noted. (The company sells Hyundai-Kia machines in Russia through a partnership agreement, incidentally.) Some 25 to 30 per cent of turnover is from 'big ticket' projects involving German Hedelius machining centres, Edel, Czech TOS Varnsdorf borers and You Ji vertical borers, Mr Dugard offers.

Five-axis activity focuses on the aerospace and mould and die sectors and during the year 19 machines worth over £5 million were installed. Fifteen involved high specification Hedelius Kombi vertical machining centres and four were for Edel machines with working envelopes of 5 by 3 by 1.1 m.



competitors – have been the key draw. A favourable dollar/sterling rate is helpful here, admits Mr Dugard.

Recent product highlights include the appearance of the first Dugard Eagle 5-axis VMC (the X5, made in Poland and already proven in the Edel factory); the first mill-turn Dugard Eagle lathe (the NL210Y: single spindle, single turret with Y-axis and driven tools, and tailstock); the sale of the first Hyundai-Kia SKT 2500 MTS B-axis mill-turn lathe with sub-spindle, shipped to Precision Aircraft at Reading; and the

introduction of a Dugard Eagle sub-£100,000, 500 mm pallet horizontal machining centre, the MH500.

The MH-500 is a 500 by 500 mm twin-pallet machine with 40-tool magazine (60 option) and Fanuc control (OiMC or 18iMB as an option). It also

features pallet load capacity of 450 kg and 0.001° indexing.

The moving-column machine runs on a one-piece Meehanite base and saddle that weigh over 9 tonnes to provide a rigid machining platform. To this structure, heavy duty linear ways are added and set on a wide span to provide high stability while supporting rapid traverse rates of 32 m/min in each axis: X, Y and Z travels being 610, 510 and 610 mm, respectively.

The long nose ISO 40 spindle is driven at up to 10,000 rpm from a 15 kW drive as standard with 15,000 rpm as an option. Also included is 20 bar through-the-spindle coolant supply.

#### REAPING WHAT YOU SOW

The Open House at the recently face-lifted Hove showroom not only revealed the breadth of the C Dugard range, but also highlighted the smaller machines in a more modern and brighter setting. There is the possibility of additional showroom/demonstration facilities elsewhere in the UK in a year or so.

“Everything is now coming together, thanks to the efforts of everyone in the company over the last four years,” concludes Mr Dugard. □

The company's customer base spans the complete range from small engineering shops to large OEMs. Indeed, says Mr Dugard: “We are now involved and winning big projects with OEMs and Tier 1 and Tier 2 suppliers and have been building our machine range and service to meet their particular demands. That has helped to create a more professional business for all our customers.”

There are 55 people based in Hove now and half are engaged in customer support. With ever growing demands for project work, application engineering keeps five engineers fully occupied. There is also a help desk with two people providing front line contact, in addition to the service team.

While grinding has been quiet over recent years, the company reports something of an upsurge in interest. The new Smart CNC Chevalier surface/profile models that offer a high specification at a very competitive price – up to 40 per cent lower for similar functionality versus

