

# Master of all trades

Market Weighon-based Britcom entered the mainstream loader crane market last year, becoming the Effer dealer for Northern England. Talk to any of the Britcom staff and you cannot help but assume that it must be a 'jack of all trades master of none' thanks to its efforts to be a one stop shop. The company will sell you a truck, modify it any way you want, paint it in any colour you want and fit a crane.

With Effer this means a choice of more than 40 from Light models with under two tonne/metres to over 200 tonne/metres. On top of this it distributes construction equipment, has a healthy truck export business, runs a big body shop and has a replacement parts business. Any company that tries to do so much rarely succeeds, so we accepted a long-term invitation to visit and see for ourselves.

### A little background.

Britcom was established in 1981 by current chairman Ray Urwin as an exporter of used commercial vehicles, initially specialising in the Far East, Cyprus and Malta, then the Caribbean and Africa - literally everywhere with demand for right hand drive trucks. In 1987 the company moved to larger premises with its own workshop and paint shop and promptly expanded into

the refurbishment of trucks and added a spare parts business.

In the 1990's the company diversified into construction equipment and acquired a chassis engineering business. In 2006 it moved to its current 14 acre site and with all that space it added further activities including the paint and commercial body shop. It also took on the Wacker-Neuson, Sunward, Effer and Edbro dealerships.

Outside the UK, the company owns a Renault truck distributor in Kenya and has a stake in a Renault truck distributor in Trinidad. Total revenues are around £30 million.

First impressions are highly positive with the company's facility looming out of the countryside alongside the A1079, a few miles off the M62 and within close proximity to Hull, Leeds



The 14 acre site provides plenty of storage space



The new buildings create a strong first impression

and York. A tour of the facilities maintains the first impressions and it becomes clear that the company really does provide a one stop shop for truck fleets of any kind. Truck

sign-writing and finding a buyer. For replacement vehicles it sources the truck, carries out any modifications, applies any company livery - paint and sign-writing, adds any



Effer cranes awaiting mounting



One of several workshops

sales accounted for 64 percent of the company revenues last year, construction equipment which the company also exports 16 percent and engineering, which includes the crane mounting and the Effer distribution business just four percent.

Services include what the company calls 'de-fleeting' which involves taking trucks from a fleet as they become ready for renewal, inspecting, valuing, cleaning and repairing them, removing any

bodywork or modifications including supplying and mounting any crane required. As if this was not enough the company designs and builds custom trailers to suit unusual and awkward loads. A good example of this is that it has become a major supplier of trailers to residential caravan transport companies, a business that has become more challenging as the vans have grown in size and weight.

The company also has a steady trade in converting trucks from one



The company also builds specialist trailers

use to another. During our visit it was modifying a second hand enclosed truck into a classic car transporter for a private client. Another job, repainting a Formula One truck, demonstrates the quality of its blast and paint operation - no room for orange-peel on such a vehicle! The paint shops can cope with vehicles up to 26 metres long, more than enough for the largest mobile cranes and truck mounted lifts. It uses two-pack acrylic and epoxy finishes and has impressive paint colour matching equipment.

The company has recently mounted some of the larger Effer cranes, including a 1750 8S for Sharron Pattison Transport, where the company not only installed the crane on a DAF XF 8x4 drawbar chassis cab, fitted additional fuel tanks, a fifth wheel, and painted it Sharron's violet colour scheme but also designed a removable ballast body with storage lockers for chains and rigging as well as the fly jib. When a semi-trailer is attached the ballast box is removed and placed on to the neck of the trailer. A two

axle dolly was also built for the truck to add to its versatility.

In addition to creating a tractor unit out of an 8x4 chassis the company is frequently called on to extend regular tractor units providing a longer chassis and often equipping them with a crane. To carry out such sophisticated work the company uses Solid Works 3D with FEA, AutoCAD, Star and NG3 software and its welders are externally certified to the highest standards.

Our impressions after visiting? The company certainly appears to be



The post paint inspection and finishing shop

something unusual - a 'Jack of all trades' that appears to master them all. It can certainly offer a great 'one stop shop' service to those customers that need such a service, but trying to market so many different activities is clearly a major challenge.



A crane fitted to a stretched and converted tractor unit







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