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glass handling Cfa Heavy glass

There was a time when windows and glass panels were invariably installed by hand, a big window would simply require more people to help carry and lift it into place. Over the past 20 years it has changed beyond all recognition, and has mostly been driven by two major factors. Firstly, stringent manual handling rules, which are increasingly applied throughout Europe, now require every employer to risk assess manual lifting, essentially limiting how much a person can lift to 40kg – or 25kg if the lifting task is repetitive or routine.

At the same time glass panels in both commercial and residential buildings have become significantly heavier, thanks to increased insulation requirements. This is likely to further increase as triple glazing is more widely used.

The lifting industry has responded positively with numerous manufacturers now offering a vast array of glass handling robots, along with vacuum lifting equipment for use with cranes and telehandlers. Commercial contractors have largely adopted mechanised forms of glass handling on all of their projects, however, smaller builders still tend to rely on manual 'grunt' to install even relatively large or heavy windows. The fact is with the right equipment the work is not only safer and easier but also substantially faster and more accurate.

Rental companies all over Europe have also responded well, tuning into the opportunities this equipment offers. While many general rental companies now stock these products, an increasing number of specialist rental companies are now getting involved. After all, glass handling equipment fits well with the lifting equipment offered by crane, telehandler and aerial lift rental companies.

Manufacturers such as Jekko

and the European spider crane distributors such as Kranlyft, which handles Maeda throughout Europe, also offer glass handling attachments and robots. Kranlyft has taken on the German built Uplifter Glassworker line. Unic's European distributor GGR, came from the other direction, having started in the glass handling field it added spider and mini crawler cranes later. As one of Europe's leading glass handling specialists, the next two pages cover a slew of new products that the company launched at a recent open day.

More glass handling

With interest in this subject growing, we plan to cover the subject of glass handling more often in future issues and would be happy to hear from those of you working in the industry. The following are few items of news and applications.

Counter balance beam in action

When it came to installing six by 2.8 metre prefabricated wood façade panels - complete with window frames and glazing - seven storeys up, manufacturer Anton Ambros and contractor Heavydrive decided to use counter balance/overhang beam fitted with 400mm forks. The beam was connected to the project's tower crane with the installation team using radio remote controls to operate the crane.







The Beast

In July, German glass handling equipment manufacturer Uplifter launched its largest pedestrian controlled glazing robot to date with the 1,125kg Glassworker GW 1125. Dubbed 'the Beast', it can handle its full capacity at a radius of 320mm and take it to a height of 2.4 metres. With its short front hydraulic stabilisers deployed it can handle 330kg at its maximum outreach of 2.32 metres and at its maximum height of 4.55 metres. One of its first jobs involved the installation of six metre by 2.1 metre glazing panels weighing more than 900kg.

Curve ball

When a new pharmacy in Stuttgart's city centre ordered special curved glass panels for its façade, the contractor sensibly factored in a breakage factor, based on previous experience. He contacted glazing company Lanz from Rutesheim to deliver and place the hand crafted panels. Lanz used its 85 tonne/metre truck mounted Palfinger LK 370 equipped with a 600kg Kappel 16 suction cup vacuum lifter. The glass panels had to be lifted, rotated, and placed, the job was completed with zero breakages.



The Kappel glass handler proved ideal





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glass handling Cha Nevy kit for fix it fleet

Nick Johnson visited glass and lifting specialist GGR this summer during an open day, to look at the company's latest vacuum lifters, glazing robots, compact cranes and other specialist handling equipment.

The brother and sister team of Graeme and Gill Riley started their family business as GGR Glass Services in the summer of 1995 with a couple of vacuum lifters. Now operating from three locations in the UK, it provides national coverage. The company has built up an enviable reputation for providing innovative problem solving materials handling equipment.

One only needs to look through GGR's equipment pocket guide to appreciate the wide variety of

specialist machinery it offers. The company's rental fleet includes over 500 glass, stone and cladding vacuum lifters, around 290 glazing robots and robotic manipulators as well as over 230 compact cranes and other equipment such as telehandlers and tracked carriers.

Having started out with vacuum lifters, GGR demonstrated its 'know how' and experience in the sector, by designing and building its own glazing robot in 1998. Product development has continued and today the company's wide range





of battery powered, glazing robots provide lifting capacities up to 1,400kg.

Gekos and Oscars

Among the latest robots in the GGR fleet are the Geko 500 3D, the Oscar 600 Long Reach and the Oscar 800 with 3D Head.

The smallest of the trio is the wheeled Geko 500 3D which, as its designation suggests, can handle 500kg glass, marble, steel and other panels, and is ideal for work in confined areas. It has an overall width of 833mm, a stowed height of just over 1.3 metres and an overall length from counterweight to suction cups of 2.4 metres. Swing out stabilisers provide extra stability and extend the working width to 1.25 metres.

Weighing 764kg with counterweights installed, the battery powered machine features a single section boom, topped by a hydraulic four pad 3D head for optimum precision at vertical heights of up to 2.5 metres or overhead heights of up to 2.9 metres. The powered head rotates 180 degrees and tilts just over 90 degrees, taking a panel from the vertical to horizontal. The boom itself can also be slewed manually 22 degrees with a back and forth movement of up to 600mm.

Long armed Oscar

A new fleet addition is the Oscar 600 Long Reach wheeled glazing robot that has a maximum lifting capacity of 600kg. This machine has an extra-long telescopic arm that can extend over 2.3 metres from its front wheels for an extra 900mm of reach, compared to the standard model, for lifting loads of up to 220kg. A sideshift function enables minor adjustments in load placement to be made without having to reposition the entire machine.

Utilising rear wheel steering, the Oscar 600 Long Reach has front wheel drive with large dual tyres to cope with uneven terrain. Its dual circuit vacuum system can safely handle heavy glass and other flat non-porous materials using six heavy duty vacuum suction cups.

Off road glass handling

The battery powered Oscar 800 Offroad glazing robot is one of the company's more popular models and can now be offered with a 3D head. Shod with lugged all terrain tyres, it is a metre wide and boasts a maximum lifting capacity of 800kg, a maximum lift height of five metres and a maximum outreach of 2.7 metres. Features include 100mm of lateral side shift, wheeled stabilisers and radio remote control. The eight suction cup hydraulic head has 180 degrees of rotation - 90 degrees either side of centre - and a full 90 degrees of tilt.

The Atom

For delicate surfaces or rougher ground, GGR has introduced the rubber tracked Atom 800 glazing robot. Powered by Vanguard 10 petrol engine, this 800kg capacity machine is only 930mm wide and weighs in at around 1,250kg.

The Atom 800 features a three section telescopic boom, an eight pad dual circuit vacuum system, hydraulic swivel, tilt, slewing and rotating head, allowing it to easily pick up a glass panel from ground level or a stillage and then transport and manoeuvre the load into place.





glass handling

It is operated by a Hetronic radio remote control system, and it can lift canopy glazing to a maximum height of 4.25 metres in the vertical plane, or 2.7 metres when glazing horizontally overhead.

The GGR glass handling range is so extensive that details of the various models occupy more than 60 pages of its equipment pocket guide. Its range can handle flat, curved and fin glazing panels weighing from 100 to 6,000kg. Yet it continues to expand its range.

King cladders

Another new product is the CladKing Intelli-Grip with a six cup head capable of handling up to 320kg and a four cup capacity of 270kg. It is suitable for roof and horizontal wall panels up to 10 metres and vertical wall panels up to 14 metres.

Features include a dual circuit vacuum system with vacuum gauge, reserve tank and non-return valve for each circuit, a 90 degree dampened lockable tilt and onboard reverse air flow (blow-off) vacuum pump. An audio-visual low vacuum alarm is standard.

The new battery powered Clad-Man

has a capacity of 400kg and is suitable for placing vertical and horizontal wall panels up to 14 metres and roof panels up to 26 metres. Complete with 90 degree manual tilt, it has a dual circuit vacuum system with vacuum gauge, reserve tank and nonreturn valve for each circuit.

Overhang beams

GGR has also launched a range of overhang/ cantilever lifting beams for use with tower or mobile cranes. Offering capacities of up to 20 tonnes, they allow a piece of glass, panels or other loads to be placed underneath or above an overhang on a building.

The flagship 20 tonne Libro 20000 beam can place loads under or over overhangs up to three metres deep. It weighs around 8,130kg and comes with radio remote controlled counterweight travel to counterbalance the load.

The smaller three tonne Libro 3000 can be fitted with a new 2,200kg capacity Corner Lifter attachment, which provides a safe solution for installing corner elements, including glazing, onto buildings with overhangs. Weighing 4,793kg, it features multi position lockable jaws that extends the maximum overhang that can be accommodated to nearly five metres.



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glass handling









Articulated spiders

GGR is the European master distributor for Unic spider cranes but is now offering a range of articulated models from BG Gru, including the 2,500kg capacity TMC 25 and its much bigger brother – the 14 tonne TMC 525. Featuring an Effer knuckle boom with six section telescopic jib on a BG tracked chassis, it can achieve a maximum hook height of 32.5 metres and a maximum radius of 29.4 metres.

Equipped with a Yanmar diesel and 415V electric power pack, the radio remote controlled TMC 525 weighs 13,200kg. To add to its operational versatility, it can be fitted with a 1,500kg capacity vacuum lifter attachment.

Yet another new product unveiled is the MultiGrab attachment that



The 14 tonne TMC 525 articulated crawler crane at the GGR Open Day

can be installed on spider cranes or telehandlers. The remote controlled 750kg capacity grab can precisely manipulate all manner of beams or pipes with actions imitating the human hand and wrist. GGR is currently working on the 'FlexiGrab' which will lift up to 750kg, with interchangeable heads, including an integrated vacuum lifter to provide yet another mechanised glazing option.

Installing hand crafted beams

A Unic URW 706-2 spider crane equipped with a MultiGrab was used in the construction of the new timber framed Shakespeare North Playhouse in Prescot, Merseyside. It was used to lift, place and hold the hand crafted timber beams in what will be a faithful replica of a Jacobean timber candlelit theatre.