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Kobelco revenues up 34 per cent

KOBELCO CONSTRUCTION MACHINERY has reported a 33.9 per cent increase in crane sales to 24.8 billion yen (£122 million) in its financial results for the year ending March 31, 2004. The crane business, Kobelco Cranes Co, which became an independent subsidiary of Kobe Steel in April, also said that it expects its crane sales to reach 28 billion yen (£139 million) in fiscal 2004.

Sales across the entire Kobelco group rose by 17 percent to 184 billion yen, (£910 million), while operating income jumped by 79 percent to 8 billion yen (£40 million). Net profits leapt by a huge 293 percent to 2,824 million yen (£14 million).

During 2003, a major focus of Kobelco Cranes was the building of its specialised sales and service networks. As part of this programme, and to strengthen its distribution in Europe and North America, Kobelco formed two wholly-owned and dedicated crane marketing companies beginning a move away from the Kobelco Construction Machinery business. The company is also planning to open dedicated crane sales offices in Shanghai and the Middle East.

In late 2003, Kobelco signed a crawler crane agreement with Manitowoc for the supply of its sub 150 USton (136 tonne) lattice boom crawler cranes on an OEM basis to Manitowoc in the Americas region, the first of which was delivered in April. A further agreement will see the supply of Grove's all-terrain cranes to Kobelco under its own brand name to be sold exclusively by the company in Japan from 2005.

FULL STORY ON WWW.VERTIKAL.NET



Warrington-based crane hire company, Commhoist, has secured a £900,000 deal with the Bank of Scotland for the purchase of a 40 tonne and 200 tonne capacity Liebherr mobile crane. Commhoist operation director David Carsley (left) and Commhoist managing director Bob Kerslake (right) are pictured here with Bank of Scotland Construction finance specialist and professional rugby league referee Karl Kirkpatrick who helped secure the deal.

HSE to miss accident reduction target

The UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) will fail to meet its target to cut construction industry accidents by 60 percent by 2010, according to the National Audit Office (NAO). The NAO also said that the construction industry and government organisations, such as the HSE, could do more to improve the health and safety of workers.

The announcement follows a recent outburst from the general secretary of the GMB, Britain's General Union, Kevin Curran, who accused the HSE of being complacent and said that it [HSE] is spending too much time on targets and not enough on inspections and enforcement."

Just before giving evidence before The House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee Inquiry into the work of the Health and Safety Commission and Executive recently, Mr Curran commented: "The current regulatory system is simply not working, yet the HSE's new strategy document claims that they 'have done a great job on safety."

The GMB is calling for the establishment of an effective enforcement agency dedicated to rooting out and punishing employers who put profit before life and limb. The union has submitted written evidence to the Select Committee Inquiry documenting its concerns about the Health and Safety Commission and Executive, which include the recently published HSC strategy, HSE resources, the HSE's focus on 'goal-setting' regulations, the lack of support for tripartite Advisory Committees and HSE enforcement policy.

Mr Curran continued: "We welcome this inquiry and the opportunity it presents for a serious debate about health and safety enforcement in the modern economy. The nature of work has changed significantly since the Health and Safety Commission and Executive were established. But what hasn't changed is the need to enforce health and safety laws effectively and the HSE should spend less time goal-setting and focus more on ensuring that regulations give workers adequate protection."

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Lavendon's UK revenues rise

THE LAVENDON GROUP, Europe's largest powered access company, owners of Nationwide Access in the UK, Zoom in Germany and Rapid Access in the Middle East, has reported improved UK revenues for the half-year to June 30.

Its UK revenues increased slightly compared to last year, but at a cost of extra investment in sales, marketing and customer services. C&A estimates that the firm's UK half-year revenues will be in the region of £29 million. This positive performance, combined with a revenue increase from its Middle East operation, Rapid Access, where a 15 percent jump to around £3.3 million, helped to compensate for poorer results in Continental Europe. The firm's German operations reported a five percent fall to around £13 million, compared with the previous year, while revenues in France, Spain and Austria were down by two percent overall to around £4.7 million.

The effect of the extra investment cost in the UK is likely to depress the firm's UK margins for the first half-year, but should pay off in the second half, particularly as market conditions in the UK are showing signs of improvement in pricing and utilisation terms.

Lavendon said that its overall revenues are in line with the £50 million reported last year. This is ahead of market expectations. Lavendon expects the second half of the year, which is traditionally a busier time, to improve in all markets except Germany, thus providing full year results close to, or above, the £107 million reported in 2003. ■

JLG on target for billion dollar breakthrough

JLG IS on target to break yearly revenues of US\$1 billion for the first time in the company's history according to its recently published third quarter results. Third quarter revenues were up by 55 percent to \$319 million (UK£175.8 million) compared to last year, while its year-to-date revenues were up 49 percent to \$769 million (£424 million), outstripping revenues for the full 2003 period.

Revenues were boosted by last year's Omnicup acquisition, which also helped to triple the firm's telehandler sales to \$241 million, (£132.8 million), but even on a like-for-like-basis, sales of JLG products rose by 22 percent. Year-to-date sales of aerial platforms were up by 20 percent on 2003 at \$345 million (£190 million), nearly 50 percent of the firm's revenues, which it targeted when the lift business was in the doldrums. This objective could become a reality in 2005.

Sales in the US saw the biggest increase, up by almost 60 per cent, while sales in Europe increased more modestly at over 40 percent to \$48 million for the quarter and up 12 percent on year-to-date to \$112 million.

"Order patterns continued to strengthen during the third quarter reflecting increased fleet refreshment and customer confidence," said Bill Lasky, chairman of the board, president and CEO at JLG. "Our consolidated order backlog is strong and rising. Steel shortages have impacted our production lines resulting in disruptions to our production schedules and higher work-in-process inventory.

"Despite these challenges we are pleased that our earnings are in line with our internal plans for the year. We continue to focus on our core access products, expanding our products and distribution strengths with our recently announced acquisition of Delta Manlift in France and our intended alliance with the SAME Deutz-Fahr Group for agricultural telehandlers in Europe."

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UK Forks moves into contract hire

BRITAIN'S LEADING telehandler hirer UK Forks has entered into the contract hire market with the launch of its new Telelease service.

The new service, available to customers under a minimum two-year agreement period, will include the supply of new, or nearly new, telehandlers and a logistics service whereby UK Forks will undertake the transportation of customer machines from site to site. Full warranty for the contract hire period, breakdown and replacement cover, a fixed monthly charge and security and safety options will also feature under the customer agreement.

UK Forks divisional director, Rob Coxon said: "As UK Forks has a nationwide depot network, Telelease is the UK's first true national contract hire service and an exciting new offer for the UK construction industry."

The first Telelease contract has already been agreed between UK Forks and plant procurement manager Chevron Site Services, which has taken 11 of UK Forks' JCB machines with a further ten units to be delivered over the summer.

National accounts director with JCB, Ken Bainbridge said: "Twenty-five years ago most of our machines went directly to contractors. Fifteen years ago hire companies came into the equation and we see contract hire as an important new stage in this evolution, which will become commonplace."

UK Forks has also just taken delivery of over 70 new Bobcat, 14-metre T40170 and 17-metre plus T40170 telehandler models. Much of the work in securing the deal was carried out by ex-Bobcat National Accounts Manager, Barry Timms (*right in pic*), who recently retired from the company.

Ainscough criticises UK crane hirers

MARTIN AINSCOUGH, chairman and CEO of Ainscough Crane Hire, has criticised UK crane hire companies for their lack of support at a crane safety conference held in London last week.

More than 170 crane industry professionals attended this year's Crane Safety conference, including Mr Ainscough, who said: "UK crane hirers are conspicuous by their absence."

Mr Ainscough condemned UK crane hire companies for their lack of support in helping to improve crane safety in the industry.

"We work in a very dangerous industry with far too many accidents," he said. "Accidents in the crane industry occur every day."

During a presentation given by Mr Ainscough at the event, he urged crane hirers and contractors to move towards more contract lifting and blamed most of the accidents within the industry on poor planning.

He also said that because lattice boom extensions on telescopic cranes are not used frequently enough, manufacturers should "make them a thing of the past."

Mr Ainscough pleaded with delegates from the UK's Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to begin auditing crane hire companies as a way to improve safety in the lifting industry.

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Ace up trumps

RECENTLY ESTABLISHED UK crane hire firm Ace Crane Hire has taken delivery of a new 80 tonne Tadano ATF 80-4, taking the company's fleet up to seven mobile cranes. Shipped straight from Japan to the UK last month, the crane was presented at a recent open day held by Ace at Brands Hatch racetrack.

Gravesend-based Ace is a company with a rich background history and knowledge of the industry. Back in 1982, Alan Stowell, Ace's present owner, and his brother founded Diamond Crane and Plant, which, at the time of its sale to Ainscough 13 years later due to his brother's ill health, operated a fleet of 16 mobile cranes up to 90 tonnes capacity.

Having sold the company, Ace Crane Hire was founded in 1996 and in its first year exceeded £0.5 million revenue without purchasing a single crane.

"Various crane hire companies, notably Baldwins, supplied us with numerous heavy cranes up to 1000 tonnes capacity for large lifting and engineering projects such as the Kimera development in Chester, which really got the ball rolling," said Mr Stowell. "Since purchasing our first crane, a 20 tonne Kato back in '97, the company has continued to grow through investment, and last year was our first £1 million turnover year which we achieved with just four cranes."

Mr Stowell told C&A that, along with his management team, all of which are former Diamond employees, he plans to consolidate the business and keep operations tight in preparation for a future acquisition.

"We may soon be looking to raise our lifting portfolio possibly up



to 110 and 160 tonnes capacity," continued Mr Stowell."

In response to Mr Stowell's comments, UK sales manager for Tadano at Cranes UK, Brian Crisp, who also attended the open day said that Tadano's 160 tonne capacity ATF 160-5 and 110 tonnes capacity ATF 110G-5 units were yet to make their mark on the UK market."

Also on show during the open day was a brand-new 45 tonne capacity ATF 45-3 recently acquired by Bob Francis Crane Hire of North Wales lifting.

Platformers' Days 2004



THE COUNTDOWN has begun to Platformers' Days 2004 that will take place at its traditional Hessen Hotelpark venue in Hohenroda, Germany on August 27 and 28. During the show, the Vertikal Press will once again be teaming up with a group of independent experts for the fourth annual Vertikal Check event. This year, 3.5 tonne chassis, straight-boom, truck-mounted platforms with working heights of around 20 metres will battle it out in front of the crowds and be closely scrutinised by judges Reinhard Willenbrock, Adrian van der Geer and Hubert Gardemann.

Other equipment on show will include trailer and scissor lifts, articulated and telescopic lifts, special working platforms, telehandlers and cranes from the world's major producers. Visitors will also be invited to attend numerous seminars on the Friday of the show, where topics such as financing, leasing, machine insurance and equipment maintenance will be covered. For full details of Platformers' Days 2004 visit www.platformers-days.com

JLG to launch trailer-mounted platform range

JLG HAS announced plans to enter into the trailer-mounted platform market by the end of the year. The company displayed details of the first model in what will initially be a two-model range with platform heights of around 10 and 15 metres. The units are scheduled to enter production at the end of the year.

The announcement was made at a recent financial analyst meeting hosted by JLG at its McConnellsburg, Pennsylvania headquarters, where the company also revealed a number of key strategies and objectives, including an annual revenue target of \$2 billion (£1.1 billion) by 2009.

Apart from badging and marketing the aerial range of trailer lifts in Australia, JLG has until now largely ignored this market, which appeared at one point to be in terminal decline. Many large producers assumed that self-propelled lifts would make them obsolete. The market was left to local producers until UpRight and Genie entered the market and then the North American market took to them.

JLG's timing will be well placed for the UK market where the Health & Safety Executive is already beginning to clamp down on the use of ladders in anticipation of the new Temporary Work at Height directive 2001/45/EC. Trailer lifts are an ideal substitute for ladders in many applications.

Plans for the firm's telehandler range are equally aggressive. Currently market leader in North America, thanks to its Gradall, Lull and Skytrack acquisitions, and number three producer worldwide, JLG said that it aims to take 10 percent of the European market, where it currently holds less than one percent, within five years. JLG claims that should it achieve this aim, it would become the worldwide market leader, passing JCB and Manitou, the current numbers one and two. JLG expects to take the number two slot from Manitou within the next two years.

The company also plans to carve out a share of the European excavator market through its range of Gradall telescopic models, but also said that this was not a core product and that it would be prepared to sell the range if approached with a decent offer.

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Manitou (Site Lift) has invested £40,000 in a new workshop/training facility at its Verwood premises in the UK. With 950 square-metres of workshop space and 400 square-metres allocated for training use, the new site comprises five pre-delivery and inspection bays, three training bays, a tool store, a welding bay, a lube bay, a general storage area and a workshop office.

Workers sue over Clapham crane collapse

TWO KENT engineers who were injured when a German-made 100 tonne capacity Kirow 810(UK) rail-mounted crane toppled over at Clapham Junction in January (see *news Vertikal.net January 8, 2004*) are suing the crane's owner Balfour Beatty Rail. Both men are said to have suffered serious psychological injury after running for cover when the crane collapsed.

Sam Hamel of Fenton Solicitors, which is representing both men, said: "Although we are uncertain about what caused the crane to collapse, the ultimate responsibility lies with Balfour Beatty as it has a duty to protect its employees.

"Both men were dangerously close to the crane when it collapsed and both are continuing to experience symptoms as a result of the trauma. We are seeking an award from Balfour Beatty to compensate for the psychological injury and the cost of ongoing treatment that the men will need."

The crane was carrying out routine point replacement duties between Clapham Junction and Waterloo station when it toppled, blocking two of the four rail tracks into the UK's busiest station and causing chaos for up to 75,000 commuters.

The Health & Safety Executive Railway Inspectorate has decided not to investigate, although the Rail Safety & Standards Board will be holding a formal inquiry. A date has not been set.

Two towers



UK CONSTRUCTION company Shepherd Construction has been supplied with the first of two tower cranes from HTC Plant for lifting duties as part of the £15.5 million City Square development project in Liverpool's Central Business District.

The first tower, a TC1 Wolff WK 5520, is scheduled to stay on site for 33 weeks, while a smaller TC2 Wolff WK 100EC will stay on site for 42 weeks.

Although Shepherd could not confirm at the time of writing, Ainscough Crane Hire's flagship 1000 tonne capacity Liebherr LTM11000DS mobile crane could well be making an appearance on site around September this year for three, week-end shifts to assist with the project's steelwork programme.

Favelle may be floated

MUHIBBA ENGINEERING is considering floating its crane division, Favelle Favco Cranes Holdings, on the Bursa Malaysia MESDAQ (Malaysian Exchange of Securities Dealing and Automated Quotation) market.

In a statement requested by the Malaysia Securities Exchange and forced out by speculation from the Malay press, Muhibba said that it is currently looking into the possibility of listing its subsidiary on the MESDAQ market.

Muhibba is principally a contracting company specialising in

marine construction. The company went public in June 1993, and expanded into cranes in 1995 with the purchase of the Australian tower crane producer, Favelle Favco, that had been trading locally since 1962.

Muhibba also purchased the Manitex offshore crane division from Manitowoc in 1996 establishing Favelle Cranes in the US a year later, into which Manitex was incorporated. Favelle Favco holdings posted revenues of MYR195 million (£27.6 million) in 2003 and forecast a 10 percent increase for 2004.

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Tadano turns profit corner

TADANO, THE Japanese crane and aerial lift producer and parent of Tadano Faun, has announced its first sales increase since 1999 and the first positive year in profit terms since 2001.

Sales for the year ending March 31, 2004 were provisionally reported at ¥96.64 billion (UK£478 million), an increase of 16 percent on 2003 and the highest level since 1999. Net profit rose to ¥2.76 billion (£13.7 million) following losses during four out of the past five years.

Tadano has also forecasted further improvements in 2004/5 with revenues expected to rise to ¥100 billion (£495 million) with net profits of ¥2.8 billion. This still falls behind 1999's figures, however, when Tadano revenues were at ¥110 billion (£455 million) and the company reported a loss rather than the projected profit.

Attributable partly to the exchange rate, Tadano is once again rivalling the crane divisions of Terex-Demag, Liebherr and Manitowoc in pure dollar terms, although the Tadano numbers do include aerial work platforms and digger derricks in addition to cranes. ■

Contractor fined for using excavator as crane

ENFIELD-BASED contractor J Reddington has been fined a total of £32,620 after pleading guilty to breaching safety rules for lifting materials and causing serious injury to an employee.

The offence occurred in August 2002 when the slings attached to an excavator being used to lift steel piles broke causing the steel to fall on worker Warsame Yusaf.

HSE inspector Alec Ferguson who investigated the incident said: "Mr Yusaf suffered terrible injuries as a result of this incident. While the load was within the lifting capability of the slings, shackle and excavator, the method used to steady the load – pushing the excavator bucket forward against the slings – caused damage to one of the slings leading to its failure.

"There was neither protective packing nor protective sleeving at the point where the bucket met the sling to prevent wear to it. There are lessons to be learned from this incident for all who use lifting equipment." ■

FULL STORY ON WWW.VERTICAL.NET



The Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol formed the backdrop to a lift performed by Sparrow Crane Hire recently, which was called in by Bristol City Docks to assist in the re-fitting of 90 tonne lock gates at the Cumberland Basin in the Avon Gorge. For the main part of the lift, Sparrow brought in a 100 tonne capacity Grove GMK 5100 and an 80 tonne Liebherr LTM 1080/1, (pictured), while supporting roles were provided by two Demag AC 40/1s and a Tadano TL 75.

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News highlights

UPRIGHT has confirmed the closure of its Madera plant in the US, effective August this year, ending almost 60 years of production in North America. A corporate restructuring recently announced by the company also suggests the dropping of UpRight Inc for UI distribution North America Inc, which will be based in Fresno. It has also been rumoured that UpRight Inc may be, or has been, placed into liquidation. When confronted by C&A, John Coughlan, president of the UpRight group would only say that: "UpRight Inc was no longer trading."

FULL STORY ON WWW.VERTIKAL.NET

KOMATSU of Japan has announced rising sales of almost 10 percent to \$11.5 billion (£6.6 billion) and increasing net profits after tax of 79.6 percent to \$246 million (£140 million) for the year ending March 31, 2004. Strong sales growth in China and the US were cited as the main drivers for the increases. Komatsu also predicted sales growth this year in the nine percent region with net profit expected to rise by 37 percent.

GEORGE KEMPTON has retired from JLG's board of directors after more than 10 years in service. Mr Kempton, who was named a director in 1993, is the retired chairman of the board and chief executive officer of Kysor Industrial Corporation and former director of ARO Corporation, Guardsman Products and Simpson Industries.

AFI AERIAL PLATFORMS has opened a new UK depot at West Hallam, near Ilkeston in Derbyshire. The depot, which is AFI's tenth UK facility, was opened with a fleet of 75 boom and scissor lifts. AFI is hoping to double this amount of equipment over the next 12 months.

THE ASSOCIATION of Lorry Loader Manufacturers and Importers (ALLMI) Training has been granted the HSE's 'Working in Partnership' logo of recognition for its UK training scheme. The programme was drawn up by with the participation of an HSE representative and will now be referred to in the relevant HSE publications (see full ALLMI Training report on page 39).

SWINDON CORONER Nigel Brookes said that he would be writing to the HSE to request improved safety practices for plant hire companies. The action comes after Mr Brookes recorded a verdict of death by misadventure for a contract cleaner that was crushed between the cage of an aerial platform and a steel beam in late 2002.

HAULOTTE UK has moved into new purpose-built premises in Telford in the UK. The new premises are located on the same site as the company's old premises, allowing it to retain the same telephone numbers and mailing address.

A MAN DIED recently at a project site for Bell and Webster Concrete in Grantham in the UK when a large block of concrete that he was lifting using a gantry crane slipped from its slings and crushed him.



CANADA-BASED platform producer Skyjack has announced the production of its 100,000th unit. The SJ111 3226 unit, which received a special paint job and chromed parts, was presented to the company's head office staff at its HQ in Guelph, Ontario before being delivered to its new owner, AHERN Rentals of Las Vegas.

BROSHUIS of The Netherlands has been awarded a \$5 million (£3.3 million) contract to supply the English defence department with 75 semi low-loaders to be used for transporting its tanks. To meet growing demand for its trailer units across all sectors, Broshuis says that it will soon be expanding its production area in The Netherlands by around 2,500 square-metres.



WILLIAM O'BRIEN Crane Hire hosted Ireland's first ever Crane & Concrete Pump Conference in Cork recently in an attempt to promote effective safety management systems in the work place. Included in the speaker line-up was Keith Hartis and John Lowton, safety director and safety manager respectively Ainscough Crane Hire, Pochin Plant managing director Dave Pochin and several members from Ireland's Health & Safety Authority. From left to right, William O'Brien Senior, DJ Carey, Killkenny hurling legend, and William O'Brien Junior.

EPL ACCESS has been awarded a Best Practice Award from the Business Environmental Training Initiative project for its attention to the environmental impacts of the access business and the firm's responses to them. Councillor Richard Baker MBE, chair of Bedfordshire County Council, presented the award.

THE MANITOWOC Crane Group has announced the renewal of the long-term service agreement with Samuel Walker Ltd for the supply of field service, warranty cover, parts and technical support for Grove cranes in the UK.

FULL STORY ON WWW.VERTIKAL.NET

LIEBHERR Great Britain has closed down operations at its Hatfield site in the UK after 38 years in residence. The Liebherr UK operation has now moved to the company's new 10-acre purpose built facility in Biggleswade near Bedford. New telephone and fax numbers apply.

VP PLC, owner of UK Forks, the UK's leading telehandler hirer, has reported rising revenues by almost 11 percent to £83.5 million for the year ending March 31, 2004. UK Forks, which currently operates a fleet of around 1,000 units, turned in a solid 15 percent increase in revenues to £12.4 million compared with 2003. Profits remained static at £1.3 million in spite of the increased turnover.

WILLIAM L STERETT JUNIOR, president of Sterett Crane and Rigging and vice president of the Specialized Carriers & Rigging Association (SC&RA) in the US, has died at the age 57. Mr Sterett Junior was at the helm of a boat when it broke up after hitting a patch of rough water during a race. Mr Sterett was pulled from the wreckage and taken to Owensboro Medical Health System Hospital where he died from his injuries.

* C&A would like to highlight that the total number of Demag city cranes sold since the launch of its two-axle, AC 25 in 1997 is around 1,200 units. The numbers reported on page 22 of the 'Streetlife' city crane feature in the last issue of C&A refers to UK sales only.