

# The History of



(50 years in business)

**1974** After being made redundant, as a toolmaker, from Hughes Aircraft Company in Glenrothes (now Raytheon), George S Brown at the age of 45 decided to start up in business utilising his modelmaking lathe and his self made milling machine working from his garage at Damsfold by Kingskettle, Fife. His wife Brenda, kept the firms financial records and undertook the administration role.



GS Brown (Founder)

**1974-75** In the early years his former employer subcontracted some of the toolmaking and engineering services, and increasingly there was a requirement for production turned and milled components. During this time, second hand conventional production equipment was procured.

**1975-76** The work base gradually increased with new customers. During this time Mike Brown who was working as a toolmaker in a local engineering sub contract company, became involved at evenings and weekends to augment production. In 1976 Mike joined the business full time and set up in partnership with his father.

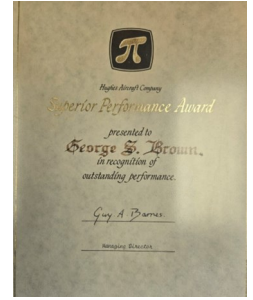
**1976-77** A new workshop 300sq ft building was erected in the garden at Damsfold to accommodate the purchase of a new EMI- MEC sprint automatic pegboard capstan lathe, which allowed for larger production batches to be manufactured.



**1977-79** Around this time the computerisation of machine tools was just developing with the introduction of CNC (Computer Numerically Controlled) technology. GS BROWN took the bold decision to invest in a Matchmaker 800 3 axis milling machine which was one of the first CNC machines to be installed in Scotland. In 1978 the firms first employee George Birrell (Podge) was taken on. In addition Des Brown assisted in production and material procurement on a part time basis while studying for his degree in Business Studies.



**1977-79 cont** A few years after starting the business GS Brown was awarded a certificate from the Hughes Aircraft Company for superior performance and achieving zero defects over an extended period supplying parts to them.



**1980-1981** After graduating Des Brown joined the business full time for a short time, carrying out the accounts/admin function before leaving to pursue a career in accountancy.



Shortly after this the firm procured the building in Ladybank (an ex WW2 Italian prisoner of war camp) and undertook modifications to the building to provide office accommodation.

**1982** All production equipment was moved and business commenced its operation from Ladybank. Many of the turned parts manufactured at this time were suited to manufacture using sliding head machines, so the firm invested in the first Tornos Bechler Elector 16 CNC lathe to be brought into the UK.



**1983-84** The firm took on its first apprentices and continued to invest in further CNC machines including the first fixed head turning machine (Nakamura), and the first investment in a Bridgeport CNC machining centre with automatic tool changing functionality. With the increased investment in machines, the factory had already been out grown and the first factory extension was built in 1984.

**1985-8** CNC technology at this time developed quickly, with new machines offering more functionality and faster production times. Further apprentices were taken on who formed the basis of the CNC programming and setting capabilities for the firm's future. Toolmaking was still a service provided by the firm but this started to decline in favour of CNC production during this period. To support manufacturing an ad hoc D-base system was developed to control production, material purchasing and traceability.



During this time supplying defence companies was a significant part of the business, and to meet their supplier requirements, GS BROWN successfully attained BS5750 part 2 certification in Feb 1987 cert FM1117. BS5750 was the pre-cursor to the current ISO 9001:2015 quality assurance system.

**1989-90** With an increased workforce Mr Bill Johnstone joined the partnership in 1989 and became responsible for managing production. GS Brown (founder) begins to step back from his day to day duties. Investment in the latest technology continues with the first Mazak Multiplex 6 axis fixed head lathe to be installed in Scotland. Brenda Brown dies in 1990.



**1991-92** Des Brown re-joins the business in January 1991 taking over the financial, computing and systems operations. The firm becomes a limited company in April 1992 and the existing partnership is dissolved. A second extension is built on the factory with upstairs canteen and offices providing an additional 4000 sq ft of factory space.

**1993-95** In February 1993 a Star VNC 20 machine went on fire during unmanned running in the evening. Luckily the intruder alarm system was set off and the fire was detected and put out by the fire brigade with only limited damage to the factory. Production resumed within a couple of days and the damaged machine replaced by the insurance company. In 1994 two further Bridgeport machining centres were installed, together with another Mazak Multiplex 620. In 1995 with production space still tight, the company purchased a small industrial unit in Gladstone Place. All of the conventional turning equipment was transferred to this site which manufactured higher volume components.



**1996-1999** In 1997 Tornos introduced the revolutionary Deco range of machines offering 10 axis machining, meaning the machine could simultaneously cut with 4 tools. This dramatically reduced cycle times and GS BROWN were among the first to adopt this technology in the UK. In 1998 the company acquired 2.3 acres of land to the north of the existing factory and a new access road off

Cupar Road was built. By 1999 work started on an 8000 sq ft extension increasing the factory to 20,000 sq ft. This was completed by the end of that year.



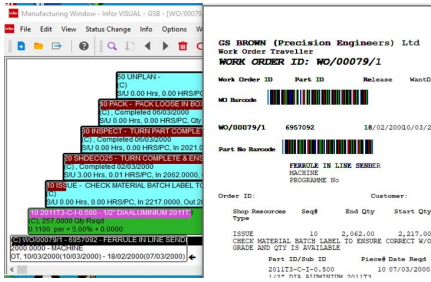
**2000-2001** All production from Gladstone Place is transferred back to the main factory.



Offices/services in the new factory extension are completed and 2 new high speed Brother Machining Centres are installed for long term contract producing sectional valves. GS Brown (founder) dies in 2000.

After detailed research into computer systems ...cont

**2000-2001** cont... the company implements a fully integrated ERP manufacturing control system VISUAL Manufacturing. Utilising bar coding the new ERP system controls the full manufacturing process from quotation through to invoicing, and integration into the financial ledgers. The companies new logo is introduced.



**2002-2003** During this period with a number of new contracts, production capacity was extended through further investment in additional Brother machining centres and Tornos Deco lathes.

**2004-2006** Malcolm Dick joins the company as Production Manager. The company gains BS 9001 (2000) accreditation. In 2006 the company introduced a fully automatic robotised hard metal turning capability with a fanuc robot inside a Spinner super precision CNC lathe. This new technology replaces operations previously carried out on grinding machines.



**2007-2009** Following solid trading during 2007, the company was impacted by the 2008 global financial crisis and sales levels declined by 40% during that period. This resulted in the company having to implement a redundancy programme to ensure the future security of the business.

**2010-2015** During this time business activity gradually improved and by 2012 had recovered to the pre recession levels of 2008. Due to the high level of investment in prior years capacity remained available during this period.

**2016-2017** The engineering sector in the UK was adversely affected by sanctions imposed on Russia due to their invasion of Crimea, and GS Brown faced a decline in sales of its hydraulic business from a number of OEM customers. Mike Brown steps back from day to day involvement in the business.

**2017-2018** GS Brown secure significant contracts in a new business sector and to support this business, invest in a new Mazak multiplex W-200Y 8 axis turning centre replacing the first multiplex bought in 1990.

Turnover reaches an all time high in late 2018.

The directors begin to look at succession planning and the alternatives available to the ownership of the business moving forward.





**2019** After exhaustive research the directors decide that employee ownership is the best option for the continued success of GS Brown. In May 2019 GS Brown becomes an employee owned company with 70% of the shareholding transferred to the EOT (Employee Ownership Trust). Malcolm Dick becomes a director and joins the board of directors.

**2020-2021** In early 2020 the Covid 19 pandemic struck and this resulted in a brief closure of the business. With the introduction of the furlough scheme business resumed with a reduced staff initially returning to work. By October 2020 all staff returned to work after being on the furlough scheme.

Negotiations with an existing customer for a long term contract were successfully concluded in 2021 and a new Spinner U630 Advanced 5 axis machining centre was purchased to fulfil this new contract.



**2022-23** Following the start of the Russia/Ukraine war the resulting energy crisis, GS Brown faced a threefold increase in energy costs, this severely impacted business profitability. With the support of our customers, GS Brown was able to negotiate price increases and energy surcharges to maintain the companies profit margins during this extraordinary period.

Des Brown begins to relinquish day to day duties but continues in a review and monitoring role.

**2024** GS Brown celebrate 50 years in business.



*Current GS Brown directors from left (Malcolm Dick, Des Brown, Mike Brown)*