Some Excalibur scroll saw background:

According to my first edition copy of Patrick Spielman's excellent "Scroll Saw Handbook" (edition published in 1986 - ISBN 0-8069-4770-5; but I believe there's now an updated 2nd edition) the Excalibur range of scroll saws first came on the market in the early 1980s. Designed and developed by a pair of Canadians, Tom Sommerville and J. Philip Humfrey, although they had a number of quite innovative mechanical details, plus a very high standard of engineering (e.g. needle roller bearings on the parallel motion main arms and on the associated small "sub arms"), the first Excalibur scroll saw examples on the market did not feature the later trademark tilting head.

The tilting head is a definite improvement on the tilting table method for making angled cuts, especially when dealing with chunkier work pieces. For someone who didn't feel that angled cuts was all that important before I bought mine, I'm genuinely surprised how often I use that feature.

It seems I'm not alone in that as since the tilting head has appeared in later Excalibur models it seems to have resulted in Excalibur scroll saws slowly becoming something of a market trail blazer, if not (arguably) the out and out market leader.

At some time after the tilting head development the above two chaps sold their business to a larger Canadian company, General International, whom I believe also make a range of well-respected table saws and other wood and metal working machinery. If you're interested, the full GI range can be seen at:

http://www.general.ca/home.html.

GI continues to make Excalibur scroll saws today, offering the well-known range of 16, 21, and 30 inch models which, apart from throat/table size, are all very similar. They're all made in Taiwan, but as I've remarked before, there's nothing at all wrong with that IMO, *provided* that the manufacturer ensures that original material specs, manufacturing tolerances and assembly processes remain under careful QC. That certainly seems to be the case with Excalibur scroll saws, where, for example, the extensive use of needle roller bearings remains unchanged, and indeed the whole machine remains very well engineered with high-quality fasteners throughout - no "Chinese cheese" nuts & bolts to be found here!

Based on my mechanical engineering training then, I find these machines in all respects at least as well specified and as well made as any other on the market - and considerably better than many others I've seen and read about. The result is a machine which is not only a real pleasure to use but is a genuine investment that should last anyone's lifetime, even under daily "trade usage" conditions.

Though by no means cheap, Excalibur offers a bigger "bang for the buck" than the machines generally recognised as *the* "Rolls-Royce" standard for scroll saws, namely the various Hegner models - none of which have the tilting head feature BTW. In addition I have proven to my own satisfaction that the few spares that *may* be needed for the Excalibur saws are *much* more reasonably priced than their Hegner equivalents.

But what about all this "name badges business"?

The following has been difficult to confirm 100%, but as far as I can find out, *all* "Excalibur" scroll saws are made by GI in Taiwan, regardless of whether they have "Excalibur", "Pegas", or "Axminster Trade" badges on them! But as you'll see, the reality is a bit more confusing than that:

Let's first go back a bit. Just to the N & E of Geneva, in the French-speaking area of Switzerland lies the town of Vallorbe. That's within one of Switzerland's principal high-value watch making areas and has been associated with "fine", high-precision metal working for several hundred years. Regarding watches for example, the real "I'm a high roller, I've got half a million bucks strapped to my wrist" sort of watch names all seem to come from this area - not that I have any personal experience of such extravagancies of course!

Also a Swiss bloke called Grobet working in Vallorbe claims to have invented the first mechanised method of cutting teeth into file blanks in 1836. His company, together with several other family businesses in the area, merged in 1899 to form today's manufacturer of Vallorbe brand precision files, rasps, and other cutting tools for fine mechanical work. That company is called Vallorbe (actually "Usines Métallurgiques de Vallorbe" if you want it in full).

Meanwhile Monsieur Grobet's own separate file company became US owned at some point in the past and now also makes specialist files, plus rotary burs and other cutting and abrading tools for dental, jewellery, watch and clock making and other precision industries. So Grobet files are now made in both the USA and in Switzerland (confusingly, the Swiss Grobet plant is still in Vallorbe, though the company now apparently has nothing to do with the above Vallorbe files manufacturer, and is simply called Grobet USA).

So what I hear you ask?

Well in 1966 Grobet USA took over an existing Swiss company called Scies Miniatures SA. Based in Lausanne (also within the main Swiss watch and clock making region), Scies specialised in making all kinds of small metal sawing blades and other jewellers' tools. In 1985 they opened a new larger factory, but at the same time relocated to the town of Vallorbe! Later on, (2001 actually) the Pegas brand was introduced. As many scrollers have already found, Pegas brand scroll saw blades are widely used by many experts today - and by a lot of "non-experts" like me too!

As said, the Pegas brand is wholly-owned by Grobet USA through their Scies Miniatures SA subsidiary, but as far as I can find out (it's been difficult) Pegas do *not* make any scroll saw machines themselves.

The rather confusing result is that today we have 2 entirely separate companies located in Vallorbe, one a file maker called Vallorbe and the second, a file maker called Grobet - and Grobet *also* makes Pegas brand scroll saw blades.

I can't confirm 100% (they either wouldn't or couldn't answer my question when asked) but Pegas do *perhaps* make a single very specialised band saw which they list in their own web site as their own brand, the Pegas SRP-14CE "Feinschnitt-Bandsäge" (that's "fine cut band saw" in English).

Said to be a unique tool, although it's capable of making cuts as fine as any scroll saw can in wood, plastics, and metals, this machine is *not* able to make internal cuts like a "proper" scroll saw. That's because the blade is a fully-closed loop, just like any other band saw. For anyone's interested, the machine appears in the current German Dictum Tools catalogue at a price of 1,300 Euros (inc. German VAT at 19% or just over 1,000 Euros VAT free)! Here's a link:

https://www.dictum.com/en/power-tools-sawing/pegas-scroll-band-saw-716062

And here's a link to the Scies web site with all their info:

https://www.scies.ch/

Both sites are available in English BTW.

Getting to the point now, I *think* that at some stage after GI took over the Excalibur scroll saw range from the above original 2 Canadian gents, Pegas (or perhaps I should say Scies? Or perhaps Grobet?) became the importer/distributor for the GI-manufactured range of Excalibur scroll saws, if not for the whole of Europe, then at least for the German-speaking counties (Austria, Germany, and Switzerland). But I couldn't definitely confirm that point either.

Note however that Pegas/Scies/Grobet does not deal with retail customers at all - they always direct retail customers to a dealer. For me there is a Pegas dealer in Switzerland but that company holds virtually no Pegas stock, *and* the prices charged are higher than charged by the Pegas dealer in Germany, the above-mentioned Dictum Tools, Munich.

So it was from Dictum that I bought my own Exc 21 back in 2014, and it's interesting to note that although my machine has both "Excalibur" and "Pegas" labels on it, it was clear from the packaging that it was delivered to Dictum Munich by Pegas in Vallorbe. *And* (as per EU regulations), it was also clearly marked "Made in Taiwan" and had clear indications on the paperwork that GI was the actual manufacturer.

Again Pegas either could not or would not confirm that fact, but I believe that this remains true today, even though current "Pegas-badged" tilting head scroll saws do not now carry any label other than Pegas. To update this info, the latest edition of the US magazine "Scroll Saw Woodworking & Crafts" (Spring 2019) carried the ad shown below:

As you see, both the 14 inch "Scroll Band Saw" mentioned above and the (apparently) "Pegas-own brand" 21 inch scroll saw are featured. No mention of Excalibur or GI here. But of interest to us, a couple of pages further on in the same mag, a full page "advertorial" featuring the "new" Pegas 21 inch scroll saw appears. I've reproduced it below:

PRODUCT REVIEW *By Bob Duncan*

Pégas Scroll Saw

Introductory price: $649, $719 with stand
MRSP: $719, $799 with stand
Call 800-847-4188 or
e-mail sales@grobetusa.com
to find a local retailer

The first branded Pégas Scroll Saw to hit the market does so with a bang, combining Swiss engineering with a proven design to set a new standard for higher-priced saws.

These new units, made in the same factory as Excalibur saws (as well as Jet, King, Seyco, and a few brands sold in other countries), match the quality of those popular saws but include a key upgrade: they come with the revolutionary Pégas Blade Chuck Heads pre-installed.

Like Excalibur saws, the Pégas features a tilting arm controlled by a rack and pinion system that allows you to dial in an angle quickly and accurately. It also has a spring-loaded locating pin and matching holes for common angles, such as 0°, 45°, and 22½°, to make it even easier to orient the arm. (Follow the instructions in the owner's manual to check these angles when you get your saw; after I squared my blade to the table, I had to adjust the angle guide and locating pin to zero it in.) And conveniently, Pégas put the power switch and speed control at the front of the saw arm.

Most importantly, however, Pégas pre-installed their Blade Chuck Heads on the saw. This upgrade, a $90 value, reduces vibration noticeably and holds blades super-securely—incredibly, we put them on our shop saws nearly a year ago and have not had a single blade slip out of place since. (See our review of them at scrollsawer.com/2019/09/07/product-review-pegas-blade-chuck-heads/.)

The table is large enough to support most projects, and since the saw arm lifts and stays in place, you can top- or bottom-feed when cutting fretwork. (One quibble: the dust collection cover made it a challenge to change blades, so I removed it.)

A strong dust blower easily moves sawdust off pattern lines, but the pop-n'-lock joint where the blower nozzle connects with the air tubing is undersized. To tighten the fit and keep the nozzle in position, I wrapped a short piece of tape around the male end of the connection. Helpfully, a longer-than-usual nozzle makes positioning the blower easier.

Built-in Pégas Blade Chuck Heads reduce vibration and hold blades securely.

The new Pégas features a tilting arm controlled by a rack and pinion system.

The introductory price for the Pégas saw and stand, $719, puts it in the same range as the King 16" with a stand ($730), the Hegner 14-E at $795, the at PS Wood 21" at $799, and the Seyco ST-21 at $879. What sets it apart is the addition of those terrific chuck heads, which keep it running quietly and smoothly at any cutting speed.

To compare the new Pégas Scroll Saw with similarly priced models, check out our reviews at scrollsawer.com/category/product-reviews/saw-review/.

As well as the "special US introductory prices" quoted (interesting I thought, especially when compared to current Axminster Tools UK - see below - and Dictum Germany prices), it's also worth noting that this saw QUOTE: comes from the same factory as Excalibur, Jet, King, and Seyco UNQUOTE: So from that I read that apart from the new "Blade Chuck Heads" (also covered further on in this post under "Updates to my machine") this machine is virtually identical to my own Excalibur 21 CE, and to the machines sold by Axminster Tools in the UK.

Wait a minute, how does Axi suddenly jump into this picture?

Well, back in 2014, when I bought my own machine (labelled both "Excalibur" and "Pegas" remember) Axi were the UK agent/distributor Pegas, and sold the Excalibur scroll saw range (16, 21, and 30 inch models) with the Excalibur label on them. *And* they also sold Pegas scroll saw blades in UK.

Also back then, although Axi already had a couple of Hegner scroll saw "clones" bearing their own label, there were *no* "Axminster Trade "own label" versions of the Excalibur range of machines (I may well have bought my machine from Axi instead of from Dictum, except that Dictum's price was a bit lower than Axi's).

Since then however, we all know Axi have their own Trade Series of 16, 21, and 30 inch scroll saws, all with the tilting head mechanism. From what I can see from both the Axi catalogue and from posts here, today's Axi "Trade Series" machines are virtually identical to my own GI/Pegas version except for the label, plus a No-Volts Release (NVR) switch (added no doubt to meet UK-specific regulations).

I therefore *strongly suspect* (but again have been unable to definitely confirm) that the present Axminster Tools "own label" tilting head machines are in fact GI Excalibur machines, made in Taiwan, just like my own.

In short, just like Axi have in the past have clearly done some sort of deal for JET machines to be sold under Axi's own label, I believe that Axi have also made some sort of commercial arrangement with either Pegas/Scies/Grobet (or more likely, directly with GI) to now sell the GI Excalibur scroll saws under their own label.

But the main point is that looking at the current Axi catalogue (thanks Droogs) I see that the Axi versions of these machines are now cheaper than those sold by Dictum in Germany.

Anyway, seeing how much interest there is on this Forum in the manufacturing history of tools generally, perhaps this somewhat convoluted input will serve as a "building block" for the budding tools historians who come along in the 22nd Century!! In the meantime, as you have read above, I've made several assumptions which I've been unable to confirm, so if anyone else is interested and has any hard facts available, I for one would appreciate corrections.

To continue this whole post close this .pdf and click on the link for the separate .pdf post on updates to my own machine: