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Mastclimbers on the rise

The mastclimber market is an interesting one, in that for most façade work it offers a better solution for working at height, in terms of safety, efficiency, and aesthetics to name a few. However, there is still untapped potential for their use. Nick Johnson highlights the latest products and an array of interesting applications.

The mast climbing work platform – mastclimber for short – is an increasingly versatile piece of kit for both the construction and repair of high rise buildings. Available in single, twin or even triple mast configurations with long platforms, they tend to be supplied by specialist companies which can provide the support required to get the most out of them, including selection advice, planning, installation expertise and technical back-up.

Having become an accepted alternative to scaffolding, a significant number of mastclimbers are now operational in markets such as the UK. The ability to raise the platform to a precise working height means that tradesmen can work at the most comfortable and

productive height without the need to bend or stretch, while taking materials and tools with them.

Where remedial work is being carried out on occupied apartment blocks, residents benefit from not having scaffolding obscuring their view. And, with the mastclimber platform left at ground level out of working hours, security is much improved compared to a block surrounded by scaffolding for months on end.

The modular nature of mastclimbers allows them to be easily tailored to all manner of façade shapes and angles. And, where ground space around the building is limited, the mastclimber's base can be located slightly higher up the structure using a cantilevered gallows bracket.

Bracket mounted mastclimbers have been installed by Apollo Cradles on a prominent job in Aldgate, London, where the RG Group is building high rise student accommodation. At its peak, there were 43 mastclimber drive units on site powering platforms on both single and twin masts.

Apollo Cradles has standardised its mastclimber fleet around the GP40 model from the Spanish manufacturer Goian, part of the Jaso tower crane group. Platform lengths from 2.8 to 13.4 metres with a maximum capacity



of 2,300kg are possible on a single mast, while the twin mast format provides platforms from 6.7 to 35.9 metres and increased capacities up to 4,550kg.

Options from Apollo include double stacked platforms on twin masts and the ability to angle back masts with special brackets to accommodate 80, 100 and 110 degree facades. To aid the manual handling of materials, masts can also be fitted with monorail lifting systems.

Apollo director Darren Brady says the UK market for mastclimbers is buoyant although it is now being affected by a slowdown in material supply to sites. His machines are involved in both new build and some recladding work although the latter has not increased dramatically, in spite of all the publicity over the

Grenfell tower fire tragedy, which highlighted the need to replace flammable cladding.

Brady is also chairman of the IPAF Working Group on Mastclimbers which has been developing a new 'Hoists and Mastclimbers for Managers' course. Due to be finalised by the end of this year, the course is intended to help construction site managers select the right equipment for their jobs.

Another prominent supplier of mastclimbers in London is PHD Access. It has multiple Encomat models, including single and double mast and double stacked units, working close to Wembley Stadium in West London. There are around 60 mastclimber drive units on the Wembley Park development being built by McLaren Construction.



Apollo Cradles has a multitude of Goian mastclimbers surrounding new student accommodation in London



A large number of Encomat mastclimbers from PHD Access are in use close to Wembley Stadium in West London



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The Alimak MC 450 mast climbing work platform is available in both single and twin configurations, flexible platform length and width, and can be used on the same mast as Alimak construction hoists. It offers an efficient and ergonomic alternative to scaffolding.

Alimak has a proven track record of high standards, safety and quality with all products. The Alimak Safety Device is fitted as standard to the current range of hoists & mast climbers.



Electroelsa used Vertikal Days for the UK launch of its single mast ELSA P40 mastclimber



Maber is updating its MBP mastclimbers to provide more capacity and longer decks



The special traveller produced by PHD Access to work inside the escalator shafts at the new Bond Street station

Peter Hoar, managing director of hoists and masts at PHD, says the company also has more than 70 drive units working on a big White City Living project in West London for the Berkeley Group. In addition to its Encomat fleet, PHD also runs Saeclimber and Alimak mastclimbers. The company says that while it is very busy at the moment, there is further 'pent up' demand for the expected surge in recladding work in the wake of Grenfell.

The big question is whether the UK market will have sufficient machines and the necessary experienced personnel to cope with such a surge. The government is under pressure to facilitate making such buildings safe, but getting the work done quickly could be problematic. Increasing demand in an already buoyant market could help increase rental rates. At present renting out hoists is often more profitable than running mastclimbers.

Meanwhile, prospective buyers who visited the Vertikal Days had several models to look at. Alimak had its well established twin mast MC450 mastclimber on show that offers platform lengths of between 8.6 and 30.2 metres. A standard platform width is 1.2 metres, or 2.2 metres with an extension. Maximum platform capacity is 4,500kg. Italian manufacturer Electroelsa

attended the event for the first time, with its ELSA P40 mastclimber. Platform lengths range from 4.2 to 13.2 metres with corresponding maximum capacities of 1,540kg to 640kg.

Electroelsa sales manager Said Shabana says that while the company has been manufacturing mastclimbers since 1995 it is only now starting to sell them in the UK. Machines can now be fitted with a GPS based monitoring system to diagnose faults and send information to a remote device such as a mobile phone. The system also has the ability to sound an alarm when the maximum capacity or wind speeds are reached.

Fellow Italian company Maber exhibited in the same area of the show, its models include the MBS 01/120 and MBP 01/150 single mast units and the MBS 02/120 and MBP 02/130 with twin masts. Sales director Diego Benetton confirmed that Maber is in the final stages of a redesign for its MBP mastclimbers with square masts. The new versions, available from February, will feature increased platform capacity and longer platform options.

Canadian heavy duty mastclimber manufacturer Hydro Mobile says that it has been working on improving the flexibility and productivity of its products, whilst simultaneously reducing the cost

of ownership. To increase machine versatility, it has introduced the swivel bridge concept along with 'mast sharing' and the ability to reconfigure mastclimbers into transport platforms.

A swivel bridge is a platform section which can 'swivel' or rotate through 180 degrees, allowing the platform to be easily adapted to different building façade profiles and provide access around corners. It was developed to add to its flexibility and the ability to adapt to different facades with fewer components, while improving a safer method of providing access to difficult areas.

The ability of mastclimbers to be configured for unusual applications is highlighted by the Spanish manufacturer Saeclimber. Its P40 equipment has been used successfully for demolition platforms around tall structures such as redundant chimneys, cooling towers and high motorway bridge piers.

In 2018, the 150 metre high Delimara Chimney in Malta was demolished using two rubber tracked Brokk 120 demolition robots, working from a special Penta Mastil Saeclimber P40 platform on five masts that surrounded the cylindrical structure. A PH15 service lift was also used.

The following year the same system was deployed to demolish several highway bridge piers in Tuscany, Italy. This contract utilised Quadri Mastil Saeclimber P40 platforms and a PH15 service lift. Demolition was carried out from the platform deck using two remote controlled Brokk 170 demolition robots.

In another unusual application, the UK's PHD Access brought its expertise to bear on the design, delivery and installation of what was effectively a very special inclined mast climbing platform for a Costain Skanska joint venture. This unique platform was used to help crews install the steel frame and cladding in Europe's largest escalator shaft at

the new Bond Street station on the Crossrail underground railway line in central London.

Whilst the platform capacity of a standard mastclimber is typically around 2,500kg, the Bond Street machine required a capacity of 7,500kg. It also had to be strong enough to support a Fassi F55 hydraulic loader crane and have each of its two decks large enough to carry a scissor lift.

PHD conceptualised and created a bespoke dual platform rack and pinion traveller able to travel on a 60 metre track on a 30 degree incline within the escalator shaft. PHD's engineers worked with mastclimber maker Encomat to build a special frame around suitable drive units. Once in operation, it proved to be much quicker than the conventional methods of scaffolding, chain hoists, slings and all the manual effort that was originally envisaged.



Hydro Mobile F platforms in use with the swivel bridge and mast sharing features



Safer demolition with Brokk demolition robots working from a Saeclimber P40 platform surrounding a bridge pier in Italy

Tower crane operator hoists

With greater use now being made of tower crane operator lifts - or elevators if you prefer - Nick Johnson takes a look at the latest developments.

Vertical Days proved the ideal opportunity to see several of the latest products, including, Alimak's TCL and Geda's 2PK. One notable exhibit was Electroelsa's A03 crane operator lift, but what really caught my eye were the prominent Select Plant Hire decals on its sides.

It turns out that this was just one of 21 units ordered by Select for use on its tower cranes, signalling a welcome move towards adding this equipment to higher free standing tower cranes in the UK. In spite of the intense national focus on health & safety, hardly any tower crane operator hoists have been installed in the UK - despite their widespread use across the Channel in France and in a growing number of other countries.

Leading the way

Whilst there appears to be no official plan to make operator lifts mandatory for cranes over a

certain height in the UK, there are clear benefits to their installation. And Select is to be congratulated in taking the lead. The provision of a lift enables tower crane operators to quickly and safely reach their lofty cabs without a slow and strenuous ladder climb. The availability of a lift also makes it easier to descend to the ground for comfort breaks - something that will surely be appreciated by the growing number of female operators. And, most importantly, it enables first responders with life saving equipment to quickly reach an operator who has suffered a medical emergency.

Having successfully trialled the Electroelsa A03 hoist, Select has ordered the hoists through its tower crane supplier Terex, a partner in the hoist's development. Dubbed the T-Lift by Select, the 1.42 metre by 1.05 metre lift provides a safe working capacity of 250kg and can travel at a speed of up to 24 metres

a minute, in wind speeds up to 20 metres a minute. Select is initially installing the T-Lifts externally on its cranes with one prominent example being its big Terex CTL 1600-66 luffing jib tower crane currently working in West London. The crane is one of a number employed on a £600 million Laing O'Rourke contract - part of the £1.3 billion Olympia regeneration project. The T-Lift can be installed during the installation of the tower crane or added later, when the crane is climbed to a greater height. With

Select Plant Hire is leading the way with tower crane lifts in the UK



Laing O'Rourke on board and other major contractors interested in the concept, Select is set to order at least another 20 units.

Select is also trialling the installation of the T-Lift internally within the tower sections. This entails the modification of rest platforms and a switch from inclined to vertical ladders.

Ozzie mega tower

A particularly spectacular tower crane installation with operator lift can be seen in Sydney, Australia where a 60 year old TV transmission tower is being dismantled in Willoughby. Known locally as the "Eiffel Tower", the 233 metre high lattice structure is being removed to make way for a new residential development.

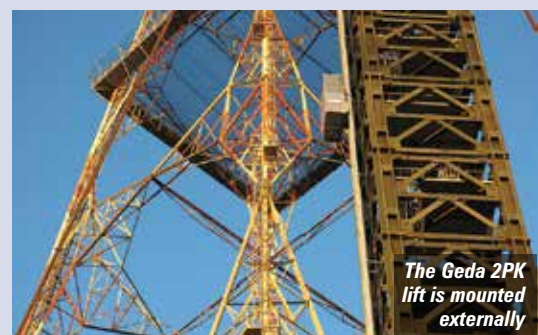
Marr Contracting - well known for its big Favelle Favco cranes - has been commissioned to provide the mechanical muscle needed to remove the structure, which is as high as a 77 storey building. Marr has installed one of its M310D luffing jib tower cranes on a 200 metre freestanding tower supported half way up by guy ropes.



Dismantling begins on the 233m transmission tower



Marr Contracting has installed a Geda crane operator hoist on the 200 metre high crane tower in Australia



The Geda 2PK lift is mounted externally

Once half the transmission tower has been brought the ground, Marr will reduce the tower height and swap the crane top for an even heavier duty M1280D to complete the demolition work. To enable the operator to reach the crane cab without having to face a 200 metre ladder climb, it has been equipped with a Geda 2PK operator lift, supplied by Geda dealer Hasemer Materials Handling and installed by Hoist & Lift Tec.

The externally mounted Geda 2PK lift travels at a speed of 24 metres a minute, however the ascent still takes more than eight minutes! This is still much quicker and easier than climbing - and particularly appreciated when the temperature rises.

Growing bigger



The Mace display at Vertical Days, with a variety of Geda hoists and transport platforms

Nick Johnson takes a look at the latest hoist developments and discovers a buoyant UK market for both construction hoists and mast climbing transport platforms with a growing trend towards bigger units.

Construction hoists come in a variety of types with an increasing choice of deck or car sizes and capacities. The different types include goods only hoists, transport platforms - able to move both goods and people - and passenger/goods hoists that come in single, twin or multi-car configurations.

Whilst the smallest goods hoists are supplied by some general rental companies, the majority are provided by specialist hoist rental businesses that claim that their expertise is essential for the optimum use of these machines. In the UK where construction continued apace even during the lockdowns, demand for hoists has remained strong with many owners adding new units.

Strong showing at Vertical Days

This year's Vertical Days had an unusually strong hoist and mastclimber sector with a wide variety of new products on show.

Mace Industries - the UK dealer for Geda - had a particularly impressive line-up, including the 200kg capacity 200Z goods hoist, alongside 300kg

and 500kg transport platforms, the 300Z ZP and 500Z ZP, and a P12, 1,500kg 12 person passenger/goods hoist. The company also displayed a Geda 2PK crane operator hoist, while Luke Mace revealed that a modified version of this 200kg capacity/ two person rack and pinion hoist has been used with slipform concrete construction.

Next door, CLM had two Maber rack and pinion transport platforms on display. The first was the 2,000kg capacity MBC 2000 with a 3.2 metre by 1.5 metre platform and a fully opening three metre wide C-Door, to allow the loading of large building components at ground level. The display unit was sold to Hoist Hire Services.

CLM also had a larger transport platform on its stand in the form of a 2,000kg MBC 2300, complete with larger 4.4 metre by 2.2 metre platform. The basic hoist structure with the drive motor is only 2.3 metres wide for easier transportation. The show machine was purchased by Scottish company Scot Hoist.

Maber has also shipped the first of its new 2,000kg capacity

MBA2000-EU passenger/goods hoists with a 1.5 by 3.2 metre car and 2.6 metre C-Door. Travel speed is up to 54 metres a minute and utilises the company's MBC 2000 transport platform mast, ties and landing gates - a modular advantage for fleet owners.

German manufacturer Böcker kept its Vertical Days display focused on aluminium boom truck cranes but was also promoting its range of hoists as part of a push to increase its UK hoist sales. Peterborough based rental company NTP has recently taken delivery of five transport platforms - three 1,000kg capacity MX 1024s and two 2,000kg MX2024s.

New industry developments

Kirsty Archbold-Lambing is a director of Southern Hoist Services and a prominent authority in the UK construction hoist market. She chairs CPA's Construction Hoist Interest Group and is a member of IPAF's Mast Climbing Work Platform & Hoist Committee.

Southern Hoist runs a wide range of goods hoists, transport platforms and passenger/goods hoists with recent additions to the fleet including Geda 1200 Z/ZP transport platforms and P22 passenger/goods hoists as well as Maber MBC 2000 dual prose machines. The MBC 2000 can be supplied without a roof as a goods only hoist or with a roof as a transport platform.

Keen to promote better understanding of hoists in the construction industry Archbold-Lambing highlighted the fact that IPAF is working on a new 'Hoists and Mast Climbers for Managers' course which will follow a similar format to the 'MEWPs for Managers' course. She also highlights the usefulness of the recently published CPA publications - 1101: Maintenance, Inspection

and Thorough Examination of Construction Hoists and 0501: Transporting Scaffolding in Construction Hoists (including Transport Platforms). Both publications can be downloaded free of charge from the CPA website.

Penny the Pink Hoist

A very visible unit in the Southern Hoist fleet is 'Penny the Pink Hoist', a Geda 300Z goods hoist resplendent in a bright pink livery. It was commissioned late last year as part of Breast Cancer Awareness month and 20 percent of the rental revenue is donated to the Breast Cancer Research charity.

The 'Penny the Pink Hoist' in the SHS hire fleet is raising money for the Breast Cancer Research charity



This 2,000kg capacity Maber MBC 2000 transport platform was bought by Hoist Hire Services

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Good use was made of the common tower system to help construct the Landmark Pinnacle in east London



Common Towers

Another specialist hoist hire company based in southern England is Plantire. Operating from Ashford, Middlesex, it has the distinction of being the oldest member of the CPA, having joined in 1941. It originally focused on excavator rental, before adding hoist rental in 1970. Today it supplies goods hoists and transport platforms to the construction industry. The company was also instrumental in the introduction of the 1,000kg capacity Maber MBC 1000 transport platform, its fleet of which are currently fully utilised.

Market leader Alimak displayed a 2,300kg capacity Scando M Combi 25 goods hoist, alongside a TPL 500/300 transport platform, and two high capacity passenger/goods hoists, a 2,400kg/ 24 passenger Scando 650FC and 2,500kg/ 31 passenger Scando 650XL.

Alimak's Francis Harris says that whilst the 2,000kg Scando 20/32, with its 1.5 metre by 3.2 metre car, used to be very popular, there is an increasing preference for the 2,400 to 3,000kg Scando 650XL with a two or 2.5 metre by 3.2 to five metre car. The larger car size is driven by the desire to transport larger cladding units.

Harris also highlighted the greater use of common tower systems in order to maximise the number of big passenger/goods hoists within a small space alongside tall buildings on congested city centre sites. Up to six cars have been used on a common tower with a twin hoist attached to each of the three outside faces of the common tower.

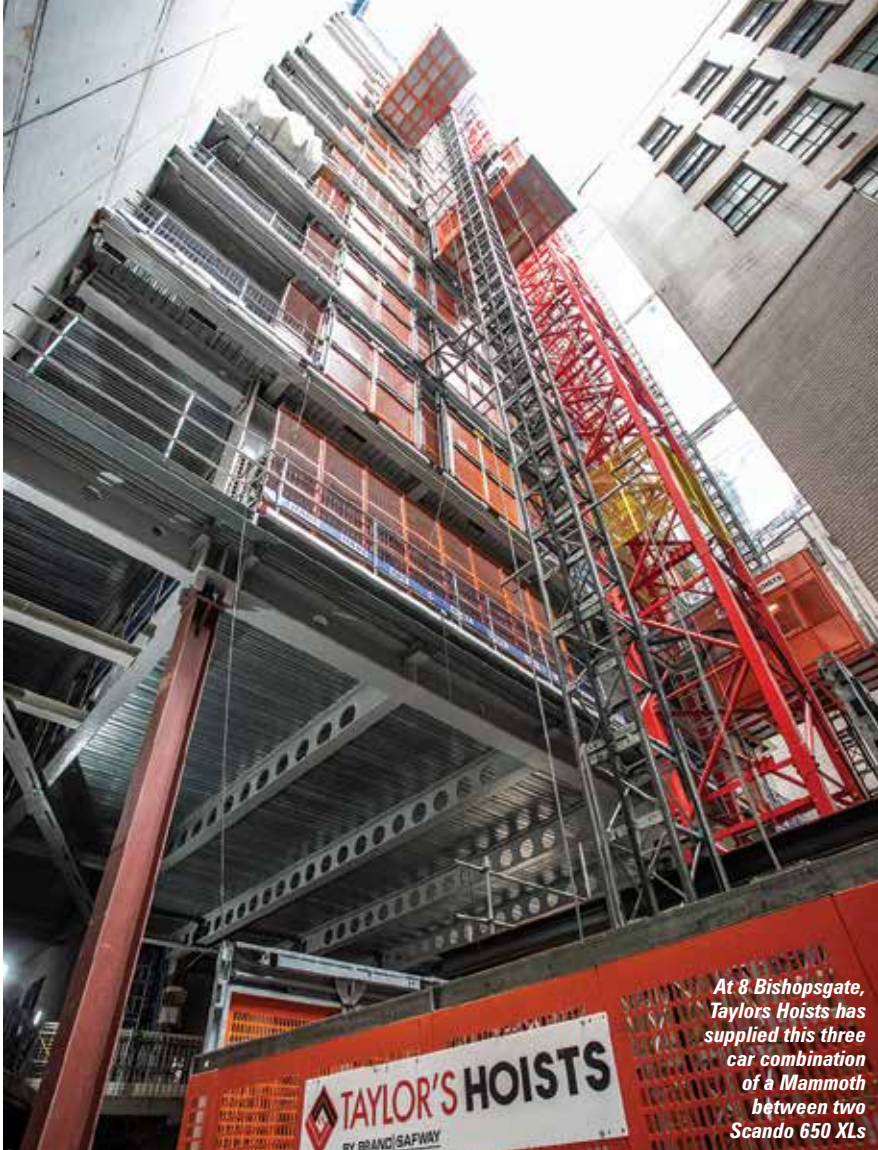
Common towers score by providing centralised loading and unloading, maximising hoist capacity and requiring fewer openings in the facade during construction.

A good example of common tower usage is the construction of the recently completed 233 metre high Landmark Pinnacle residential tower on the Isle of Dogs in East London. The project made use of one five metre square Reco common tower and four Alimak hoists. The hoists comprised one high speed Scando 650FCS XL 25/39 twinned with a 3,000kg Scando FCS 30/39, a 5,500kg TM Mammoth 55/50 and a 3,200kg Scando 650FC 32/39.

A number of Alimak's Mammoth hoists are now being used in London. Taylors Hoists has supplied a new 4,000kg capacity



The spacious car of the Alimak Mammoth hoist in the City of London



At 8 Bishopsgate, Taylors Hoists has supplied this three car combination of a Mammoth between two Scando 650 XLs

Mammoth with a 4.6 metre by 3.5 metre car for use by Stanhope on the 50 storey tower block now being built at 8 Bishopsgate in the City of London. The big Mammoth has a speed of 30 metres a minute and it has been specially designed to transport wide and bulky loads. On this contract managed by Lend Lease, the Mammoth is operated on masts also carrying two 2,500kg Scando 650XLs with a two metre by 4.6 metre cars.

Taylors Hoists also supplied two Scando 650XL cars running either side of a separate mast on another face of this building. Director Lisa Price of Taylors Hoists says that the big XL cars score by being able to carry pods of materials up the building, saving valuable tower crane hook time.

Geda in Budapest

In another interesting project in Budapest, Hungary, Geda hoists are being used to help construct a 28 storey headquarters for the MOL Group, a global oil and gas company. Construction company Market Építő Zrt has installed a 3700 Z/ZP transport platform, a 2,000kg capacity/23 passenger BL 2000 twin car passenger/goods hoist and a 2PK operator lift on a Kroll tower crane.

The 3,700kg capacity 3700 Z/ZP is particularly interesting because it has been installed with a five metre long 'D platform', which enables the transport platform to safely carry the many glass panels that make up most of the façade of the distinctive building that will be known as the MOL Campus.

The 3,700kg capacity Geda 3700 Z/ZP with its five metre long 'D platform' working in Budapest, Hungary



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