

PARRISIANNE workways

It's been a year of change at Parrisianne with a new team at the helm, new premises, and even an alteration in the official company name, but the important things are unchanged. There is still an emphasis on providing quality machines, efficient installation and the reliable after service that has made the company one of the most successful in the southeast of England.

The official handover from founders Ian and Anne Parris actually took place on August 1 2007. For managing director Jimmy Holt, who has been with the company 22 years, it was more of a step in an on-going process of gentle evolution than a new direction.

He says: "The timing was just a matter of natural progression. Anne and Ian were coming up to retirement age and it was just a matter of sorting out the nitty-gritty within the company so that we handled the handover smoothly. So there's been a change of ownership but in all other respects - the service we provide and team working here - we have remained the same."

Core members of the 'team' include technical director Iain Weir, engineering director Mark Catchesides, and technical support manager Rob Graham. All have been with the company for a number of years.

The product range has also remained the same. On the drycleaning side, Parrisianne has long been associated with Union machines, for which it is exclusive UK distributor.

Iain Weir comments: "The majority of our sales are perc but overall we are probably still the biggest supplier of hydrocarbon machines into the UK because we had the exclusivity from Johnsons and a massive order in 2003. In terms of volume of hydrocarbon there isn't anybody who has sold more than we sold into the market. Currently, our best seller is probably the perc XP835."

On the finishing side, the company is exclusive UK distributor for Ghidini. It also supplies Junmag boilers, Metalprogetti conveyors, and Hawo packaging systems. In fact, everything needed for the complete unit shop.

In 2003 Parrisianne acquired the exclusive distributorship of Sankosha's shirt machines. This deal was recently re-signed.

Holt explains: "When we took on the Sankosha agency we felt that it was the best shirt machine available throughout the world and we were very privileged to become their agents."

"I still hold that opinion. I've been selling for 25 years in this industry and I can honestly say no piece of equipment can come up to the quality and reliability of the Sankosha machines. We just do not get problems with them. Although you can argue from a certain point of view that it is not so good!"

To which, Iain Weir adds:

"The only time we make money on parts of Sankosha is in spare covers! They just don't go wrong."

Shirts are very much the growth area of the business and this is a trend that Parrisianne can only see continuing.

Holt notes: "The drycleaning industry has really plateaued off. There's not a great deal of growth. So you've got to look around and ask yourself 'What can we do? Where can we grow our business?' Really, allied to what we do now, that means looking at laundry."

"When I was a child, people got their laundry down at the local drycleaners. I can still remember getting it back wrapped in a blue and white paper bag. I think that's what people are starting to look for again."

"So the shirts are a great growth area. And if you do it properly, you put in the right washing machine system and the right pressing system, then you can use unskilled operators and it can be a profitable part of the business."

"I've got clients who were doing 200-300 shirts a week and we put in the right shirt system for them and now one of them is now doing 3000-3600 shirts a week with costings of about 60-65p a shirt including labour, energy, packaging and washing. So it can be done."

The right piece of kit is the key, believes Jimmy Holt. And for Parrisianne, without doubt, that means Sankosha.

Holt continues: "I've been to Tokyo and America and seen the shirt plants over there. Both of those are big markets. If you can get the right package so you can do the shirts at the right price, the market is here to be opened up. Honestly, without fail it can be done."

The new offices in Sevenoaks, Kent were opened on September 1 and provide just under 3,500sqft of space including offices and storage.

But says Iain Weir: "The size is not the issue, it was more about relocating for the benefit of the operation. In the last building we had five separate offices and a separate meeting room! Now, we're all in one large central office with a separate meeting room so there's much better communication within the team. It's a much nicer working environment."

From its Kent-base Parrisianne distributes across the whole of the UK. It has recently appointed Centre Services, in Castleford, West Yorkshire as an agent following the retirement of long-time partner Doug Coates of Northern Trading.

Long-time ties are a feature of the clients as well as the trading partners. These include well-established names such as David Barnes Cleaners in Cardiff, Solent Cleaners, Columbine and Harlequin.

"We operate on a tradition of service. We've always been in the top couple of suppliers in the southeast, for at least the last 15-20 years. It's been done

It's been a hectic year for the team at Parrisianne Drycleaning Solutions, but with all the changes, the business is still focussed on its traditional values of quality and service. Carole Wright reports.

purely on our reputation as being a very good service company and selling a good machine," says Holt.

While the drycleaning market reflects the position of the general economy Parrisianne is looking for relative stability for the next couple of years.

"We've had a lot of change in the last year. What with the change of ownership, the change of factory and also now with the uncertainty in the full retail market. I think it's a matter of just stabilising. Making sure things are run correctly, getting the costings correct and being here in two, three, four years time, to help the customers out."

"I don't see it being a fantastic year for anyone for growth, we are making steady sail through the stormy seas and making sure we keep things turning over as they are."

That said, in business there will always be developments. For Parrisianne this includes the possibility of joining other suppliers under the SLEAT umbrella. With the acquisition of Ajax, Sankosha is branching out its range of finishing products and this will open up new lines on the pressing side.

Says Holt: "I do believe that I can sell the first machine but it's the engineers who sell the second, third and fourth machines. So really, to sum the company up, I think it's giving the customers a total back up and what they need once they've bought the machinery from us."

"We started as purely a service company. Now we've become a very popular sales company with a service back-up team. It's been good."



Parrisianne is exclusive UK distributor of Sankosha and Ajax equipment



ABOVE: Parrisianne managing director Jimmy Holt and technical director Iain Weir at the new offices



LEFT: Good service is what keeps customers coming back



ABOVE RIGHT: Metalprogetti conveyors can save space and help with garment tracking

ABOVE: The well-stocked store rooms are presided over by Denis Still



RIGHT: Parrisianne has been distributing Union machines for more than 20 years



Ken Uchikoshi, managing director of Sankosha Company Ltd and Fumio Tsuchida, chief representative of Sankosha Europe's office along with James Holt, managing director and Iain Weir, technical director of Parrisianne Dry Cleaning Solutions Ltd signing the new exclusivity contract at the beginning of 2008