

lift torque

Summer 2009

TOP PRIORITY FOR TRAINING

In the face of tough trading conditions and growing recessionary pressures, it is very tempting for companies to slash spending across the board. One of the first casualties is often the budget allocated to training and health and safety – but not at Apollo. This year we have maintained our commitment to reinvest a fixed percentage of our profits in our on-going 'Engineering Excellence' programme – and we'll be doing the same in 2010.

One of the main objectives of the project is to deliver into the field one of the best trained, most knowledgeable and most safety-aware teams of any service-oriented company in the country. That's why five years ago we pledged that every Apollo engineer would need to attain NVQ Level 3 as a minimum competency standard. That's why we launched our own modern apprenticeship scheme. And that's why we have one of the most rigorous IOSH-based health and safety training schemes in the UK lift industry as we work towards achieving full BS OHSAS 18001 accreditation.

NVQ success

Over the last 12 months alone, no fewer than 17 engineers have obtained their NVQ Level 3 in Engineering Maintenance (Lift servicing), with three also achieving NVQ Level 4. So congratulations to:

- > Roger Carter
- > Tom Flynn
- > Neil Jeffrey
- > Bradley Nelson
- > Robert Newton
- > Ian Greenwood
- > Tom Howland
- > Michael Rich
- > David Rich
- > Steve Ross Jnr (Apprentice trained)
- > Matthew Torrence
- > Michael Wratten
- > Barry Davey
- > Wayne Noakes

- > Richard Hollins (Tester NVQ 4)
- > Alan Nye (Tester NVQ 4)
- > Luke Reardon (Tester NVQ 4)

A big hand too for Lee Grainger, who has just completed his NVQ Level 3 in lift installation.

And engineers' technical and operational education doesn't stop there as we run regular internal courses to both supplement and retest existing skills and competencies. We have also enjoyed considerable success with our apprenticeship scheme, with both **Charlie Wilbraham** and **Callum Nye** combining college-based learning with on the job experience under the watchful eye of senior colleagues.

An intrinsic part of Engineering Excellence is safe working. No engineer is a good engineer unless he is also a safe operative, mindful of his own and others' well-being. With plenty of legislative changes to keep us on our toes plus an understandable desire to reinforce the 'safe working' message at regular intervals, our Technical Manager **Ian Tasker** has brought in a new initiative called Tool-box Talks. These are bespoke training materials especially developed for technicians, supervisors and risk managers to use in our rolling programme of internal H&S courses. Areas covered thus far include:

- Asbestos awareness
- Working at height
- Lifts directive & final test
- Passport to safety
- Manual handling
- Abrasive wheels



It is also our intention to have all supervisors and operations managers IOSH trained at Head Office this year, with supervisors also deputed to attend the regular LEIA safety forums to expand their own knowledge and pass on good working practice and advice to others.

In summary, there are always going to be 'cut-back' casualties in a prolonged downturn – but at Apollo, engineering excellence won't be one of them.

PEOPLE TORQUE

As well as a new man in the finance hotseat (see story right), there have been plenty of other comings and goings at Apollo over the past few months.

We're delighted to welcome Bernard Bergin to the sales team in the north although we were sad to lose northern office stalwarts Neil Smith and Geoff Meakin, both departing for a well-earned retirement.

Down in the south it's the story of two Alans: Alan Davis who comes into sales, and Alan Wiltshire who has joined us as a service supervisor

And say hello to our first Scottish colleagues, with engineers Davey Todd and Kevin Assiph already rising manfully to the challenge of two of the company's largest service routes. Glasgow to Inverness is not exactly a quick trip....

Now you know what they say about starting them young? Well, we're pleased to announce that a whole host of little Apollo people have arrived on the scene lately: northern repairs supervisor Mickey Bradshaw, engineer's mate Luke Cresswell, and southern service engineers Tony Morton and Roger Carter have all become fathers, while accounts executive Nicola Wall has just given birth to a baby girl called Lily.

Talking of accounts, we can also report on a pair of new faces there too – Antony Brown and Vicki Harden have quickly found their feet and, as with every new team member, we wish them both continued success here at Apollo.



NEW FACE OF FINANCE

Apollo Lifts Group has announced the appointment of Bill Donaldson as its new Finance Director.

Bill's extensive knowledge of private equity finance and his proven track record in the development of successful teams, financial systems, reporting and controls are seen as key to Apollo successfully pushing on with the second stage of its 'Invest in Growth' strategy. The company's objective is to become the UK's largest independent lift contractor within the next three years and Bill will focus on enhancing operational and financial structures to underpin future expansion.

Managing Director Martin Bettridge comments: "Bill's commercial and technical abilities made him the stand-out candidate and he brings a huge amount of talent, know-how and expertise to the management team. In the current challenging climate, there will naturally be an onus on tight fiscal controls as well as increasing efficiency and productivity; but we're also committed to pushing through our expansion plans and Bill's previous experience of acquisitions and private equity financing will be central in helping take Apollo to the next level."

Bill Donaldson has held a number of senior positions since qualifying with PwC, including roles with Allied Domecq plc and Inchcape plc before becoming Finance Director of Saga Services Limited. From 2002 - 05 he held the post of Chief Financial Officer at SIRVA Europe, and most recently CFO at Sterling Relocation.

Figures may play an important role at work but there's one figure in particular that dominates his spare time: his golf handicap. He's currently playing off a very creditable 'seven' so you have been warned!

LORDS OF THE MANOR



The Manor House Library in Lewisham represents one of Apollo's most stunning installations in recent months. The 8-person, machine room-less lift is not just an aesthetic triumph but also a highly professional execution that satisfied the rigorous criteria of English Heritage.

BETTER CONNECTED

Earlier this year we completed a significant upgrade to our communications infrastructure as part of our on-going commitment to IT-driven performance improvements.

A business-class fibre-optic network linking Apollo's London and Leeds offices has enhanced the speed and quality of connectivity, while super-fast broadband has accelerated access for both clients using the Dashboard customer portal and field engineers linking through to the Mercury Service Management System. The project has also seen the extension of IP telephony to the northern office, improving and simplifying call transfer and call management across the whole organisation.

Garry Strange, Apollo's operations director, believes such investment is critical if Apollo is to maintain its competitive edge: "We have a tradition of using technology to drive efficient working, increase productivity and deliver a consistently high level of customer service. The creation of a hi-speed private network brings real gains for both office and field teams, and for clients interacting with Apollo via the web, email or phone. Despite the current downturn, it's essential that we continue to strengthen our infrastructure so that we can better respond to operational demands and client needs now and in the future."

COOL HAND LUKE...

...but very warm - and sore - feet, we'd imagine. That's because Apollo Lifts tester Luke Reardon completed the punishing Three Peaks Challenge recently. For the uninitiated, this involves scaling Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon in three days or 24 hours' walking time. Luke was raising money for an extremely worthwhile cause, the Ellenor Lions Hospice, and we were delighted to support his fantastic fund-raising efforts.



20 Questions - Karen Hawkes, Office Manager



Name

Karen Hawkes

Role and Responsibilities

Office manager – admin of fleet, HR, payroll to name just a few

Qualities need to do the job

Being exceptionally well organised!

Biggest change you have seen in the company

The real growth we've experienced, particularly since the MBO

Your view on the company's strengths

Technology – I remember when the SMS was just a seedling

The biggest change in your job

The sheer volume of everything!

The best part of your job

Not having a swear box – I'd be skint!

The most difficult part of your job

Chasing people up

Your most embarrassing moment

Don't think I've had one but I'm quite good at embarrassing other people with my innuendoes!

Proudest personal achievement

Giving birth to my "little solder"

Alternative career

Hairdresser

Unfulfilled dream

Retiring

Most useful desktop gadget

My Apollo 'bendy pen'

Favourite place to be when not at work

Watching my son play rugby union

Secret vices

Chocolate

Likes and dislikes

Like holidays with friends and family. Hate lateness

Music on your car stereo

Homemade compilation of rock, pop and soul

Three things you'd take to a desert island

Chocolate, lilo, umbrella

Three words you'd use to describe yourself

Organised, loyal and a chocoholic

Three words you think your colleagues would use

Organised, punctual and with a good sense of humour

