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GrindingHub 2024: British people are automating production with VOLLMER technology

Biberach an der Riss, 15th May 2024 – The English city of Doncaster is home to the medium-sized tool manufacturer Systco-Unilap. The company has 22 employees and manufactures circular saws and rotary tools. Eleven VOLLMER machines form the basis for production – three of which were delivered by the Biberach-based sharpening specialist in 2022. With the new CHX 840, QXD 250 and VGrind 260 machines, Unilap has been able to take its automated tool machining to a new level. The tool manufacturer is also a good example of how the British grinding market will remain of interest to VOLLMER even after Brexit.

(The press release and accompanying images can be found at the following link:
<https://www.vollmer-group.com/en-uk/company/press/press-releases>)

The city of Doncaster is located in the English county of South Yorkshire in the heart of Great Britain, and is home to the tool manufacturer Unilap. The company was founded in 1974 by Darrell Hughes as "South Yorkshire Saw & Tool Co" (Systco). Back then, it was just a small company for sharpening saw blades and selling accessories. Today, his son Carl Hughes runs the company, which was renamed Systco-Unilap in 1992, and now employs 22 people and manufactures more than 5000 product lines for the British market. As an expert in woodworking and metalworking, Unilap develops customised tools for the automotive industry, the aerospace industry and industries that process composite materials.

Unilap has been relying on VOLLMER for more than 40 years

Unilap's portfolio includes both carbide-tipped circular saws and rotary tools made of carbide and ultra-hard cutting materials such as PCD (polycrystalline diamond). The company is achieving an annual growth of 25 per cent with its routers, profile tools, drills and circular saws. To strengthen this development in existing as well as new markets, Unilap has expanded its production capacities with VOLLMER technology. In 2022, the English tool manufacturer commissioned three more VOLLMER machines in addition to the eight it already has.

"We have relied on VOLLMER for more than 40 years and love the brand for its quality, innovative strength and reliability. That's why we are proud that we now have eleven VOLLMER machines in operation," says Carl Hughes. "The new VGrind 260 in particular represents a new approach for us – to take automation in the production of rotary tools to a new level."

VGrind 260 has initiated a paradigm shift

The VGrind 260 tool grinding machine delivered in October 2022 has initiated a paradigm shift at Unilap. Previously, carbide tools were produced semi-automatically on two machines, with an employee having to continuously change the tools. With the automated VGrind 260 and the HC 4 chain magazine, Unilap can now produce its rotary tools around the clock in an unmanned operation. In addition, the VGrind 260 with proven VOLLMER kinematics and double spindle enables high-precision multi-level machining, which has significantly increased the quality and service lives of Unilap tools.

"In the past, we had to painstakingly plan tool machining and assign it to the respective machines in order to minimise the changing of grinding wheels and collet chucks as well as reprogramming," says Bob Young, General Manager at Unilap. "Now, we can load the chain magazine with tools of different diameters and the VGrind simply keeps going – this has enabled us to reduce the machining time per tool by more than 80 per cent."

Unilap is expanding its capacities with the CHX 840 and QXD 250

With the VOLLMER CHX 840 grinding machine for carbide-tipped circular saws, which arrived in Doncaster in April 2022, Unilap has expanded its capacities in the automated production of carbide-tipped circular saws. Thanks to the HS loading system, unmanned operation is possible, which relieves the strain on existing VOLLMER machines when it comes to production and maintenance. The QXD 250 erosion machine complements the previous VOLLMER QXD 200, which the tool manufacturer has now been using for ten years for the machining of PCD tools. Equipped with the HC 5 tool storage, the QXD 250 can hold a total of 28 tools weighing up to 25 kilograms, and feed them to the erosion machine in 24/7 shifts.

"The QXD 250 with the innovative Vpulse EDM erosion generator increases our cutting speeds by up to 40 per cent and, at the same time, ensures a significantly improved surface quality of around 0.1 µRa," says Bob Young. "Thanks to the

intuitive ExLevel PRO software, we can also program our tools 50 per cent faster than before. Overall, the time saving is between 70 and 80 per cent if we include the efficiencies in programming, set-up and touching."

The British grinding market remains attractive for VOLLMER

Unilap's most recent investments in sharpening machines made by VOLLMER also show that the British market will remain attractive for the Swabian machine manufacturer even after Brexit. VOLLMER has been represented in Great Britain with its own subsidiary since 1980. VOLLMER UK is based in Nottingham, a city located around 80 kilometres south of Doncaster in the triangle formed by the economic hubs of Manchester, Sheffield and Birmingham.

"Exports are the foundation of our company's success, which is why VOLLMER is represented in 15 countries around the world with their own subsidiaries – we generate around 80 per cent of our turnover abroad," says Andreas Böhm, CEO of the VOLLMER Group. "The English tool manufacturer Unilap is a prime example of how customers around the world have remained loyal to us for decades, even when economic hurdles such as Brexit pose new challenges for partnerships."

(Approx. 6000 characters)

Press images



Caption: Carl Hughes, CEO of Unilap, programmes the machining of a carbide tool on the new VOLLMER VGrind 260 grinding machine.



Caption: The VOLLMER HC tool storage enables Unilap to produce their carbide and PCD tools around the clock in an unmanned operation.



Caption: Bob Young (right), General Manager at Unilap, and Carl Hughes (left), CEO of Unilap, stand in front of the new VOLLMER VGrind 260 grinding machine in their production hall in Doncaster, where ten other VOLLMER machines are also in use.



Caption: At Unilap, the new VOLLMER QXD 250 erosion machine complements the previous QXD 200, which has been in use there for ten years now and machines different PCD tools with high precision in unmanned 24/7 shifts.

About the VOLLMER Group

With its comprehensive range of machinery, the VOLLMER Group – which has sites in Germany, Austria, Great Britain, France, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the USA, Brazil, Japan, China, South Korea, India, Russia and Thailand/Taiwan – enjoys global success as a tool machining specialist in the areas of both production and service. The technological leader's range of products includes the most advanced grinding, eroding, laser and machining tools for rotary tools and circular saws in the woodworking and metalworking industries, as well as for metal-cutting band saws. In offering this, VOLLMER relies heavily on the company's tradition and its strengths: Local contacts, quick decisions and rapid action by a family-run company. The VOLLMER Group currently employs approximately 800 workers worldwide, with around 580 of these at the headquarters in Biberach alone, including more than 75 trainees. The company invests around eight to ten per cent of its turnover in the research and development of new technologies and products. As a provider of technology and services, the VOLLMER Group is a reliable partner to its customers.

Further information and relevant images are available at:

<https://www.vollmer-group.com/en-uk/company/press/press-releases>

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