Need a lift?

Combilift was the brainchild of engineers Martin McVicar and Robert Moffett. Together they designed a new concept in space saving forklifts which, they believed, would enable the productive handling and storage of long and awkward loads in confined spaces

picture:
Combilift electric pedestrian stacker ranges, such as the Combi-WR4 and the Combi-CS, are also ideal for handling pallets as well as long loads such as aluminium profiles. Equipped with Combilift's patented tiller arm, these models guarantee maximum safety for the operator and other people in the vicinity.

The first ever Combilift truck, the C4000, was a multidirectional 3-wheel all-wheel drive forklift.

In its first year the company manufactured 18 units and all but one were exported. From the outset Combilift aimed to be major exporters and since its start it has sold more than 80,000 units to over 85 countries, most of them still in operation.

Combilift aims to invest 7% of annual turnover in research and development. Partly because of this, its portfolio has expanded significantly over the past 25 years and there are now around 25 different product families. The company says that its products are all designed around specific needs of the customers and finding solutions their challenges.

The company has a global presence base around a strong network of dealers who operate in each of its geographical markets. According to Combilift they are all experts in their field, not only from a product point of view but also in terms of the culture, language, and business practices that characterise their specific area. ❐

www.combilift.com

The Combilift multidirectional C-Series forklift is engineered to provide the safest and most productive way to handle long, fragile and specialised loads, such as windows, aluminium profiles, or extendable glass covers. It has a low centre of gravity and features an integrated platform, which provides a stable base for resting loads on while transporting. Safety is at the core of the design of the multidirectional C-Series. A low centre of gravity and integrated platform provide a stable base for transporting long, awkward, and fragile loads.

Multidirectional forklift models such as those in the C-Series and CB range are designed to travel sideways while handling long and bulky loads, for example, windows or glass panels. The sideways function eliminates the need for overhead carrying while navigating tight spaces, which significantly reduces the risk of injury. This in turn allows for much better and cost-effective use of all available space which is one of a company's most valuable assets. An additional safety feature is that these forklifts are built with a very low centre of gravity, allowing for a low-to-the-ground movement of your load. The C-series also includes an integrated platform, providing a stable base for resting your load during transportation.

A keen eye for quality

The difference between a production line that simply runs and one that genuinely supports profitability comes down to how efficiently processes are managed. And for Jade Engineering's co-founder and director Adam Jones, this has become one of the most important conversations in the sector , writes Jade's Adam Jones

Rising material and energy costs, tightening margins and an increasingly complex regulatory environment mean manufacturers are under pressure to produce more efficiently than ever before. Fabricators are under pressure from all sides, so the businesses that really understand their processes and optimise them are the ones that protect their margins.

Automation and new machinery are often seen as the route to improvement but the biggest gains frequently come from refining existing processes.

Large capital investments can be important, but they should never be the first – or whole – answer. Sometimes it's about looking carefully at the production line you already have. Small adjustments to tooling, workflow or material handling can remove bottlenecks and increase output without major disruption.

The spaces between the machines

A lot of the inefficiencies we see aren't actually caused by the machinery itself. They occur in how materials move through the factory, how workstations are organised, or how operators interact with the process.

Even relatively minor inefficiencies can have a significant impact over time. Profiles waiting for space, unnecessary operator movement or poorly optimised storage systems can slow down production far more than many manufacturers realise.

That's why we look at the whole production journey from when profiles arrive on site to when finished frames are ready for dispatch. If that flow is logical and well organised, the whole factory performs better.

Supporting this broader approach to efficiency is one reason we have been investing in expanding the JadeBespoke division. This focuses on designing and manufacturing the infrastructure that supports fabrication processes, including racking, workstations and material handling systems.

These elements might not be the most visible part of the factory but they can have a huge impact on productivity.

Jade's next phase

At Jade we have spent the past year preparing for growth. Having moved into our new 30,000sq ft premises, we used 2025 as a period of consolidation and investment, strengthening our facilities and internal capabilities.

Now, the first quarter of 2026 has marked the start of the next phase. We've invested heavily in our own infrastructure so we're ready to support the industry as demand evolves. The focus is on building the team and expanding our capability.

Two key appointments form part of that strategy. Stephanie Tague has joined as sales and marketing manager, while Harry Heer has stepped into the newly created role of design engineering manager, leading Jade's technical and design team.

Stephanie Tague and Harry Heer

Heer brings experience from outside the fenestration sector, having previously managed CAD engineering within the Polestar UK research and development team.

Manufacturing challenges in fenestration are surprisingly sophisticated. Having someone with experience of high-performance engineering environments helps us bring new perspectives to solving those problems.

Aluminium growth and regulations

Another major factor shaping fabrication environments is the continuing growth of aluminium systems. Which is why we increasingly work closely with aluminium profile suppliers and the Council for Aluminium in Building (CAB) to support the development of new manufacturing solutions.

Fabricators must also keep pace with evolving regulations affecting both PVC-U and aluminium systems. These changes can influence product design, manufacturing methods and quality requirements, meaning production processes need to adapt.

For manufacturers, regulatory changes can feel daunting. But often the adjustments needed in production are relatively straightforward if they're identified early.

This is where our engineering and consultancy work comes into its own. It might involve adapting tooling, refining machining processes or adjusting workflows. But if you address those factors early, it prevents disruption further down the line.

Ultimately, efficiency isn't just about speed. It's about creating manufacturing environments that are reliable, adaptable and commercially sustainable. Our industry is incredibly resilient, but the businesses that succeed long term will be those that understand their processes inside out. The most effective operations aren't just the most automated, they're the ones where every stage of production is engineered to work as a single, integrated system. ❐

www.jade-eng.co.uk

From start to finish

Haffner has assisted with the successful relocation of machinery for long-standing customer Mercury Glazing.

Mercury Glazing required its existing Haffner machinery to be transferred into its main manufacturing facility in Gloucester as part of an operational reorganisation. With production uptime critical, the project demanded careful planning, efficient execution and rapid recommissioning.

Haffner's team managed the entire process, from dismantling and transportation through to installation and commissioning. The relocation, which included four machines and the large CNC machining centre, was completed in just two days.

Martin Halford, managing director at Mercury Glazing, says: "The Haffner team relocated our machinery and had everything up and running in just 48 hours. They were incredible, and nothing was too much trouble for them. There's no substitute for quality products or service and you get what you pay for with Haffner."

Matt Thomas, managing director at Haffner, says: "Supporting customers goes far beyond supplying machinery. Projects like this highlight the importance of having the right expertise in place to manage relocations and ongoing support efficiently, ensuring productivity is maintained at all times." ❐

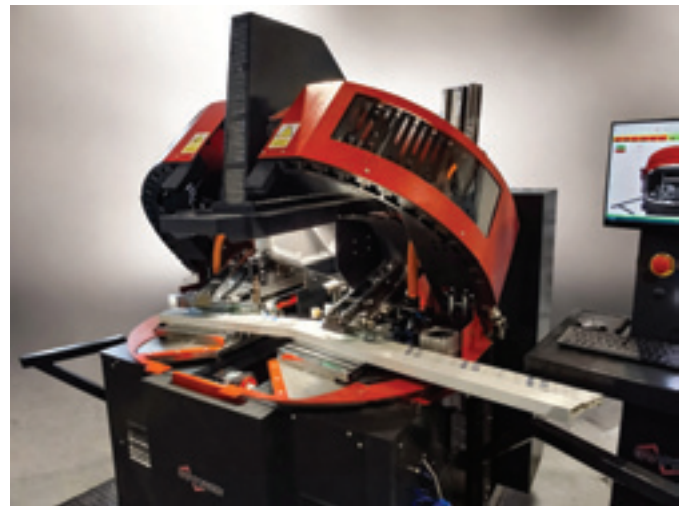
www.haffnerltd.com

The right solution

John Fredericks Plastics has installed a new Graf Synergy single head CNC sill welder, supplied by Haffner. The investment follows a visit to Graf's headquarters near Modena, Italy, last year, where the John Fredericks' operations team explored advanced sill welding solutions.

During the visit, Graf demonstrated how the machine could streamline fabrication processes by delivering seamless, high-quality welds while removing several time-intensive finishing stages. The patented technology eliminates the need for corner cleaning, sanding, polishing of sills and penning in, significantly improving workflow efficiencies and reducing production time.

Mark Dicconson, managing director of John Fredericks Plastics, says: "Having the team visit Graf to look at sill welding options, it quickly became clear that this was the right solution to resolve a bottleneck in our fabrication process. Not only would the sill welder reduce production time and save on costs, but the finish quality of the end product was exceptional. From an investment point of view, it was an easy decision to make."



Like all Graf Synergy machinery, the sill welder produces a precise, seamless weld free from excess sprue, enhancing consistency and reducing the need for post-weld finishing.

Dickonson says: "The feedback from our customers has been fantastic. They've particularly noticed the quality of the seamless weld, which really enhances the overall finish of the product.

"Working with Haffner has been a pleasure. Both Matt Thomas and Mike Moulds have been great to work with from start to finish, and the whole process has been seamless in every sense of the word." ❐

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