

# Babcock upbeat on prospects

Although he acknowledges that 2016 was a “challenging” year for all companies supplying equipment to the mining industry, David Vaughan, Managing Director of Babcock’s Equipment business, says he is very optimistic on the prospects for 2017 and beyond. “We’ve noticed a change in mood amongst our customers, who clearly see better times ahead and, in some cases, are looking to renew or expand their fleets,” he says. “Certainly, we are very busy sending out quotes in response to the many enquiries we’re getting. In addition, we’ve had some excellent orders for both our Volvo and Terex machines and are starting the year with a healthy order book.”

Dave Vaughan, Managing Director of Babcock’s Equipment business.

The EC950E, the new flagship of the Volvo tracked excavator range.

**A**mong the orders that Vaughan refers to is one from Burgh Plant Hire for the newest and biggest machines in the Volvo line-up – the Volvo A60H, the largest ever articulated dump truck to be launched by Volvo Construction Equipment (Volvo CE), and the EC950E crawler excavator, the new flagship of the Volvo excavator range. The order – for three of the A60H units and one EC950E – was

placed at last year’s bauma show in Munich, Germany, and the machines are expected to be delivered within the next couple of months.

“The order from Burgh was the first order from anywhere in the world for the A60H and they will be working mainly in the Highveld coalfields,” notes Vaughan. “Burgh is a long-standing customer of Babcock and already has more than 100 Volvo machines in its fleet, mostly articulated haulers. The A60H is a



The new Generation 10 Terex TA400 articulated dump truck.

perfect match for the new EC950E, which now ranks as Volvo’s biggest excavator.”

He adds that both machines are attracting huge interest from customers, the A60H in particular. “In fact, the interest we’ve seen in the A60H is unprecedented indicating that it very clearly fills a gap in the market. It is evident that many operators have been waiting for an articulated machine of this capacity that provides an alternative to less versatile rigid trucks. I think potential customers also like the fact that it is a true articulated hauler with a standard three-axle layout which incorporates all the market-leading technology of the Volvo articulated hauler range. Volvo pioneered the articulated hauler concept just over 50 years ago and has been in the forefront of the field ever since.”

The payload of the A60H is 61 short tons or 55 metric tons (tonnes). When it was unveiled at last year’s bauma it offered a full 40 % increase in payload on Volvo’s next biggest ADT, the 39-tonne capacity A40. Since then, Volvo CE has introduced the A45, which can carry 45 000 short tons or 41 000 tonnes. The latest incarnation of the articulated hauler range is the G Series. “We don’t have any G Series machines in the country yet but will be introducing them shortly,” states Vaughan.

The EC950E is a significant step up – in terms of capacity – from the EC750, which was previously Volvo’s biggest excavator. A 90-tonne class machine equipped with a powerful 450 kW Volvo D16 engine, it combines power and stability with fuel efficiency and is ideal for

demanding mining applications. Quick cycle times are achieved with the enhanced hydraulics system which increases pump power for a fast and smooth operation while Volvo’s unique ECO Mode optimises the hydraulic system to reduce loss of flow and pressure.

Vaughan, who became MD of Babcock’s Equipment business in November last year

The pace-setting Volvo A60H, the biggest articulated hauler in the Volvo lineup.







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(he was previously Sales Director), notes that Babcock has been the official Volvo CE dealer in South Africa since 2000 and has really put the brand on the map. “There were others before us who had the agency but we’re the ones who have made all the headway – so much so, in fact, that on three occasions we’ve been named Volvo CE ‘Dealer of the Year’.

With Volvo CE having acquired Terex’s hauler business in 2014, Babcock is now also the dealer for Terex Trucks, based in Motherwell, Scotland. “We took over as the Terex Trucks dealer in October 2015, so the Terex brand has not been with us for too long – but we’ve already had some notable successes,” states Vaughan. He adds that Babcock has forged a close relationship with Terex Trucks in Scotland, which is intent on growing

its market share in the Southern African region.

Terex Trucks offers both articulated and rigid haulers. The articulated range consists of three models – the TA250, the TA300 and the TA400, with hauling capabilities from 25 to 38 tonnes – with the latest versions being the New Generation 10 machines. The rigids come in a four model line-up, the TR45, the TR60, the TR70 and TR100, offering payloads from 41-tonne capacity to 91-tonne capacity.

Commenting on the articulated Terex units, Vaughan says these are extremely capable machines with a strong following in the local market.

“The existing customer base is very loyal to the brand and many owners have told us that they are delighted that we are now providing the support and backup. We’ve also notched up some good sales in the relatively short time we’ve had the agency, with ten TA300s and 20 TA400s being sold during 2016.”

Vaughan says that Babcock – which prior to taking on the Terex Trucks dealership was unable to offer its customers a rigid truck – is expecting to do well with these. “They’re very robust and easy to maintain and are ideal for African conditions,” he observes. “They’re also known for their rimpull and their ability to handle steep gradients. Already we’ve sold three of the TR60s to Atlantis Mining, which has deployed them in the Middelburg area. Atlantis has been using Terex trucks since the 1980s and has quite a substantial fleet of TR60s. Some of them have worked for 25 000 hours and are still going strong – which is testimony to just how durable they are.”

Vaughan says that the company is particularly excited to have the 91-tonne capacity TR100 in the range. “This is an incredibly versatile and capable mining truck and there is a considerable population of TR100s out in the field. One mining contractor is about to deploy a large fleet of them in Botswana and we will be providing the support, involving putting technicians – and a spares inventory – on site. As yet, we haven’t sold any new TR100s but anticipate sales as mining recovers. Because of the downturn experienced over the past couple of years,

A Terex TR60 rigid truck. This is one of three new TR60 trucks recently purchased by Atlantis Mining.



**Left:** A Volvo EC750 tracked excavator at Babcock’s new Middelburg branch. The workshop has 12 large 9 m wide bays.

**Below:** The Middelburg branch includes a well stocked parts warehouse.

many mines and contractors have deferred purchase decisions and are now ready to invest in new machines. We believe many of them will look very closely at the TR100.”

While Babcock has the advantage with Volvo and Terex Trucks of marketing genuinely world-class brands, this is only part of the equation. Aftermarket support is critical and Vaughan says that this is an area where Babcock excels. “We believe the support we provide is industry leading. We work closely with our customers and have our branches strategically located in areas of their operation throughout South Africa and the wider Southern African region. This is a network which few other suppliers can match,” he says.

Evidence of Babcock’s commitment to customer support is provided by its state-of-the-art Middelburg branch, opened just on a year ago and representing a R100 million investment. It serves the Witbank/Middelburg area, which is home to many Babcock customers, most of them involved in coal mining.

Located on a 30 000 m<sup>2</sup> site, the new energy-efficient complex – as we reported in an article last year – includes 12 large 9 m wide workshop bays (able to accommodate trucks of up to 100 tons such as the Terex TR100), overhead craneage of up to 40 tons, dedicated washing bays for yellow metal vehicles, an industrial spray booth, a steel fabrication section for dump truck repairs and 900 m<sup>2</sup> of office space. It can handle full rebuilds and also has a huge parts holding.

Comments Vaughan: “The new facility has been a huge success and has certainly improved the backup we are able to supply to



customers, some of whom are literally just minutes away from us. Moreover, new machines shipped from our principals overseas can now be delivered directly to Middelburg rather than first having to come through our Bartlett branch in Johannesburg – this vastly improves delivery times.”

Finally, and looking forwards, Vaughan says Babcock’s Equipment business is in the process of restructuring. “In essence, we’re moving from a matrix organisational structure to a regional structure. This is designed to streamline the business and improve lines of communication,” Vaughan states. “We’re looking forward to putting the new structure in place in the coming months and are confident that it will result in Babcock’s Equipment division becoming an even more efficient and responsive organisation than it is at present with the overall customer experience being greatly enhanced.” ■