

lift torque

Summer 2007

APOLLO - ALL OVER THE UK

At the recent Liftex 07 exhibition, Apollo proudly showed off its national contractor credentials. In the last two years, the company has grown hugely, much of it centred on the dynamic development of our Leeds office.

In just two years, we have extended our reach across the UK, no longer serving just the South East and South West but now firmly established in the Midlands, Humberside, Yorkshire and Lancashire, the North East, North West and even moving across the border into Scotland.

The growth figures speak for themselves. Units under contract in the north now total in excess of 1000, a 1000% increase on 2005 levels. Office space there has doubled. The team in Leeds is approaching forty strong, up from a base of six two years ago. An excellent structure is in place under the experienced eye of regional manager Steve Turner – the current complement includes service supervisors, a repairs supervisor, a project manager, sales managers, sales engineers, lift technicians, callout engineers, service engineers, repair crews/ & installation crews – and we're still recruiting heavily so as to satisfy the demands of continued expansion.

On the installations and modernisations side of the business, northern office projects have increased from four lifts a year to 24 lifts a year including prestige single lift contracts up to a value of £1M.

All in all, Apollo is making rapid progress in its bid to be the UK's leading lift contractor. We have already been acknowledged as a genuine alternative to the majors (evidenced, for example, by our work for Reuters and Jimmy's Hospital) and we are looking forward to building further on our success – all over the UK.

LIFTEX '07 - THE VERDICT

'It exceeded our expectations by a long way". That was the verdict of Apollo Lifts' managing director Martin Bettridge on this year's Liftex 07. Against a backdrop of a stunning six foot high map of the UK forged in stainless steel, Apollo demonstrated their national contractor credentials in style.



It was also the perfect launch pad for the latest version of the Mercury Digital Dashboard, whose slick new interface certainly turned a few heads. And as for the competition to win a funky iPod nano? Well, there were plenty of guesses on the accumulated fleet mileage of the engineering team...but did anyone come close? Read on!

COMP WINNER ONLY MILES OUT

Congratulations to Derek Jones of JB Lift Consultants for his brilliant guess – 1,754,236 against an actual figure of 1,758,915, just 4679 out. Next time we'll ask for the diesel calculation, which will be even more frightening!

GETTING CONNECTED PART 1...

Pocket Plutos, a PDA style device that links engineers directly with the Mercury Service Management System, were introduced two years ago to boost connectivity and information access and retrieval.

The first half of this year has seen a big push to extend Pluto usage across the whole call out/service team, in both the north and south. Training of both regional teams was complete by Easter and a month later the Apollo technicians' team was also ready to roll. The latter were equipped with the Sony Ericsson 990i rather than the standard Sony Ericsson M600 as these powerful PDAs have extra useful functionality such as camera phones and more user-friendly email set-ups.

The Plutos continue to have dramatic effects on efficiency and responsiveness, enabling the service desk to maintain a quality service to clients despite the rapid growth seen in the Apollo portfolio.



Engineers appreciate the ability to access key call information and to progress their calls without having to report into the service desk; alerts on outstanding service jobs are also proving useful in scheduling and completing work.

...PART 2

Supervisor Saturns, a Pluto-like PDA for supervisors, are currently in development to enable the team to keep track of operations and engineers regardless of location. Engineer status, call logs, lift history, night service roster and alerts together with email are just some the features in the initial specification. A pilot roll out is scheduled for the end of the summer.

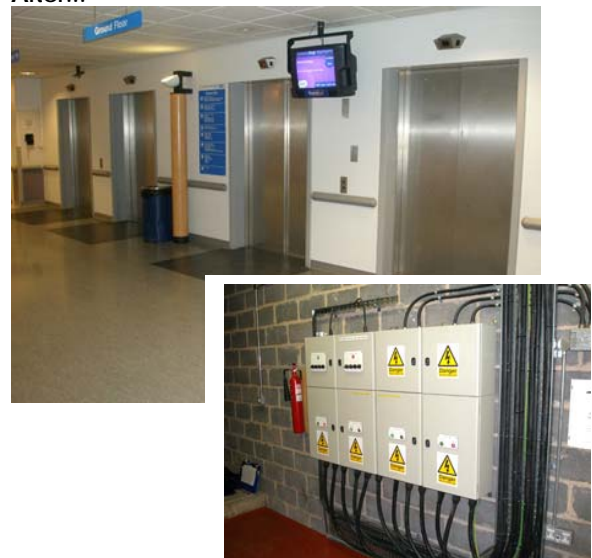
JIMMY'S IN PICTURES

Earlier this year we completed one of the most prestigious modernisation programmes ever in the history of Apollo – the complete upgrade of a 4-car group at Europe's largest teaching hospital, St James's in Leeds, or Jimmy's as it's more familiarly known. The project included all builders works related to the widening of two existing lift shafts as well as the complete overhaul of the cars, controls and motor room.

Before...



After...



BUSY TIMES FOR DDA TEAM

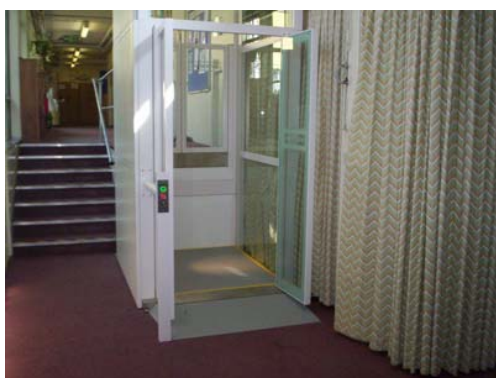
Disability solutions have been a recurrent theme for the installations team in 2007 as the realities of the Disability Discrimination Act start to hit home. Apollo has built up extensive experience in the stairlift/platform lift arena over the past decade, maintaining a substantial number of units for both public sector organisations and private individuals. In that time it has also developed an impressive installations portfolio – here are just three jobs from earlier in the year:

Stockwood Park athletics track:



Type: KL720 Platform stairlift with soft start & folding seat
Size: width 1000mm depth 800mm
Rated load: 225kg

Breakspear School:



Type: LM12 Hydraulic drive, vertical travel, enclosed platform, through access lift
Size: width 1100mm depth 1400mm
Travel max: 1500mm
Rated load: 350kg
Doors: Power operated
Part 'M' compliant

Denbigh Junior School:



Type: LM25 hydraulic drive, vertical travel, enclosed platform, side access lift
Size: width 1100mm depth 1400mm
Travel max: 2500mm
Rated load: 400kg Part 'M' Compliant

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY I

As part of the concerted inter-office familiarisation and training campaign, a number of exchange visits between the northern and southern-based teams have taken place since the turn of the year. One of these was scheduled for the week of the tremendous flooding that afflicted Sheffield and the M1 at the end of June. No matter, the game trio of Michael January, Karen Hawkes and Kathy Brown set off for Leeds in Mike's car at 7.30am aiming for an 11am meeting start. All was going swimmingly until suddenly the whole place was awash with diversions – and floods. Hours went by and still no destination in sight – but were they deterred, did they turn back? No, they finally made it through the rain, checking into the hotel some nine hours after setting off. They then hit the expense account before turning up prompt the next morning for a hastily rearranged accounts meeting. A particular round of applause for the 2 Ks – nine hours of Mike's car music collection is quite a feat of endurance.

BEYOND THE CALL OF DUTY II

Acknowledgement of Christian Hodgson's magnificent effort one June Friday. We received a call out to Homebase in Wick (you can hardly get further north!). Christian set off from Sunderland on Friday evening, arrived at 6.50am the next morning, fixed the problem and was home again by Saturday evening – a round trip of some 800 miles!

NEW OFFICE TAKES SHAPE



Building work on the new office complex across the road from Apollo HQ continues although the poor weather of the early summer has impacted on the hand over schedule. However, when it's complete, we will have an additional 4000 sq ft of high grade office space and industrial storage to expand into. Interestingly, the office will bear its own testimony to the skills of our installations department – Apollo has been contracted to deliver platform lifts as part of the complex's disabled access solution.

DASHBOARD v2.0 LAUNCHED

When we launched the Digital Dashboard in 2005, we expected it to be a useful tool taken up by a number of key clients. However, what we didn't foresee was just how many! Two years on and Dashboard users now number 100+ clients, and for many it's an indispensable resource for keeping track of Apollo performance and their own lift portfolios.



So they'll all be pleased to hear that we're now currently beta testing a new improved version of Dashboard – it's had a radical makeover while maintaining all the essential functionality of the original version. And that functionality has now been added to with new features including:

- Service reports module
- Bespoke reports and alerts configuration facility
- Comparative call volume calendar
- Fast feedback form
- News ticker

Once beta testing is complete (anticipated to be the end of the summer), clients will automatically be upgraded to version 2.0. An email notification alerting you to the change and the new features will be sent just prior to the changeover.

JOHN THE JUMPER

Some people go to extraordinary lengths to help others – Apollo engineer John Heseltine went to extraordinary heights. Earlier this year, strapped to a lift salesman from a rival firm no less, he jumped in a tandem skydive from 16,000ft! Despite landing heavily on his backside, he returned to earth in tact to the cheers of friends and colleagues. Thanks to his derring-do, the charity Medequip 4 Kidz is £500 better off.

