

Back from the brink

Many people thought that Holland Lift's days were numbered – until a mystery investor bought the company. **Tim Whiteman** spoke to the new owner.



Holland Lift has a full range, but will remain firmly targeted on doing what it is good at – building large size scissor lifts



"WHEN I bought Holland Lift, it was a company that people had lost faith in and thought was not going to survive" – so says Roger Tracy, the man who bought the company.

That was a year ago and Tracy is even more convinced that the general opinion was wrong.

"When I first went into the Holland Lift factory, it was immediately clear that this was a well engineered product and that Holland Lift was not into producing low price, mass produced equipment" he says.

That first impression has stayed with him and is at the heart of the new owner's development policy. This is focussed on making specialist products to fill specific niches. Holland Lift has a full range, but will remain firmly targeted on doing what it is good at – building large size scissor lifts.

"We have a small solid base that we are building on – our first task has been to win back the confidence of the markets and then to build on that" says Tracy. Part of re-building market confidence was the decision to take a large stand at the Apex show in Maastricht. Tracy feels this was an ideal opportunity to show that Holland Lift had survived the turbulence of recent years during which it was bought by Terex, almost sold to Haulotte and then finally sold to him.

Apex was also an ideal opportunity for Holland Lift to let its workforce know that the company had changed direction and was moving forward – all employees were invited to the exhibition to let them see their own display and to let them compare products with those of the other manufacturers.

... it was immediately clear that this was a well engineered product and that Holland Lift was not into producing low price, mass produced equipment



Roger Tracy, the new owner of Holland Lift.

The new owner

So who is Roger Tracy, the man that bought Holland Lift? The answer is a little difficult to give as he eschews personal publicity and says simply that he is an engineer turned business man whose company Stoneham Equipment has interests in areas as diffuse as agricultural machinery and specialist imaging/measuring equipment for the railways. Originally British, he has lived in the US for many years and is seriously investigating whether the Holland Lift product should be made available in the US.

"We need to be strong in our home markets before moving into the US because there are a lot of US regulatory matters that have to be addressed first, however we are looking very carefully at whether it is worth doing."

Roger Tracy is convinced that his money is safely invested in Holland Lift. Before he bought the company he visited major customers and "they all told me that the quality and reliability of Holland Lift products was excellent". He seems to see his role as bringing long term stability to the company and stresses that he has no short term formula for quickly turning a company around:

And the future? "We're going to sell lots!" says Tracy with a very confident smile. 