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## **GEFCO gear-up with Yale**

**Global transport and logistics company GEFCO has taken delivery of forty lift trucks manufactured by Yale Europe, as part of a new contract to supply materials handling equipment to GEFCO's nine UK warehousing and cross docking centres, in support of its European operations.**

A wholly owned and autonomous division of Peugeot Citroen Group, GEFCO has operations in 80 countries with 400 sites worldwide. Coinciding with the opening of a new 20,000 square metre warehouse site at Prologis Park, 8 miles from its European Network operation in Coventry, GEFCO has been supplied with a range of the latest 2-3.0 Tonne capacity Veracitor engine lift trucks, 3-wheel electric counterbalance trucks and pedestrian powered pallet trucks, supplied as part of a new contract with Yale Europe.

The GEFCO group operates across three business divisions: Automotive, Network and Supply. The Automotive division deals, as its name suggests, with vehicle distribution and preparation, while the Network operation provides a range of groupage, full and part load transport and express delivery services. The supply division undertakes air and sea freight transport as well as conventional warehousing and logistics processes a number of well known global brands, including heavy plant and automotive manufacturers.

In recent years GEFCO's client base has diversified as a result of a long term business plan to make wider use of the extensive skills base that existed within the group. "We believe that across the three divisions within our group there is no logistics based service that we cannot provide," says Andrew Hill, GEFCO's UK Logistics Manager. "GEFCO was originally formed to serve the automotive sector and, because we are used to meeting the high demands placed on suppliers by car manufacturers, we feel we have the discipline to work with customers in any industry – be it manufacturing or retail based," he adds.

Andrew Hill is based at the UK headquarters of GEFCO's supply division – a brand new, state of the art distribution centre built on a 20 acre site in Coventry, where GEFCO undertake a range of both straightforward and sophisticated storage operations, as well as 'pick and pack', 'decanting' and 'in-line sequencing' services for manufacturing-based clients who, in many instances, require stock to be delivered directly to their production line on a just-in-time basis.

Some 36 different manufacturing companies around the world are supplied from the site and, Andrew Hill estimates, for 90 per cent of them, the timing of deliveries is absolutely critical to the success or failure of their operation. So much so that some clients have penalty clauses written in to their contract that could penalize GEFCO if deliveries are so much as one minute late! In practice, the risk to GEFCO is minimal due to the high levels of service that are achieved. "Our in-line sequencing service, or supply in-line as it is sometimes known, involves supplying parts directly to the manufacturer's production line and, quite simply, if for whatever reason a part is not there on time, the entire production process could stop," explains Andrew Hill.

With such little margin for error it is essential that GEFCO's materials handling equipment operates to the highest standards and at the start of this year, after evaluating the products available on the market, GEFCO placed a major forklift truck order with Yale Europe Materials Handling. At the GEFCO Supply division's Coventry warehouse, a fleet of two tonne capacity LPG-powered Yale Veracitor counterbalance trucks is used to unload incoming trailers and deliver palletized loads to a marshalling from where they are picked up and put away in the racking by reach trucks. For outgoing orders the process is reversed.

In addition to the racked storage area which can hold up to 30,000 pallets, the site features a bulk store where, at any one time, between 4000 and 8000 stillages containing awkwardly shaped items – such as windscreens, engine parts and even complete motorbikes – which are block stacked. Before incoming goods arrive at the site an advanced shipping note (ASN) is received giving details of the anticipated delivery time. On arrival, lorry drivers report to the gatehouse where, for security purposes and to eliminate any possible chance of congestion around the yard area, they are validated and issued with a time slot before reversing their vehicle into one of 20 loading dock bays.

The Yale Veracitor trucks drive into the vehicles from the loading dock and remove

the pallet loads. Before the switch to Yale products, GEFCO's was operating 2.5 tonne capacity counterbalanced trucks across all of their sites. Unfortunately, the bigger machines not only damaged the curtainsiders delivering to the various sites within the group but, because of their size, had caused problems for the operators.

Andrew Hill explains: "The 2.5 tonne counterbalanced trucks that we had been operating, were designed in such a way that our forklift operators had difficulty seeing the entry point of the pallets when working in a lorry. As a result, we often had to dedicate a worker to stand inside the delivery vehicle and issue instructions to help guide the truck's forks into the pallet. Because of its smaller capacity and shorter wheelbase, the Veracitor GLP20SVX has removed both of these problems."

This was just one of the recommendations that Yale was able to make following a complete reassessment of all the entire materials handling operation across all sites in the GEFCO group – not just the Coventry facility. A variety of different products were suggested to meet the varying needs and capacities of the different facilities and, as a result of implementing the changes, GEFCO has been able to make significant savings across its entire forklift fleet.

"Yale completely overhauled our fleet," says Andrew Hill. "At certain sites we have been able to reduce the number of trucks in operation, which obviously brings a cost saving, while at others the introduction of, for example, 3.5 tonne counterbalanced trucks with extended forks to handle unusually shaped stillages, has made a big difference to our efficiency."

GEFCO's decision to choose Yale products for the Coventry site and, indeed, its entire UK operation, was based on certain key criteria including: feedback from depot managers and truck operators; the level of service support offering by the supplier and, of course, the total cost of ownership. "The Yale trucks are all fitted with Michelin radial tyres and tyre wear, which had previously been a problem for us, has been reduced noticeably", said Andrew Hill, adding: "Yale provides regular damage and truck usage reports which enable us to monitor the fleet's performance." The fleet has been supplied on a five year contract with a full service and maintenance agreement and will be used by GEFCO to move high volumes of high value goods around the clock.

Reviewing the performance of Yale, Andrew Hill concludes: "We were extremely impressed with the quality of the Yale product. We trialed a number of different

counterbalanced trucks from the leading manufacturers, but Yale's Veracitor was, by some distance, the preferred choice of our operators. We are also extremely impressed by Yale's after sales service back-up."

[www.yale-europe.com](http://www.yale-europe.com)

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Picture references:

### **NPR-564-YE GEFCO2**

Caption: Yale trucks delivered to GEFCO in Coventry, pictured L to R Violaine Brossard (GEFCO), Gary Tonks (Yale), Andrew Hill (GEFCO UK Logistics Manager) and Donna Matthews (GEFCO).

### **NPR-564-YE GEFCO3**

Caption: Yale 3.5 Tonne capacity Veracitor with extended forks makes handling long loads easy.

### **NPR-564-YE GEFCO1**

Caption: Yale GLP20SVX is the compact solution at GEFCO for cross-docking and loading operations.

### **Editor's notes:**

#### **About Yale Europe Materials Handling**

Yale has been manufacturing materials handling equipment for over 75 years and has an independent distribution network of over 350 Dealers in 62 countries.

Manufacturing takes place in eleven ISO 9001:2000 accredited NMHG factories throughout the world. European production facilities are in Craigavon in Northern Ireland, Irvine in Scotland, Masate and Modena in Italy and Nijmegen in the Netherlands where the Company's European Parts Distribution Centre is located. Four additional Parts Distribution Centres are strategically located in the Americas and Asia Pacific providing Yale with a truly Global presence.

As part of the NACCO Materials Handling Group Inc. Yale's Customers and Dealers benefit from the investment the company makes in Research and Design. Each year, investment in excess of over \$43 million is made in new product development. And as part of its continual commitment to Research and Design, over 370 research and manufacturing engineers are employed in the continual development of the Company's product range.

European sales offices are located in Fleet, England; Frankfurt, Germany; Paris, France; Modena, Italy and Dubai, Middle East, providing customers with local access to the full support of the Yale organisation.

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