

a new force in machinery

With Roccia Machinery taking on the major brands previously sold exclusively in the UK by Pisani, Derek Fretwell's new company came into being in September as an instantly significant force in stone machinery supply



Derrick Fretwell (seated) with (left to right) Matthew Gilbert, Arran Langford and Paul Coggins. Derrick's ambition is to make Roccia Machinery market leader in the supply of machinery to the stone industry in the UK and Ireland.

It is as if nothing has changed. Derrick Fretwell and Arran Langford are selling the same machinery they have been selling for years – GMM's CNC bridge saws, Bidese Impianti wire saws, Technosplit croppers, Socomac materials handling equipment, Italmec dust suppression units and Winkelmann water recycling plants.

But the difference is they are now selling them for Roccia Machinery rather than Pisani.

Roccia is a new company set up by Derrick Fretwell with the backing of venture capital from Paul Coggins and Matthew Gilbert of City Business Finance.

The official changeover of the agencies takes

place on 5 January. By then Roccia will have everything in place to offer sales, service, spares, installation, technical support... everything an agent needs to supply and support machinery sales in the UK and Ireland, including finance.

City Business Finance have made a specialism of supplying loans to the stone industry to enable it to buy machinery and as such have a better understanding of the stone industry in the UK and Ireland than most finance companies. "With Derrick Fretwell and Arran Langford going forward, it seemed logical to get together," Paul Coggins told *NSS*.

However, City Business Finance will not stop financing the purchase of machines being sold by other agents in the UK. Paul says: "It's a venture capital arrangement with Derrick. City Business Finance is a separate business. You can't dictate to someone who has been in the stone industry for 30 years which machines they must buy."

Moves that led to Derrick starting his own business began in January this year when he was made redundant by stone and machinery wholesalers Pisani. Arran Langford left soon afterwards to join the sales force of Intermac, the CNC workcentre company whose products Pisani sold for a while.

Pisani say they had decided that 2009 was not going to be a good year for machinery sales and had had to adjust their costs (see last month's issue of *NSS*).

With Derrick and Arran gone, Pisani could only offer their principals reduced representation in the market. Having known Derrick for many years, the manufacturers found discussions with him about continued representation were easy to develop. "I was being encouraged by customers and suppliers," says Derrick.





Paul adds: “When the most successful manufacturer of bridge saws on the planet says they want to follow you it makes the decision easier.”

Derrick does not underestimate the difficulties of the market, but says: “There’s plenty of intent out there although there’s still a reluctance to take the plunge. There will probably be a bit of a flurry when people decide the time is right. More people I’m visiting now are busy and positive.”

And if you think a recession is not the best time to start a business, Derek disagrees. “The opportunity wouldn’t have been there if times were good.”

He says starting a new company with new suppliers to the UK market would have been virtually impossible, but taking over existing marques that are already well established, respected and wanted by masons made sense.

You might have noticed that there is one of Pisani’s main agencies that Roccia have not taken on – Marmomeccanica. That is because GMM last year bought Cemar, who make edge polishers.

Pisani did not take on the Cemar range because they already had a long-term relationship with Marmomeccanica that they did not at that time want to compromise.

Roccia are not encumbered by that arrangement and will be selling Cemar edge polishers. Derrick says a new, smaller machine that is likely to be attractive to UK masons is currently undergoing trials in Italy.

Rob Vianello, GMM Sales Director, told NSS: “Derrick Fretwell is well respected and one of the most experienced industry figures. Continuity of sales service and spare parts support is very important to GMM and Derrick and his experienced staff have the knowledge to ensure our customers will continue to be

supported. With the launch of our new range of edge polishers, Roccia Machinery are set to become one of our most successful independent distributors and we look forward to working with them.”

In the 16 years since GMM were formed they have established themselves as market leaders and claim 60% of the worldwide bridge saw market. They earned that position by responding to the market with new products and their latest launch, the Intra 36, was made at the Marmomacc exhibition in Verona last month. The Intra replaces the Lexta 36 between the Brio and the Egil, with several improvements to increase production speeds and ease of use.

For example, the Intra has a 370° rotating head that can incline to 90° for vertical and horizontal sawing. It offers faster production and improved accuracy and can produce advanced profile and shape work either with direct input at the pendant or using drawings imported from a USB connection on the pendant or a LAN connection to the office. It is available in both standard configuration and monoblock.

The obvious gap in the Roccia offering is a CNC workcentre. Even though the distinction between CNC saws and workcentres is blurring, Derrick says the gap in the range will be plugged, although he is not yet in a position to say more than that.

Derrick’s ambitions for his company are high. He says: “We need to do justice to all the companies we represent and are looking to become a market leader in the supply of machinery to the stone industry in the UK and Ireland.

“I think the move has been pretty well accepted – I haven’t heard a bad word from anyone. People are looking forward to working with us in the future.” ■

Above. The new Roccia Machinery company will be introducing the range of Cemar edge polishers into the UK as part of their arrangement with CNC saw makers GMM, who bought Cemar last year. Cemar are currently developing a smaller polisher that is likely to be attractive to many worktop fabricators in the UK.

Below. This is the latest bridge saw from GMM, the Intra that was launched at the Marmomacc exhibition in Verona last month. It is available as a standard bridge saw or a monoblock and comes with GMM’s usual impressive list of options.

