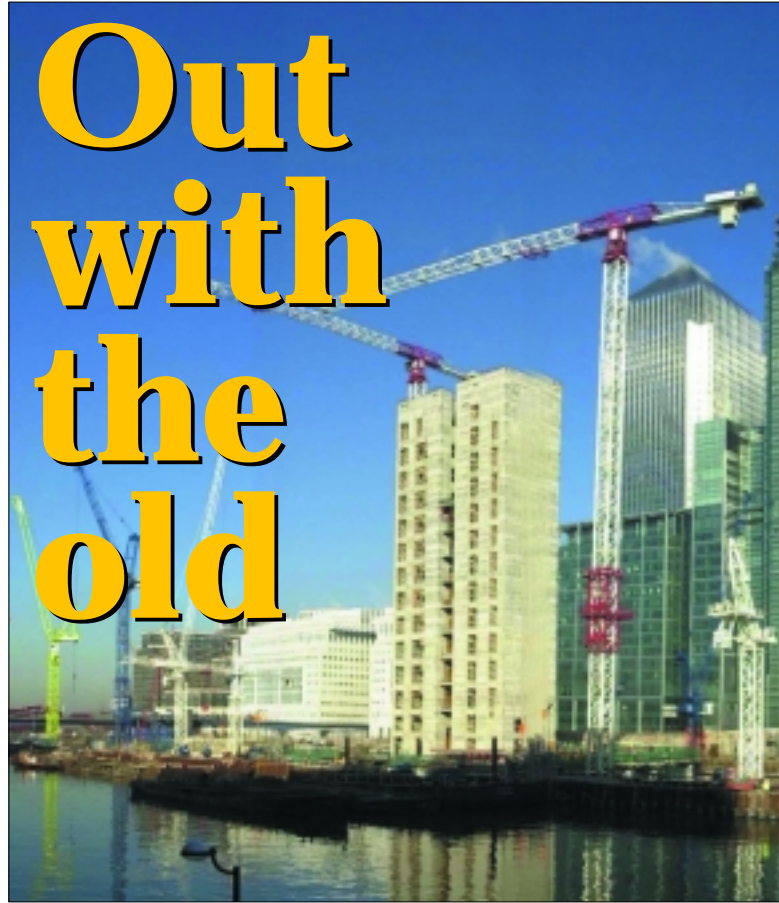


# TOWER CRANES

## Out with the old



Undoubtedly, 2001 has been a tough act to follow in terms of tower crane activity in the UK. It would seem, however, that the slight downturn reported in 2002 has produced a more refined market in terms of equipment available.

**T**he feeling one gets from talking to the UK's tower crane players is that 2002 has been very much a year of fleet consolidation. The tower crane division of Select Plant Hire, part of the O'Rourke Group, generates 25 to 30 per cent of Select Plant Hire's annual turnover of approximately £80 million. The company's single biggest project at present is the all-new £35 billion Terminal 5 (T5) at Heathrow Airport, where five of Select's, 32 tonne capacity CTT561 Terex Comedil "flat top" tower cranes are being used. And, according to Mike Studd, director at Select with total responsibility for the tower crane fleet, the company is awaiting the delivery of a further seven "flat top" units, comprising two new 32 tonne capacity CTT721-32 models and five CTT561-32 units. On arrival, the new additions will join the existing "flat top" fleet at the T5 job site.

The T5 fleet is just a small segment of the company's current 155-strong fleet, approximately 120 of which are Terex Comedil units and young ones at that. Paul Collins, managing director of Select Plant Hire is quick to emphasise an average tower crane fleet age of no more than three and a half years.

"With the increasing level of legislation surrounding the safe operation of lifting equipment today, the condition of our equipment is something that we [Select] take very seriously", says Collins. "And one way to avoid the deterioration, of any piece of

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Luffing jib tower cranes continue to be the crane of choice for many of the UK's inner city projects.

IMPORTANT:  
KPL need to get rid of red writing in pic to left

## P C Harrington buys Hewden Tower Cranes

P C Harrington has acquired Hewden Tower Cranes, the Tower Crane Rental business of Hewden Stuart, for an undisclosed sum. The business has been sold to HTC Plant, which is a subsidiary of PC Harrington Holdings. The tower crane business will be re-branded under the banner of HTC Plant, while the company will take on the title of sole dealer in the UK and Eire for Germany-based MAN Wolffkran tower cranes.

"This sale is part of Hewden's strategy to focus on its core equipment rental business and to consolidate its position as the leading equipment rental company in the UK", says Doug Whitehead, chief executive officer of Hewden Stuart's parent company Finning International. "The sale's proceeds will be used to invest in Hewden's expanding equipment rental portfolio such as the recently announced acquisition of the majority of the remaining assets of Maxxiom. This sale enhances both the parties to develop their core business and further enhances their long-term business relationship".

According to Hewden, the trend in the UK's tower crane industry structure, away from pure crane rental toward a full subcontract of tower crane services, was the key influence in the company's decision to sell the tower crane business.

The business will be re-located from Hewden's Castleford depot to Sheffield, while all staff will be retained, including Hewden Tower Crane's previous management structure. The sale agreement was concluded on 1 October.

# TOWER CRANES

## Liebherr in London



Three Liebherr tower cranes are currently being used to assist in the construction of new offices for Morgan Stanley at Canary Wharf. The largest unit of the three is the 500HC horizontal jib crane, which is free-standing to a height of 97.2 metres underhook using reinforced tower sections. The units 51.7 metre jib has a maximum capacity of 20 tonnes at 27.5 metres and 10 tonnes at 51.7 metres.

Also being used is the 16 tonne capacity 500HC-L luffing jib crane, fitted with a 50 metre jib and erected to a tower height of 93.39 metres, and the smaller 12 tonne capacity 315HC-L luffer, also fitted with 50 metres of jib and free-standing to a tower height of 58 metres.

◀ equipment, mechanically or otherwise, is to keep the product as young as possible. We have one of, if not the youngest tower crane fleet of its kind in the world”.

“In terms of tower crane activity in the UK at present, the market is, and will remain buoyant for the foreseeable future, so it is our intention to keep our position as the company with the youngest fleet, the fleet with the biggest tonne/metre rating and arguably the biggest “luffing fleet in the world”, continues Studd. Of Select’s 53 luffing jib tower cranes, 43 units are rated at over 270 tonne/metres. At the top end of the luffing fleet is the very latest 32 tonne capacity Comedil CTL630, rated at 9.6 tonnes at 60 metres, making it the

biggest luffing jib tower available in the UK. The unit is currently working alongside two, 24 tonne capacity CTL400’s on the prestigious £130 million Swiss Re project under contract from Skanska Construction UK. The 40-storey office block is scheduled for completion by mid 2003.

Studd also claims that Select’s ‘flat top’ tower fleet is “without doubt the largest of its kind in the world, with 40 units weighing in at over 340 tonne/metres, and of those, 18 at over 630 tonne/metres. With a total tonne/metre rating of 52,610, we operate the largest fleet in the UK, without fear of contradiction, which is now confirmed as the third largest fleet in the world”, says Studd.

For Paul Collins “2002 has been very much a consolidation year for Select’s tower crane division and, in terms of equipment purchases, the next 12 months will be a calming period at the company, after which time the market will be ready for further review” In the words of Leo Theyskens, managing director Arcomet, Belgium’s sole tower crane manufacturer, “specialisation is the keyword”, in terms of the UK’s tower crane landscape. “The UK market is especially interesting for us at the moment in terms of volume and price level”, says Theyskens. “We have some 50 to 60 tower cranes in the UK and this number is set to increase sharply in the near future, both by the addition of new tower cranes and with the extension of our self-erecting crane fleet”.

Cranes to be added to the fleet include the 200 tonne/metre class Raimondi MR 210 Ultralift, the 6 tonne capacity Arcomet A 45 crawler mounted self erecting tower and the 10 to 20 tonne capacity Terex SK 415 hammerhead crane, which says Theyskens is a popular machine in the UK due to its fast slewing capabilities. “On the luffer side”, he says, “the 5 tonne capacity Raimondi LR 60 and the 12 tonne capacity LR 120 units have proven very reliable workhorses for the UK market”.

Arcomet’s UK presence received a further boost earlier in the year with its joint acquisition of Taylor Woodrow’s UK tower crane fleet with Kier Plant for a disclosed sum of £2.4 million. The acquisition included 28 tower cranes, which increased Kier Plant’s existing fleet to 85 units. “Arcomet has a long standing relationship with Kier Plant and has enjoyed great success out of the venture”, says Theyskens. “Kier has also benefited tremendously from this co-operation as some major projects have been tackled together. For example, the Group supplied four Liebherr 290HC towers to assist in the construction of the Eurolink viaduct over the river Medway, for joint venture contractors Miller, Dumez/GTM and Beton und Monierbau.

A recent addition to Kier Plant’s tower crane fleet is the UK’s first ever Liebherr 160HC-L luffing jib tower crane, which will be erected in the King’s Cross area of London later this year. The crane offers a maximum capacity of 8 tonnes at 25.4



Kier Plant and Arcomet designed and fabricated special steel bases for two rail-mounted tower cranes on the permanent deck of the Channel Tunnel Rail project at the Medway Crossing in Rochester. A further two towers have been erected on temporary 80 metre long jetties.

# TOWER CRANES

Select Plant Hire is currently supplying five 32 tonne capacity CTT561 Terex Comedil "flat top" tower cranes for construction of the new £5 billion Terminal 5 (T5) at Heathrow Airport. The company will provide a further seven flat top units to the project later in the year.



metres and 2 tonnes at a maximum radius of 55 metres.

For Liebherr-Great Britain, "a year of rationalisation", described by David Milne, director of the company, has led to a noticeable reduction in its tower crane sales to the UK market compared with 12 months ago. "2002 has been a very interesting year to say the least", says Milne. "Acquisitions such as that of Taywood by Kier Plant acts to reduce the potential customer base for company's like ourselves. The same can be said for O' Rourke's takeover of Laing. Liebherr was previously selling substantial amounts of equipment to the company but the reigns have now been more or less taken over by Select Plant".

Milne does, however, remain confident towards the UK tower crane market and with Liebherr's current involvement in the number of reasonably sized jobs, such as the UK's T5 project and the Canary Wharf development. "We are coming out of a year of dramatic changes", says Milne. "The market will settle, and a good thing to come out of the many acquisitions that have taken place is that a lot of old equipment or less in demand machines will be replaced. This is where we are expecting sales to improve."

Graham Baukam, director of Delta Tower Cranes, sole UK agents for Germany's Peiner tower cranes, is also fully aware of the tightening of the UK market. "This year has been one of consolidation for the company, disposing of eight of our older towers earlier on", says Baukam. "The market itself has undergone consolidation in its own right - PC Harrington's acquisition of Hewden (see box story) is one example. As the market

itself becomes more and more refined, there is more of a need for rental businesses to further refine their own product lines to make sure they have exactly what the market is demanding - that is if they want to win clients".

Approximately 15 to 18 per cent of Delta's tower fleet is currently working in Scotland, while the remaining fleet predominantly operates in London. Taking this into consideration, Baukam comments that a high percentage of Delta's 130-strong fleet comprises saddle-jib units with capacities ranging from 5 to 32 tonnes. "We are involved in lots of multi-crane

projects at present to which our Peiner modular system saddle jibs are particularly suited because of the varying height demands on congested sites. Saying this, we are more than aware of the UK's interest in luffing jib units at present".

Steve Barnett, managing director of Manitowoc/Potain UK, has also witnessed the shift towards luffing jib towers particularly for applications in and around the UK's big cities. "We have found this to be particularly the case in terms of towers around the 100 tonne/metre category. In particular, the 77 tonne/metre Potain MC 85 is currently extremely popular among our customers involved with inner city sites. The MC 85's 1.2 metre mast makes the unit easier and cheaper to transport to such locations. Legislation surrounding air space rights is another factor contributing the popularity of luffers. On congested sites, if the boom of a crane hangs over a nearby building for instance, the owners are well in their right to charge rent for the air space which could prove extremely costly".

On speaking to a number of the UK's tower crane players, it would seem that the popularity of the luffing jib tower is set to continue for some time to come. And it would be fairly safe to say that as construction work continues in the UK's cities, creating less and less space to play with, the popularity of the luffer can surely only grow. ■

## Spierings boosts MTC range

Spierings has entered into the 80 tonne/metre class for mobile tower cranes with the launch of its new SK377-AT3. The unit is the successor to the company's 60 tonne/metre SK365-AT3 offering an extra 3 metres height under hook at 21.9 metres. The SK377-AT3 shares the same fully hydraulic mast currently used on the larger SK477-AT4 and the SK598-AT5, while its jib is also fully hydraulic and can be luffed to 30 degrees.

Maximum lift capacity on the SK377-AT3 is 10.4 tonnes at a 7.5 meter radius or 1.9 tonnes at 33 metres. The operator's cab can be positioned at a height of either 12.5 metres or 21 metres and can be reached by an optional elevator.

Spierings mobile tower cranes can be remotely controlled and set up in approximately 15 minutes for one man working on his own. In the company's native Netherlands, the cranes are typically operated by hire companies that do three to four jobs in a day with just one crane. The company has reported the sale of more than 20 units and is already planning the development of a six-axle version.

