

APF show

The bi-annual International Forest Machinery Exhibition - or APF as it is more commonly known - was again held at Ragley Estate, Alcester in Warwickshire - the first time at the same venue since the show started in 1976.

Even the poor weather on the second day didn't dampen the spirits of the record number of visitors viewing static and working equipment from more than 250 exhibitors. The growing importance of platforms within the industry was reflected in the number of platform exhibits and the level of interest in these products.

Mark Darwin reports on the show highlights.

Although layout changes this year by the organisers 'forced' visitors around both the static and demonstration area - whether they liked it or not - this year's show was noticeably more up tempo than in 2004. A combination of more visitors and a more buoyant market meant that many stands were inundated with customers - many serious about placing orders.

One stand amazed by the interest was Arbruck, a newly formed, Hampshire-based company showing a prototype truck mounted platform, built by and specifically for tree workers. Using a Mitsubishi Canter chassis, director Rob Nash put his

experiences gained from his commercial tree cutting, contracting and training services company Overland, into a vehicle specifically designed for tree work.

"Overland has 26 tree surgeons and currently we operate five access platforms including this 'special' which we built for ourselves," said Nash. "We thought there might be a small amount of interest in the truck so we brought it along to the show. The huge amount of interest from all types and sizes of companies has been amazing."

Nash used a Genie 30/20 boom with LV insulated basket and mounted it on the Mitsubishi 7.5 tonne chassis. The boom gives about 10 metres platform height and 6.5 metres outreach with 225kg in the basket. Also on the stand was the first Mitsubishi Canter 7.5 tonne 4 x 4 chassis in the UK, which will also be available as a base for a truck with better off-road capability. Any vehicles

ordered will have Mitsubishi's new cab, but the running gear is exactly the same.

All the tree workers in the company had an input and the result obviously hits the spot, answering the prayers of arborists, utilities and councils. Weighing four tonnes empty, the truck has an aluminium box at

Designed specifically for the tree worker, the Arbruck platform attracted serious enquiries

Up to 3 tonnes storage capacity for chip or when empty, protection for the basket



A wide variety of platforms on the Promax Access stand included a 28 metre Cella platform mounted on a John Deere tractor



Santana's joint venture with SkyHigh has produced a cost-effective 4 x 4 platform

same boom on a 4 x 4 chassis would add another £20,000 to that figure.

Input from people who need a vehicle to work day in, day out has resulted in niceties such as a German-designed Eberspacher heating system which not only provides hot water for making a brew, but also heats the side cabinets to dry ropes and other equipment in between jobs. The unit may also feature an American-developed air-powered chain saw/lopping system.

Almost on an adjacent stand was Santana showing a 4 x 4 mounted platform in a joint venture with SkyHigh. SkyKing - the UK distributor for the SkyHigh platform products - is also building the Santana-based platforms.

On show for the first time in the UK, the 3.3 tonne GVW 4 x 4 was fitted with a 12.5 metre platform capable of a 6 metre outreach with 215kg in the basket. Because of the physical size of the Santana 4 x 4, the truck can accommodate SkyHigh's unusual platform mounting system where the

rear capable of carrying three tonnes. When empty, the basket is stored within giving a shorter travel length and also added protection. When full the boom is extended and the basket sits at the back of the box yet maximum height is still just 2.5 metres. A pair of front jacks provide the stability required, and a cage over the cab gives added protection.

Prices have not yet been fixed but to give a rough idea a two wheel drive unit with 15 metre boom would be about £65,000 and the

IJ Access said the APF was the 'best show this year' with strong interest in the Lionlift tracked platforms.





Jamie Francis - Ranger Equipment's new tree surgeon recruit - was on hand to help with Teupen enquiries. The stand featured a Leo 23GT from Trac-access

platform sits directly on the four outrigger legs. In effect, once the four outriggers are in place, the 4 x 4 chassis hangs from this frame and is not supporting the platform in any way. Santana says that this arrangement gives better stability and allows the platform to operate at full reach to the front of the vehicle.

The platform is electronically driven but can also be powered from the truck's engine. Pricing should be 'competitive', probably a few thousand pounds cheaper than its main rivals.

Largest access platform display at the show was on the Promax Access stand. Several interesting

machines included the UK's first 28 metre, tractor mounted platform - on a John Deere 6920 - several Italian-built Platform Basket compact crawler units, DinoLift trailer units, vehicle mounted units and larger Cela tracked platforms.

Heading into the forest 'demo' area Keith Irvine of Lionlift distributor IJ Access only just found the time to say that he was 'run off his feet'. Keith does also sell other arborists equipment such as chippers and stump cutters, but was really pleased with the interest in the tracked platforms. Although not confirmed, he was confident of at least one platform sale at the show. 'The best show this year'

was how Keith rapidly summed up this year's APF.

Tucked away in the heart of the forest was the Terrain Scout range of Italmec-built platforms. Backed and supported by Powerlift - a company with many years of experience servicing Italmec machines - it offers a 24 hour nationwide backup service. These compact crawler lifts can achieve working heights from 14 metres to 21 metres with outreaches up to 12 metres. Folded widths start at 780mm allowing good access.

All the models in the range feature dual fuel systems allowing use both outdoors with either petrol or diesel and indoors using the standard electric power system. This combined with a short overall length, low ground pressure and a short fly boom adds up to a very versatile machine.

Currently only available to buy, the company is in the process of setting up a rental division for the platforms which should launch over the next few months, as well as a smaller platform to be added to the range.

Whether the APF 2008 is yet again at Ragley or not, one thing is certain. The number and importance of access platforms will have grown considerably - possibly to the point where the platform will be as essential to the tree worker as a chipper or stump cutter.



Hidden in the forest was a 16 metre Italmec with Terrain Scout

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