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You'd be hard pushed not to have noticed the wave of activity that has surged through the telehandler market of late. And, while other sectors in the lifting and access industries continue to fight for air, the telehandler market seemingly breathes deep.



Granco, the Scania dealer in County Down, Ireland, recently took delivery of this 7 tonne Dieci Samson telehandler to assist in truck breakdown recovery operations in the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe.

Dish of the day

ACCORDING TO Off Highway Research, the UK telehandler market has increased by almost 50 per cent in just five years. This equates to a jump from 3900 units in 1998 to 5800 in 2002. Although on a slightly smaller scale, Ireland has a similar story to tell with a reported increase of 39 per cent from 575 units to 800 units during the same period. And the increase is expected to continue during the next two years where in the UK it will level out at around 6000 units. For Ireland, a prediction of around 850 units has been set.

"Telehandlers are the relatively new giants of the construction skyline," says David Williams, ukforks divisional director. "Greater concentration on the development of brown field and urban infill sites during the last six years has seen the construction of more two, three and four storey buildings, which has stimulated telehandler demand. The introduction of telehandlers has largely led to a shift from the conventional rough terrain straight mast forklifts and, in some cases, has replaced the use of a crane because of their overall versatility on site and the ability to adapt to other 'lift and shift' tasks."

ukforks was set up in 2000 as a specialist telehandler rental division of Vp plc and has

Caterpillar has been phasing in its new B-series telehandler line since November 2002 and has so far unveiled 8 out of what will be a 10-strong range. Pictured is the 13.5 metre TH360B.



since invested £20 million in new telehandlers from the likes of JCB and Dieci, and from what the company calls 'second-tier' specialists such as Bobcat. The company recently introduced the first fleet of Dieci 9 and 12 metre Runner and 16 metre Icarus telehandlers, brought into the UK under an agreement worth £2.5 million. The Dieci machines are fitted with JCB headstocks for fitting JCB quick attachments, while the 9 metre versions include stabilisers which ukforks says is a feature that the company has consistently lobbied manufacturers for as part of its construction site health and safety initiative launched last year.

More recently, the company completed a £1.2 million investment in a new fleet of JCB 10, 12 and 17 metre telehandlers and last year invested £350,000 in a fleet of the latest JCB 10.5 metre 533-105 machines. ukforks' telehandler fleet now comprises over 1000 units.

Conflict of interest

The increased volumes of telehandlers on UK job sites, combined with the crane-type jobs they are becoming more commonly applied to has pricked a few ears in recent times, particularly those belonging to the UK's Health & Safety Executive (HSE) and the Construction Plant-hire Association. Earlier in the year, HSE said that because telehandlers are mainly used for lifting materials at height, they should be subject to the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (Loler) and so telehandlers could soon be forced to adhere to the same safety laws as mobile cranes.

"There has been recent talk about conflict with crane requirements," explains Peter Grant of Merlo. "Handler lifting height and capacity has more than tripled since the early days, and the increasing introduction of ROTO-style slewing handlers offers new capabilities.

"The issue of moving roof trusses was specifically addressed after a small number of



Last year saw ukforks invest £350,000 in a fleet of the latest JCB 10.5 metre 533-105. The company's telehandler fleet now comprises over 1000 units.

accidents, involving 'travelling' with the boom elevated. Merlo, like other major manufacturers has introduced attachments for its telehandlers specifically designed to permit travelling with the boom lowered.

"When used with load charts provided by the manufacturer, handlers are just as safe placing a suspended load as when used with forks," continues Grant. "Of course, a suspended load brings its own requirements – it must be restrained to prevent a 'pendulum' effect. But, these rules are the same when using a crane.

"Historically, best practice recommends that if a load of over 1 tonne is being suspended on a winch rope, the application is essentially 'craneage'. That dictates suitable training and certification of a crane driver, and the fitting of an approved crane safe load indicator (SLI) to the handler. The flagship Merlo ROTO KSC series already incorporates an advanced Computerised Stability System that continually checks the bearing pressure in each outrigger leg and computes a real-time stability, even being able to recognise and compensate for outriggers not fully extended."

The use of telehandlers for access applications has also been heavily scrutinised in recent times, but is becoming an increasingly common practise. "IPAF has campaigned for years against the unsafe use of handlers to lift people and HSE Guidance note PM28 ▶ 29

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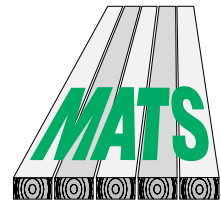
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Manitou's 12 tonne capacity MHT 10120 L Turbo.

clearly states that rough terrain trucks lifting above 6 metres are unsuitable for lifting personnel unless they have full integrated control in the basket," says Grant. "Merlo is an active member of IPAF and has recently been co-opted onto Council. We believe that handlers provide a perfectly respectable basis for an access platform, and if they comply with European Directive EN 280, are every bit as safe as a dedicated 'cherry picker'."

The company manufactures a wide range of platform attachments, ranging from traditional baskets to specialised panel handling and tunnel rig platforms. When fitted to a pre-arranged Merlo handler, the electronics recognise the attachment and change the base machine's performance and speeds to suit the access role. Intermat 2003 saw the company launch 17 and 18 metre rigid chassis units and a 4 tonne capacity, 25 metre slewing ROTO machine.

The demand for telehandlers as access providers came as a bit of a surprise to Caterpillar, which reported that access platforms were the most requested work tool while it was researching the development of its new B-Series telehandler range.

The company has been phasing in its B-series since November 2002, which began with the unveiling of the Compact TH210, with a 2.2 tonne lift capacity and 5.2 metre lift height, and the 2.5 tonne capacity, 5.5 metre lift height TH215. This year has already seen the introduction of the larger TH350B, TH360B,

TH460B, TH560B, TH220B and TH330B. August and September will see the launch of the TH340B and TH580B respectively.

Caterpillar says that the specifications of the 10-strong range directly targets the construction, agriculture and rental markets, which account for 15, 30 and 45 per cent respectively of the company's European telehandler sales. Key to the B-series' development has been easy serviceability, easy access to components and extended service intervals. Subsequently, Caterpillar says that operating costs of the new line has been reduced by 40 per cent in comparison to the company's established A-series.

All major components for the handlers, including axles, hydraulic structures, engine, transmission and electronics will be sourced by Caterpillar. A range of access platform attachments is also available, comprising a 1 metre wide version, a 2.4 metre version with 180 degree swivel and an extendable version up to 4.3 metres, also with 180 degree swivel. All are EN280 MEWP compliant. Visitors to Caterpillar's stand, which was shared by its French dealer Bergerat Monnoyeur at the recent Intermat exhibition in Paris, would have seen working displays of the 11 metre TH350B and 13 metre TH360B models.

Out with the old

The Intermat stage was divided among the majority of the world's telehandler manufacturers, most of which took the opportunity to introduce new machines. In the 10 metre lift height class came JCB's 533-105, which the company says is intended for Europe's mainland markets. The new model, with a maximum payload of 3 tonnes, is the 12th addition to JCB's established Loadall range, which has been in production for more than 25 years, and at present, according to the company, provides 20 percent bigger cab and 11 percent more glass area for increased visibility. The company also launched its smallest ever Loadall, the 1.56 metre wide, 2 tonne capacity 515H, which it claims can be used when skid steers are the only the option site. JCB also launched a new range of access platform installations for its

532-120, 537-135 and 540-170 side engine Loadalls. The attachments incorporate an electric-over-hydraulic servo control valve in place of the customary joystick control, which enables remote operation from a range of platforms. The 532 and 537 versions are operated via an electrical cable routed along the boom, while the

540-170 can be operated via remote control. A recent 1.3 million contract awarded to JCB saw the British Armed Forces take delivery of thirty-seven 525-50 Loadalls.

JLG displayed several models from its 3500 and 4000 Series telehandler lines. As the nomenclature suggests, the 10-strong range is divided into 3.5 and 4 tonne capacity machines. Five heights in both series are offered ranging from 7.3 metres up to 13 metres, with a two-stage boom offered on the 7, 8 and 9 metre machines and stabilisers offered as standard on the four 12 and 13 metre models. The company says that revenue from its telescopic handlers doubled for the first quarter of the 2003 financial year, soaring to £17.7 million compared with a figure £9.07 million 12 months earlier. The rise in sales was partly due to "share gains from the new European-design telehandler range," which according to JLG helped offset disappointing sales of its work platforms.



This 14 metre lift height TX140 from Case is the first model to be unveiled from its all-new 3 strong telehandler range. The full line, including the 12.45 metre TX130 and the 16.6 metre TX170 will be available later in the year.

Manitou also showcased its very latest addition to its now five-strong heavy-duty Maniscopic telehandler range. Sitting mid-way in the 6.5 to 16 tonne lift capacity range is the 12 tonne MHT 10120 L Turbo. The unit is kitted out with a 170 horsepower Mercedes Turbo engine with hydrostatic transmission, four drive and steerable wheels and crab steering. The company says that the heavy-duty Maniscopics have the advantage of housing a wide range of attachments that are especially adapted for heavy loads, including TFF + 1500 to 2500 forks, 14 and 16 tonne winches, 14 and 16 tonne crane jibs, 5000 and 6000 litre CBR buckets and tyre grabs.

Allowing Case to compete in what it calls a 'key product category', is its all-new 3 strong telehandler range. On show at Intermat was the first model to be introduced, the 14 metre lift height TX140. The full range, including the 12.45 metre TX130 and the 16.6 metre TX170 will be available later



Haulotte and Italian manufacturer Faresin, has produced a 6-strong 'Top Lift' line of telehandlers ranging from 7 up to 17 metres lift height and up to 4 tonnes lift capacity. Pictured is the H17.30.

TELEHANDLERS

in the year. The 4 tonne capacity machines feature a choice of stabilisers; hydraulic self-levelling; 2 and 4-wheel drive and crab steering; a side mounted engine for easy component access and developed overlapping of the boom's telescopic sections, which the company says ensures good load distribution, reduced stress and extended component life.

New Holland Construction, whose equipment and services are produced and marketed by Case New Holland along with Case and Fiat-Kobelco, also displayed its own 3-strong range,



The use of telehandlers for access applications has been heavily scrutinized but is becoming an increasingly common practice on UK job sites. Pictured is a Merlo Roto unit.

the LM1340, LM1440 and LM1740, introduced last year. Apart from the graphics on each machine, most specifications aren't too dissimilar from Case's above mentioned 'all-new' telehandler line. Fiat Kobelco also widened its telehandler product line with its new Evolution range comprising 13, 14 and 17 metre lift height units with lift capacities up to 4 tonnes.


New comers

Jumping on the telehandler bandwagon for the first time are Genie and Haulotte. A co-operative effort between Haulotte and fellow French manufacturer Faresin, has produced the 60/40 percent joint-venture's 6-strong 'Top Lift' line of telehandlers ranging from 7 to 17 metres lift height and up to 4 tonnes lift capacity. Genie's own line comprises 8 models ranging from 5.71 to 21.8 metres lift height. Built by Terexlift in Italy, Genie says that the machines are specifically targeted at its rental customer base. The smallest unit in the line up is the 5.75 metre lift height GT-2306 with a width of 1.8 metres and a height of just 1.92 metres. Lift capacity is 2.3 tonnes and hydrostatic drive and three steering modes come as standard, while power is supplied by a side-mounted Perkins 63 horsepower engine. Launched at Intermat



Steel erector, Curzon Clarke recently took delivery of a GTH-4010 telehandler from Genie's new 8-strong range.

was the 12.64 metre lift height GTH-3713T with a 3 tonne lift capacity and 8.74 metre forward reach. The standard package comprises oscillating axles and chassis levelling on the front axles along with hydrostatic drive and three steering modes. The unit can be specified with either a 67 kilowatt engine or 84 kilowatt turbocharged version and comes with hydraulically operated front stabilisers.

The next 12 months will see two more brand-named lines launched onto the already swollen telehandler market by way of Volvo and yes, Liebherr. The former company says that it is set to unveil its contributions in Europe by the end of the year, while the latter company, in what will be its second attempt to break into the telehandler market following an unsuccessful prototype a few years back, says that it is developing its own telehandlers scheduled for a bauma 2004 launch. 

JLG's 13 metre T4013 from its 4000 Series telehandler line.





Fiat Kobelco's 14 metre T14 sits half way in its new Evolution range, which also comprises 13 and 17 metre lift height models.



Merlo has introduced attachments specifically designed to permit its telehandlers to travel with the boom lowered while transporting roof trusses on site.

"Bobcat is relatively new to the telehandler market," says Barry Timms, national accounts manager at Bobcat Europe. "The acquisition of Sambron just over two years ago provided us with an already well-developed telehandler product, which we have continued to develop ourselves." Since the acquisition, Bobcat has added a 17 metre version to the telehandler line, which now comprises 8 models ranging from lift heights of 5.6 to 17 metres and lifting capacities of 2.5 to 4 tonnes. "In the UK, we currently supply around 300 machines to National accounts, 400 including dealer accounts, but it is our goal to gain at least 20 per cent of the UK market share to become one of the top three players," continues Timms.

Bobcat's newest model is the 17 metre T40170 with a maximum lift capacity of 4 tonnes, and like all models in the range, targets the agriculture, building, construction, plant hire and local authority sectors. Designed for similar markets is the top-of-the-range 14.43 metre lift height, 4 tonne capacity TD40150, capable of lifting 3 tonnes to the full lift height. Also in the four tonne class is the T40140 which can raise a 3.7 tonne load to its maximum lift height of 13.5 metres. The fourth model in the range is the 9.3 metre lift height T3093CD, which features Bobcat's CD self-levelling system to give a tilt of +/- 6 degrees to the left and right hand sides of the unit. Featuring a three-element boom instead of the two-element boom used on the smaller models, the T3093S can lift a load to a 9.3 metre lift height with a forward reach of 2.4 metres.

Next in line is the 7.05 metre lift height T3071 in the 3 tonne lift class. The end of the unit's telescopic boom is equipped with Bobcat's Z bar front loading system, which the company says increases breakout force and provides a better dump angle. Based on the same frame and chassis, the two smallest models in the range, the T2566 and T2556, are both in the 2.5 tonne lifting class. The T2566 utilises a 50 centimetre longer boom than the T2556, offering a 6.45 metre lift and a reach of over 4 metres, which Bobcat says makes the machine ideal for refurbishment and plant hire markets. A lift height of 5.6 metres and a reach of 1.05 metres in the 2.5 tonne lift class makes the T2556 the smallest machine in Bobcat's line. Timms says that the company expects to introduce new telehandler models by the end of the year which will feature significant developments over the existing range. ■

Making ground

