

# Make it like new

c&a refurbishment

**Last year we reported on the rapidly growing trend in North America for factory rebuilds of aerial lifts, a year on and it is becoming big business over here. We also report on a major crane rebuild programme by Liebherr at its new facility in the UK.**

No matter if it is a Crane, Aerial lift, Telehandler or Lorry loader; increasingly the original manufacturer or its agent is offering a full refurbishment or rebuild service for old or damaged units. A quality rebuild can, for example, make a seven or eight year old boom lift look like new

and refurbishment work, with five bays, geared up along production line principles. While we were there a package of 45ft articulated booms were being completely refurbished over five days, ready for repainting. The process includes replacement of all pivot bearings, bushes



*Control boxes look as good as new.*

Given that delivery times for new booms are now seriously extended, this might be an excellent alternative to new. Companies can either have an existing unit rebuilt or buy a shabby, second hand unit and send it in for rebuilding. Genie prefers to stick with rebuilding its own lifts, as its staff know the machines inside out and it has most, if not all of the parts required in stock. It will take on rebuilds of other brands if a customer requires it, but says that it knows that it is at its best when working on its own products. In addition to rebuilding or refurbishing customer lifts, Genie uses the rebuild facility to dress up or refurbish the used machines that it trades in, prior to reselling them.

reliable as the favoured unit. In such cases, rebuilding is ideal.

At a smaller level Genie is also extending the number of components that it repairs and rebuilds on a service exchange basis, often cutting the replacement cost in half.

The aim is to build up the refurbishment operation to 20 staff, at present it has a team of 10, with active recruitment adding to that each month.

Genie intends to extend the rebuild concept to other European markets in which it operates; interestingly in the USA it uses a franchise type arrangement with appointed regional rebuilders.

Last year we reported on the JLG

rebuild facility in Tonneins France, that operation is still expanding but has not yet seen the level of demand that American operations operated by JLG, Skyjack and Snorkel are experiencing. As we have already said the longer lead times for new



*While very few lifts are this bad, a weeks refurbishment and a week in the paint shop and it will be as good as new.*

machines and the increasing difficulty to find good used lifts, might prove to be the catalyst to bring more volume to this sector.

While currently focusing on boom lifts and big scissors, the company also intends to rebuild telehandlers. The rebuild service is also, in theory, available for smaller scissors, but given the amount of labour involved and the relatively low cost of new small scissor lifts, the economics do not really stack up.

In addition to rebuilds for customers looking to give faded machines new lease of life, some work is done on equipment that is simply popular, well loved if you like. A new model is often not available, and even if it was, might not be as good and as



*The finished product looks like new.*



*The new Genie UK rebuild centre. With five bays and plenty of space*

and extend its peak performance by at least five years. A second hand crawler crane from Japan can not only be rebuilt and certified to CE specifications, but also start off with a completely new lease of life.

A used crane traded in for new by a major hire company, can after a week or two be transformed into as new condition, a bargain for an end user or regional hirer or it can be exported to markets where price and value are more critical than the latest specification.

The recycling trend also extends to components, with rebuilds now becoming popular for costly items such as Slew bearings, hydraulic cylinders, Motor control units and more complex joysticks, not to mention bent booms. Sometimes the rebuild option is selected for speed rather than price.

## Genie new for old.

Our look at the refurbishment market started with a visit to Genie UK's new refurbishment centre in Grantham.

The company has dedicated one of the buildings on its five acre site to rebuild

and where necessary pins, while all high wear or hard to reach hydraulic cylinders are resealed. New or service exchange controllers are fitted to refurbished boxes; cages are replaced with new or refurbished ones. A thorough engine inspection and service is carried out with repairs as necessary, while hydraulic pumps and valves are checked resealed or replaced. The whole machine is rubbed down and any damage repaired. At the end of the five days the unit goes off for a new high quality two-pack paint job, on return new decals are fitted and a final inspection completed.

The end result? A machine that looks as good as new to all but a detailed under the covers inspection. The cost? Depending on its original condition and what is found during the rebuild process, between £7,000 and £9,000. For a seven or eight year old machine, which might well be written off (or at least down to 20 percent of original purchase price) a user or rental company will have a first class machine for less than half the price of a new one.

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Once complete the used crane is subjected to a full and detailed final test and inspection.



## New continent, new specification, New crane

Crane Business located in Moerdijk Holland, has over the past few years refined and developed its rebuild operation, which includes modifying Japanese market specification cranes to a full CE specification and certification.



Hook blocks are stripped and rebuilt prior to test

The detail that the company go into, to comply fully with European standards, often working with the manufacturer, results in a crane with a European compliance at least as good as the manufacturer's efforts. Another advantage is that the company can supply models that the manufacturer has decided not to market in Europe, for reasons such as low volume potential etc...



Electrical system is renewed hydraulics revised

All of the re-engineering work and modifications including the addition of a high cab, was done in-house and on completion approved by a Notified Body prior to delivery. The crane was then given a new high quality "two-pack" paint job in the Potters red house colour.



A new European Load indicator is fitted

A good example of what the company does is represented by the recent sale and delivery of a Kobelco MB600 to Dutch stevedoring service company Potter BV. The used crane looks like new, even under the covers.



Ropes are replaced with new

The BM600 features a high cab and 30.5 metre boom, specifically equipped for port operations.



A BM600 refurbished for Potter bv stevedores

## Truck mounted rescue

Wumag the German based manufacturer of truck mounted lifts is offering its customers a level of refurbishment for older lifts that takes a used platform up to virtually new condition. Wumag says that given that safety is not an option on aerial lifts, it doesn't define any aspect of its complete refurbishment service as cosmetic, and in doing so takes a wholly different approach to that practised by many other workshops. Its "complete refurbishment", programme restores a used lift to like-new condition, providing years of further safe use for the platform.

Wumag offers full scale factory rebuilds



Each platform going through the process receives:-

- Completely new covers and mudguards
- Fully revised and updated hydraulics and electrical connections
- New switchboxes made of high-grade steel and new control panels
- A fully refurbished driver's cab or in the worst cases a new chassis
- A full overhaul of the boom assembly
- New tyres
- An in depth engine service and check by the manufacturer
- A special brake inspection with renewal of any suspect components
- Remedial paint is carried out, in the worst case this comprises a sandblasting and full repaint.
- When the unit is completed the lift is subjected to a detailed final quality inspection.

## Give me back my first lift

The Wumag rebuild team was recently given an unusual project, a customer wanted to have his first ever aerial lift completely rebuilt. The 16 year old Wumag WM 200 was in a poor state of repair and out of action. However the platform had a special place in the owners heart, it was machine that had put him into business.

Wumag quoted a total price of around €95,000 to make the lift like new. This included a brand new chassis. All structural steel components were sandblasted and repainted.



An old Wumag WM200, a fleet owners first lift, was restored to new condition



The electrical and hydraulic circuits were almost completely replaced with new as were most of the covers, sheet metal work, platform, gates and railings. Finally this machine was fitted with a new aluminium basket and new control panels. It was then inspected and tested as a new machine with new documentation.

While the reason for the rebuild was driven partially by sentimentality, economic factors also proved decisive. This kind of articulated platform is no longer manufactured and the unit had a well established clientele which specifically wanted the machine back in the fleet.

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# Insulated rebuilds

When working on high tension overhead power lines it is essential that the aerial lift is in tip top condition. There is no room for error, allowing a machine to age and risk compromising its insulation effectiveness is simply not an option. Versalift UK, the market leading producer of insulated platforms, offers a full UU in-factory rebuild facility. Users of these machines are typically obliged to have all critical areas of the lift rebuilt every five years.

The five year UU refurbishment usually takes around six to eight weeks to complete and involves the fitting of new insulated hoses, chains, pins and bushes etc.. The lifts boom sections are stripped back down to the bare fiberglass, inspected with ultra violet lamps for signs of cracking, before re applying three coats of gelcoat and then repainted.

The entire machine is finally retested dielectrically to ensure its insulation integrity and finally re-certificated to go back into service.



*A Versalift VOE36 insulated lift mounted on a Mercedes Unimog chassis belonging to United Utilities is currently being refurbished.*



## Do it yourself in style



*The Platform Company's 1,600sqm rebuild centre*

When The Platform Company, the UK's third largest rental company (C&A Top 20), looked at the ongoing refurbishment of its 2,300 unit fleet, it decided to set up its own centre, with the idea that it could also take in refurbishment work from others at a later stage. The company has equipped a 1,600 Square metre, workshop in central England for the task.

The new centre is home to a team of dedicated engineers who, in addition to performing a strict six monthly PAC test on every Platform Company machine, completely refurbish an average of 10 lifts a week.



*In addition to refurbishing, units are painted in Platform Company colours.*

The "refurb" team includes mechanical experts and body work specialists who operate two new state of the art spray booths.

The Investment also extends to additional delivery vehicles bringing

machines into the centre and delivering them back to the depots. So far the company has not extended the refurbishment centres remit to include work for other companies as it has been kept fully employed by the Platform Company's own fleet.

Lee Perry, sales director at the Platform Company said "The new investment. Reinforces the Platform Company's commitment to customer service excellence through our eight regional branches, it means more machines are on hand to provide safe access when and where they're needed - whether it's an electric scissor in Newcastle or an 80 ft boom in Southampton."



*The Platform Company rebuild centre has two new paint booths*

# Liebherr gears up

**With its new service centre in Biggleswade, Liebherr GB is gearing up to take on crane refurbishments on a scale rarely, if ever, seen before in the UK. Phil Bishop reports**

If you need your mobile crane rebuilding or refurbishing there are only a handful of UK numbers you can call for a quote, if you want the job done well. It is a highly specialist business. A couple of the major rental companies like Ainscough and Weldex could probably help you. Samuel Walker would, of course, have been another name on the list, although having gone into administration in January, the future of its operations is now in doubt. You might also want to try one of the manufacturer-owned operations. Of these, Liebherr GB

assessing its UK/Irish after market coverage - but for the moment it is Liebherr that is setting the pace.

On a new business park in Biggleswade, a stone's throw from the A1 in Bedfordshire, Liebherr GB has a 3.7ha site with 2,500 square metres of office space in a three-storey building and a workshop measuring 90metres long by 66 metres wide and 18metres high. Among the equipment in the workshop are five double-girder Abus overhead travelling cranes, four of which are 25 tonne capacity

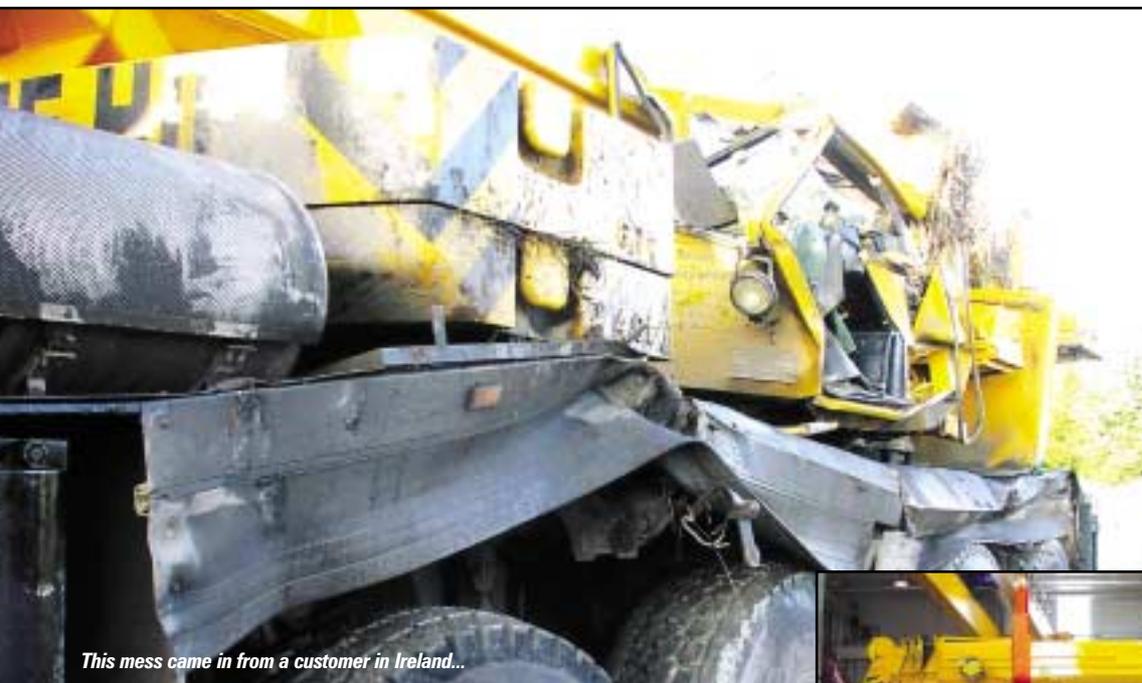


*The largest projects undertaken to date have been slew ring replacements, made possible thanks to the overhead cranes and high ceiling.*

Dotted strategically around the floor are points for attaching exhaust extraction tubes so that fumes are all taken out below ground rather than having services at height, tangling with the overhead cranes.

There are three mobile computer stations that can be plugged in at any of 17 points around the workshop. On these computers the fitters can call up detail design drawings, complete with all the parts reference numbers, of every Liebherr machine ever built. There is also a rope spooling

machine that makes a tricky job much simpler. Outside a rolling road is strong enough to take 20 tonnes per axle, which positions Liebherr to carry out MoT inspections if or when such roadworthiness tests ever come in for mobile cranes. David Slack, managing director of Crane Services and a loyal Liebherr customer, says there is nowhere else in the country with the capability to carry out major repairs on large cranes. Staffordshire Public Works used to take on a lot of crane repairs in the past, he says, but no one has anything like what Liebherr has at Biggleswade. Norman Kelsey, national service manager at Hewden Crane Hire, is also impressed. "Liebherr's operation at Biggleswade is an excellent facility. They can do anything you want with regard to repairing cranes." Ten years ago there were just 130 Liebherr mobile cranes in the UK and Ireland, says David Milne, managing director of Liebherr GB. Today it is roughly 900 and Milne confidently expects it to pass the 1,000 mark by the end of this year - "I'm quite convinced of that," he asserts.



*This mess came in from a customer in Ireland...*

has without doubt the most modern, efficient and impressive workshops at its new Biggleswade headquarters, which opened in July 2004. Terex-Demag is known to be planning new facilities to keep pace, or perhaps even overtake, its prime competitor. At the same time the Manitowoc crane group is in the midst of

(one also has a 5 tonne auxiliary hoist) and one is 20 tonne capacity. There are two service pits sunk into the floor, one 21 metres long and one 18 metres. They were pre-made in Germany, ready fitted with lighting, oil removal systems, 110V electricity supply and compressed air for pneumatic tools.



*...And went back looking like this*



*Flexible tubes carry exhaust fumes away via underground ducts.*

The new Biggleswade facility is part of Liebherr's corporate global strategy to improve product support for the growing number of Liebherr crane owners. It also allows Liebherr to play a leading role in the used crane market, by taking in old used cranes in part exchange and either selling them straight on, or offering them to the market serviced, repaired, refurbished or even fully re-built with factory warranties. Liebherr GB itself is "probably the UK's biggest used crane dealer," Milne says, having sold close to 100 used ones in 2005 - most of which were not Liebherr models. The Liebherr group probably comes close to claiming the title of worlds largest retailer of used cranes. The strategy is not unique to Liebherr, but it has pursued it the most aggressively. As well as in the UK, it is building new service centres at various sites around the world. Facilities similar to Biggleswade have already opened in Dubai and Houston, Texas last year for example. Biggleswade, like Hatfield before it, is not just a crane centre. It covers Liebherr's entire range of construction machinery - a £100 million business in the UK, says Milne. But it was primarily the demands of the crane industry that meant a new facility was needed. The old premises in Hatfield, where it had been since 1966, were good enough for most of the things the company wanted to do, says Milne, but they were too small to service, repair and refurbish mobile cranes. Much of the work was outsourced. At Biggleswade everything can

(or soon will) be done in-house. Currently, an average of about seven mobile cranes a week pass through the Biggleswade workshop, reckons workshop general manager Shaun Manning. Of these, two might be new machines coming in for pre-delivery modifications, such as mounting tackle boxes on the rear, since the tackle boxes are fabricated here. Most, however, are used machines. Occasionally a Liebherr customer will have had an accident - tipped over and buckled the boom, for example - and they need some swift repair work. More often the cranes are old ones that have been taken in part exchange and are being sold on maybe to the Middle East or to Dutch trading houses. "The really old stuff we just sell into the trade. We don't do any work on them - just sell them," Milne explains. "The better ones, we tidy up, overhaul and repaint. The plan for later this year is to start doing complete overhaul work." The amount of work done on the crane depends on the deal done with the buyer. Typically they just want it in proper working order, which means a full service - oil, filters, antifreeze, check tyres etc - and resealing cylinders where needed. Occasionally, rather more work is needed, such as when a crane is turned over and the boom is smashed up. An 80 tonner belonging to luxury yacht builder Sunseekers tipped over last year when the operator forgot to deploy the outriggers, narrowly missing several million-pound yachts but successfully buckling the boom. A 500 tonne crane needed a new engine last year because the owner

had been running it with only one of the nine axles actually driving, Manning says. He sees plenty of crane abuse. A six-axle 300 tonner came in from Scotland with no working brakes on three of the axles. "The biggest job we are taking on at the moment is replacing slew rings," says Manning. "We have done about 10 now. Because of the overhead cranes here we can just take the upper off. On the [250 tonne capacity] LTM 1250 upwards, we need to use two overhead cranes. To do that type of work in the field, the customer has to tie up two of his mobile cranes."

Just before Christmas a major customer needed a rapid turnaround on a 250 tonner. "Normally for a big crane like that you're looking at three or four days," Manning says. The workshop pulled out all the stops, it being 23 December, and five men had the job done in 24 hours. So far, most of the work has been repair work rather than full refurbishments and rebuilds. Manning explains the distinction between repair and refurbishment. "From a Liebherr point of view, repair is fixing what the customer asks you to do. Refurbishment is making it in perfect, good-as-new condition." "We will progressively get into more extensive refurbishments," Milne says.

There are two obstacles standing between where the workshop is now and where it plans to be, they admit. Firstly, the infrastructure needs to be completed. Liebherr GB still has to outsource painting, although there is a dedicated paint shop in place waiting to be fitted out. It is in the budget for completion this year. And, until now, booms have had to go back to Ehingen for repair since the boom alignment tool is not yet set up. Manning says it will be in the next few weeks, which probably means whenever it is next needed.

The second problem is less easy to solve swiftly. As anyone in the industry knows, skilled experienced fitters do not grow on trees. There are six fitters and a foreman in the workshop at the moment, working on earthmovers and concrete trucks as well as cranes. To build that number up to 10 there are four trainees on four-year apprenticeships across all machine types. "We need to train people," Milne says. "We've been sending the guys to the factory [in Ehingen] for training and we've got three Germans in the shop right now. You don't get that kind of expertise overnight. It takes time to build experience levels up."



*Liebherr's crane workshop at its new Biggleswade headquarters has an 18 meter and a 21 metre service pit*