

CRAWLER BOOMS

Genie says that after initial installation, the track systems available for its S-40/45 and S-60/65 telescopic boom lifts can be re-installed in less than 30 minutes.



Making tracks

Crawler mounted platforms are a relatively rare sight on UK job sites, but increasing interest in these humble machines means their numbers are growing. C&A takes a look at what's out there.

WITH COMMON types of platforms there is usually a wealth of alternative options to fall back on if operating conditions become that bit unfavourable. With a crawler boom, however, you either need one or you don't. Simple as that. And conditions, environmental that is, are commonly the decisive factor. This may lend an explanation as to why crawler mounts are not so prominent on the UK scene at present. It's not a question of working capabilities, more a case that the need for this specialised piece of equipment is simply not as great.

This thought is at least echoed by Brian Jackson, product manager at JLG who compares the use of crawler booms in the UK to that of the Benelux region. "These are areas that are prominent in their use of crawler booms," he says. "They are very much a specialist machine better suited to the marshy conditions often found in these areas and where the sub-soil terrain contains a high water content. A platform with its weight spread out across a large surface area is going to be far more effective than any piece of wheeled equipment. It's no coincidence that Japan, where ground conditions are often crowded and marshy, produces a high proportion of the world's tracked equipment."

A rise in the use of crawler booms in the UK has been noticed by Jackson but only because "they were seldom available before". It's not even as if the technology is any different as Jackson points out: "Our [JLG's] 600 series straight booms lend the exact same design and controllability to the crawler versions so the increase in crawler boom technology often runs parallel with that of the wheeled versions."

All JLG 450, 600 and 800 series machines feature the same single drive/steer joystick

control so operators can transfer their skills positively without having to re-learn should the need for a crawler boom arise. Approximately 55 percent gradeability and a significantly smaller 'pressure per centimetre squared' than the wheeled versions, given by the crawler booms much larger footprint, makes the navigation of boggy job sites much more manageable.

Perhaps the most attention-grabbing crawler boom development in recent times is Tadano Faun's AC-210SX and AC-160SX Superdeck. "This revolutionary machine combines Japanese technology with German manufacturing," says Mark Caves, technical director of Promax Access, responsible for SuperDeck sales to the UK market. "It's 1 tonne capacity, large deck and advanced safety features, including the unique one lever operation, provides the convenience and productivity of an exceptional scissor lift, but with the manoeuvrability of a boom."

This massive crawler mounted platform offers 16 metres of working height and over 8 metres squared of platform deck area, capable of 360 degree rotation. Tadano says that simplicity is the key to the SuperDeck's controllability, which is made apparent by a '4-way' motion control allowing the operator to move the platform vertically and horizontally with a single lever. A second lever controls diagonal movements. But perhaps most significant is the unit's true rough terrain capacities. It produces a whopping 70 percent gradeability and almost 0.5 metres of ground clearance.

A somewhat less 'in your face' offering is Omme's latest self propelled crawler boom. The 22 metre working height, 2200 RBD is a battery charged and diesel energy bi-energy unit suited to both indoor and outdoor use. ▶ 30

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The diesel power pack helps the unit to achieve 40 percent gradeability, equivalent to 21.8 degrees, where lift deployment is still possible, while self-propulsion manoeuvrability is possible across a 30 percent gradient or 16.7 degree slope. A battery version is available for indoor use.

The smooth with the rough

The reduced 'pressure per centimetre squared' of these machines not only suits the outdoor environment, but also serves a very delicate indoor purpose. Teupen has made a conscious effort to keep the floor pressure of its new 19 to 23 metre class, LEO 19 T and 23 T crawler mounts to an absolute minimum. The company says that sensitive surfaces such as marble, carpet and tile can be travelled over harmlessly, while the unit is just as capable of negotiating rough terrain, made all the easier by its adjustable ground clearance capacity.

All functions, including motion, outrigger set up and a 180 degree rotatable basket and 180 degree swivelling jib are controlled from the basket of the machine.

There is, however, a less permanent option than forking out for a new machine. Track systems can be added to a regular wheeled platform such as those available for Genie's S-40/45 and S-60/65 self propelled telescopic boom lifts. The first of two versions is the steel 'Trailblazer' track which



Falck Schmidt has incorporated a double link jib design into its new 29 metre working height Falcon Spider.

features a three-hole link allowing for numerous points where the track can be adjusted. For applications on finished surfaces, a soft bottom urethane track version, available on the S-40/45 only, features self-cleaning v-shaped pads. Genie says that after initial installation, the drive-on design of both track versions allows the track to be re-installed in less than 30 minutes.

The general consensus among manufacturers would suggest that the crawler mounted platform market in the UK is still a fairly immature one, but one that is showing increasing interest in this rather specialist piece of kit. Italy's leading powered access equipment manufacturer Oil & Steel certainly thinks so and has set up its UK stall early. The company recently appointed The Platform Company as its fully authorised distributor, providing sales, rental and training and technical service and backup for its full range of products, including its track mount Octopussy range. "These are great rental tools," says Lee Perry, sales director at the The Platform Company. "They offer self propelled rough terrain ability through muddy fields one day, and the next gain access to a shopping centre through a standard doorway and be working indoors with non-marking tracks."

Oil & Steel UK will be displaying a range of its tracked mobile elevating work platforms, including its Octopussy 1465 and 2714 models at this ► 32

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year's SED exhibition. The company says that the highlight of the show will be a new 'trailed' Octopussy model.

E Falck Schmidt is another company that sees good potential in the crawler boom market and says that it has recently turned its attention to the outdoor market with its new crawler chassis



Holland Lift's 12.8 metre working height X-105DL22 TR continues to be a strong seller for the company.

Falcon Spider FS 290C. The company is yet to sell any units into the UK where it has already sold 10 wheeled versions during the past 12 months, but has sold a number of crawler versions to companies in Denmark and Italy.

The new 29 metre working height unit sits in Falck Schmidt's existing 23 metre to 37 metre Spider range and offers an outreach of up to 14 metres. A newly designed 2 x 3 metre double link jib increases its "up and over" reach capabilities, while the outriggers can be automatically set from the basket and levelled on a 8.5 degree slope. Other standard features include an automatic safety and stability system, a self propelled drive train, proportional controls and full hydraulic operation of all boom movements.

Moving even closer to the UK's shores is Manitou, which recently sold a number of its

14 metre, 140CT crawler booms (Aichi model name SR123AJ) to a rental company in the Normandy region in France, which is renowned for its very soft, wet sub-soil terrain. Combating these conditions is the platform's 0.66 kilograms per centimetre squared ground pressure, 45 centimetre wide crawler shoes and 36 centimetre ground clearance.

Maniaccess marketing manager, Sébastien Braud, says that the 140CT is the top seller for the company, followed by the larger 23 metre, 230 CTJ (Aichi SR21AJ), which, due to an additional jib, is proving popular for underbridge maintenance work and demolition applications.

Braud says that Manitou's relationship with Aichi continues to be strong. Aichi has been selling its crawler booms through Manitou's network and under the Manitou brand name since 2000, reaching the UK, France, Norway, Denmark and Sweden. In return, Manitou continues to sell its articulated electric and vertical mast products under the Aichi brand name in Japan.

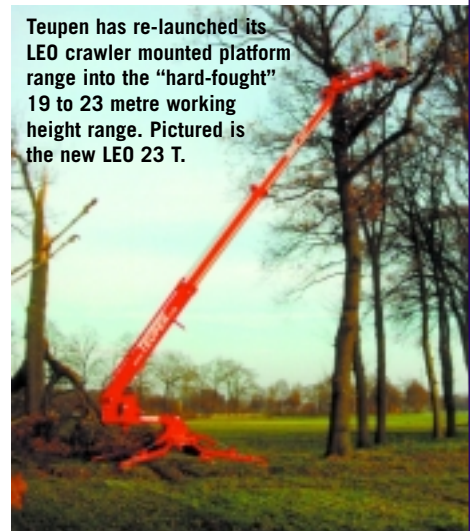
"The simple one lever operation provides the convenience and productivity of an exceptional scissor lift, but with the manoeuvrability of a boom," says Mark Caves, technical director of Promax Access.

According to Menno Koel, sales director at Holland Lift, the fate of the crawler boom is more or less in nature's hands, which has so far certainly opened a gap in the market on the company's home turf in The Netherlands. "Sales are good here," says Koel. "But, we are starting to see a growing interest in our crawler booms from Germany and the UK. The situation at the moment, however, is that in such areas where the land is generally firmer under foot, wheeled access platforms are continuing to get around just fine. There isn't really the need for users to spend an extra £14,000 to £20,000 on a machine that will not generate the money back from rental."

So while the UK crawler boom market is still a relatively modest one, interest does seem to be growing according to crawler boom manufacturers. For the time being, however, the wet marshlands of mainland Europe continue to keep the cogs of the industry's crawler booms well-oiled.

C&A

Teupen has re-launched its LEO crawler mounted platform range into the "hard-fought" 19 to 23 metre working height range. Pictured is the new LEO 23 T.



The basket mounting on Omme's 2200 platforms forms a "fly" boom mounted to the top boom which the company says gives a better outreach over obstacles.