

CRAWLER CRANES

**Kobelco is
doing well
in the UK**

Hot Crawlers

Something is stirring in the crawler crane market. Bauma and SED saw a range of new launches and it seems that customers are buying

Kobelco, Manitowoc, Sennebogen and Liebherr all made major additions to their ranges earlier this year and all have been successful with sales since then. Many of the sales have gone to the big, well known names such as Weldex and Mammoet (formerly Van Seumeren), but smaller companies have been buying as well. Rod Abbot, sales director at NRC, predicts that 50 – 75 hydraulic crawler cranes will be sold into the UK and Ireland in the forthcoming year, not bad for a time when some people are worried about recession. Just after exhibiting at this year's SED, NRC had around 25 quotations out for consideration for cranes that ranged in capacity from 50 – 200 tonnes.

Also doing well in the UK is Kobelco. Andrew Brown, sales manager says that the launch of the CKE range of crawler cranes at bauma has been met with great

enthusiasm. The range was "adapted to comply completely with CE regulations" and currently covers the 55 to 250 tonne range although there are plans to include the whole Kobelco range up to 850 tonnes. Star of the Kobelco stand at bauma was the 250 tonne CKE2500 – Jan van Seumeren Sr of Mammoet liked the crane so much that he ordered a second one during the show after looking closely at all the competing models! The modern design of the cranes includes features such as low maintenance (via just 14 greasing points), a 235kW 6-cylinder Mitsubishi engine running in an oil bath, fully hydraulic drive via an open system in which the different pumps can combine to provide power for a particular function (as opposed to the independent circuits favoured by some other manufacturers), hydro-mechanical control levers which Kobelco believes are more reliable than joysticks, wet type

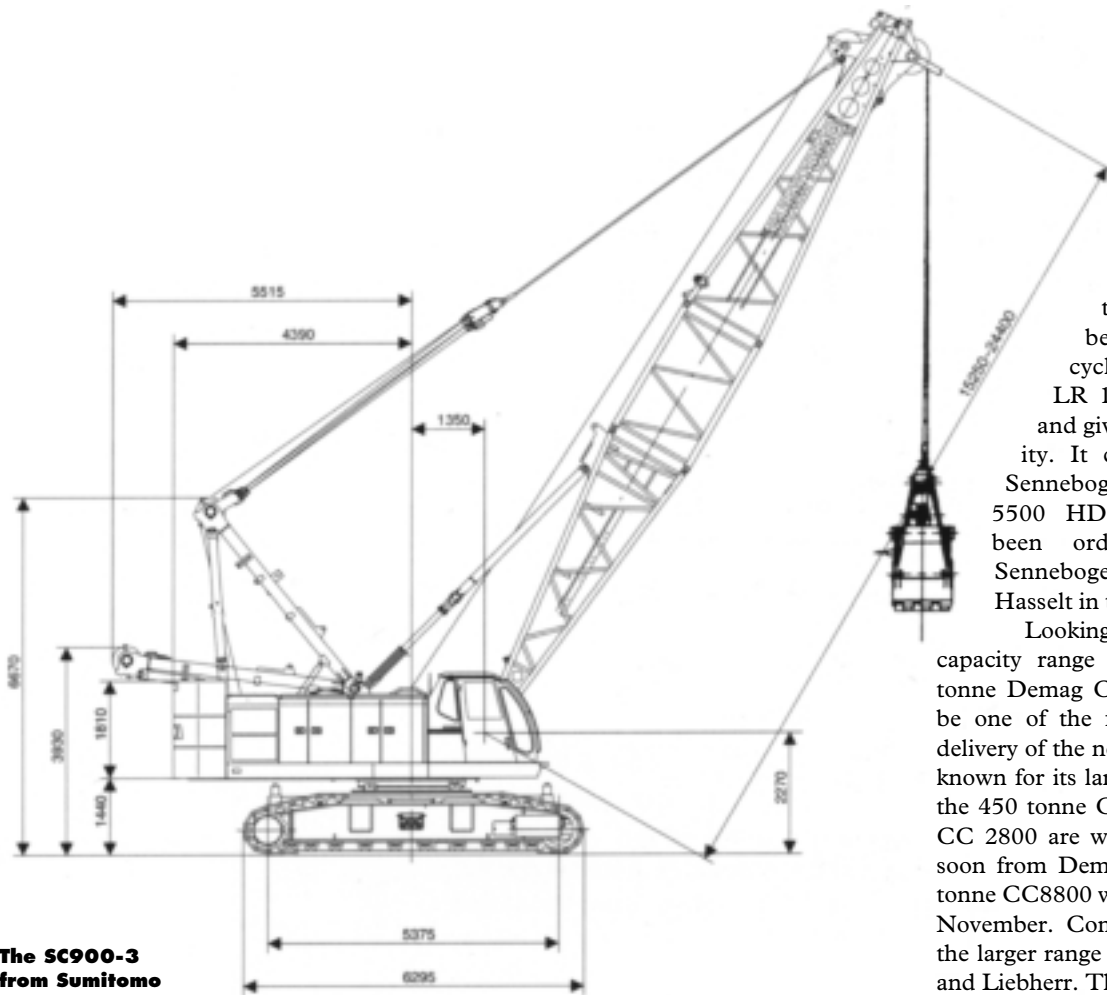
braking systems and Kobelco's own winches. Kobelco has also launched 80 and 90 tonne machines recently and says that new models will come soon.

Recent sales for Kobelco in the UK have included four 227 tonne capacity and three 80 tonne capacity units that have been bought by Baldwins, Quinn and BPH equipment. Sales direct to contractors have included five 70 tonne machines and one 50 tonne to Skanska, Hegarty and Pierse. Skanska also took delivery of three rebuilt Kobelco machines, all of which are working on the Stratford box contract for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, currently one of the biggest concentrations of crawler cranes in the UK.

Stratford box

Prominently displayed at the Stratford box will be Weldex's new Liebherrs. The company began buying them relatively recently, but managing director Dougie McGilvray is now a fan. The last year has seen Weldex buy 13 crawler cranes from Liebherr's Nenzing, Austria factory. These have included 843s, 853s, LR 1140s and the LR 1160. Liebherr's

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**The SC900-3
from Sumitomo**

◀ LR range is primarily targeted at the lift crane market – until the introduction of the LR range the Austrian factory was better known for its duty-cycle range of cranes. The LR 1160 is a new addition and gives 160 tonnes of capacity. It competes directly with Sennebogen's 150 tonne capacity 5500 HD, ten of which have been ordered by Mammoet. Sennebogen is represented by EH Hasselt in the UK.

Looking at the larger end of the capacity range we find the new 300 tonne Demag CC 1800-1. Weldex will be one of the first companies to take delivery of the new crane. Demag is well known for its larger range of cranes and the 450 tonne CC 2500 and 600 tonne CC 2800 are well established. Coming soon from Demag is the massive 1000 tonne CC8800 which will be launched in November. Competition for Demag in the larger range comes from Manitowoc and Liebherr. The 600 tonne LR 1600/1 was launched by Liebherr at bauma and orders have flowed in, including from Sarens which is an increasingly important force in the UK hire sector.

The Weldex view

The biggest crawler crane fleet in the UK, and possibly the biggest in Europe, belongs to Weldex. The Scottish based company now has 194 crawler cranes and three tower cranes in its fleet. This is actually 36 less than one year ago, just after the company bought the GWS fleet of crawler cranes.

Dougie McGilvray, founder and managing director of Weldex, says he still has too many old GWS crawlers in his fleet and is not sorry to have reduced the total size of the fleet. Due for delivery shortly is the first of three new 300 tonne capacity CC1800-1 Demags. All three will be delivered before the end of the year. Other recent additions include more than a dozen Liebherrs and three Manitowoc 777s. McGilvray is also happy with the British made cranes in his fleet: "The R-B 135 is a success and NCK's Nova and Astra models are good cranes".

Looking further afield he praises Sennebogen's 50-100 tonne capacity cranes and Liebherr's duty cycle machines but, "there is a bit of a gap in the 100-140 tonne range".. Liebherr has delivered more than a dozen cranes to Weldex in the last year and four HS 853 HD (80 tonne capacity) are currently at work on the CTRL Stratford project.

Weldex has been a regular Manitowoc in recent years but this has slowed down in part because of the high level of the dollar and part because "we have had some problems with some models but this has hopefully been sorted out" says McGilvray. He is expecting to announce more orders before the end of the year and will also be looking at Japanese built cranes which he says are good value but "spare parts are always expensive".

McGilvray is bullish about the coming year despite the fact that "there is some rate cutting going on – we will hold our rates in order to give the customer a safe and reliable service".

UK fleet

Sarens recently wrote to all its customers to announce that it was introducing a UK range of crawler cranes. These included: Demag CC600 (150 tonne); Kobelco 7150 (150 tonne), Liebherr LR 1140 (140 tonne); Hitachi KH500-3 (100 tonne), Hitachi KH300-2 (80 tonne), and the Hitachi KH180-3 (50 tonne). At the top of its fleet is Sarens 2000 tonne capacity PC9600.

However, not all the action is in the heavy cranes class. NRC, for example, has sold three Sumitomo SC900-3, 90 tonne capacity hydraulic cranes. The machine made its UK debut at SED, where it won an SED silver medal (there is no gold) in the cranes & access category. The machine was also presented with an award for Innovation & Design at the Baucon Asia Exhibition.

The SC900-3 is part of the Pax 3 series of Sumitomo cranes and is a good example of the way that crawler crane design has moved on in the last 10 – 15 years. Gone are the mechanical rods and levers that operators use on the old ▶

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An important recent contract for Sarens has been the supply of lifting operations for a number of installations on the Huntsman Hydrogen Project at the Huntsman North Tees Works, Teesside. The contract is being carried out for Foster Wheeler Energy Limited and Caxios Limited on behalf of BOC Gases.

Sarens UK has provided all the planning, engineering consultancy and technical support for the 18 weeks package of lifts which are being performed under a "contract lift" contract. The heaviest of the planned lifts on the project will be in excess of 110 tonnes and the maximum lifting radius will be over 56 metres. A feature of the project is that all lifts must be performed from one location in order to minimise site disruption. Sarens selected its Demag TC2400 400 tonne capacity strut crane (pictured). This was initially rigged with a 60 metre main boom and will use 225 tonnes of superlift to place the larger items. For lifts on the far side of the plant, the crane will be re-rigged with 84 metres of main boom.

◀ mechanical cranes still in use throughout much of the British Isles. In their place are multi-function joysticks. These include a grip throttle which is normally programmed to vary the engine speed and pump discharge simultaneously. Simply twisting the grip can advance the engine to maximum speed and the hydraulic pumps to maximum flow at the same time. By activating a switch, the operator can instead use the grip throttle to vary just the pump discharge while keeping the engine rate fixed. This is particularly useful for duty-cycle work.

Ship discharge

One of the NRC cranes has been sold to Shannon Port which specified a special 9 metre high cab for ship discharge. The machine is also fitted with hydraulic tagline for grab work which, says Rod Abbot, "does away with the need for the old mechanical type B&A to be fitted on the boom – something which has in the past proved to be very unreliable and often damages the boom during fitting and removing".

The choice facing many prospective buyers is between investing in a new hydraulic crane, which involves consid-

erable expense, or struggling on with ageing mechanical machines which are highly economical. IHI, Hitachi, Sumitomo, Kobelco, Liebherr, Manitowoc, Sennebogen, R-B, or even the re-launched NCK? The choice is yours. As Dougie McGilvray makes clear (see box story), the tide is swinging toward hydraulic equipment, a development that is also supported by the Health & Safety Executive. The crawler crane market is enjoying something of a come-back and this is proved by the fact that Fil Filipov, executive vice president of Terex, has stated very clearly that he would like to have a range of CE-marked crawler cranes to sell in Europe. As they say in all the best papers: Watch this space! ■



The Model 21000 is Manitowoc's largest crane. Its maximum reach is 195 meters (640 feet) when fitted with 340 feet of boom and 300 feet of luffing job. The Max-er attachment boosts the crane's capacity to 907 metric tons (1,000 tons). A feature of the crane is its variable stance which is made possible by the patented Octa-trac eight-crawler system that can be configured to narrow its stance from 46 feet to 30 feet.

Alabama Power has purchased two Manitowoc 21000 lattice-boom crawler cranes to handle heavy-lifting projects at a power plant expansion and renovation beginning this fall near Birmingham, Alabama. Already operating in the UK is the 777 which was specifically designed to comply with European travel dimensions.