

GeoDrilling International



Exploration drilling

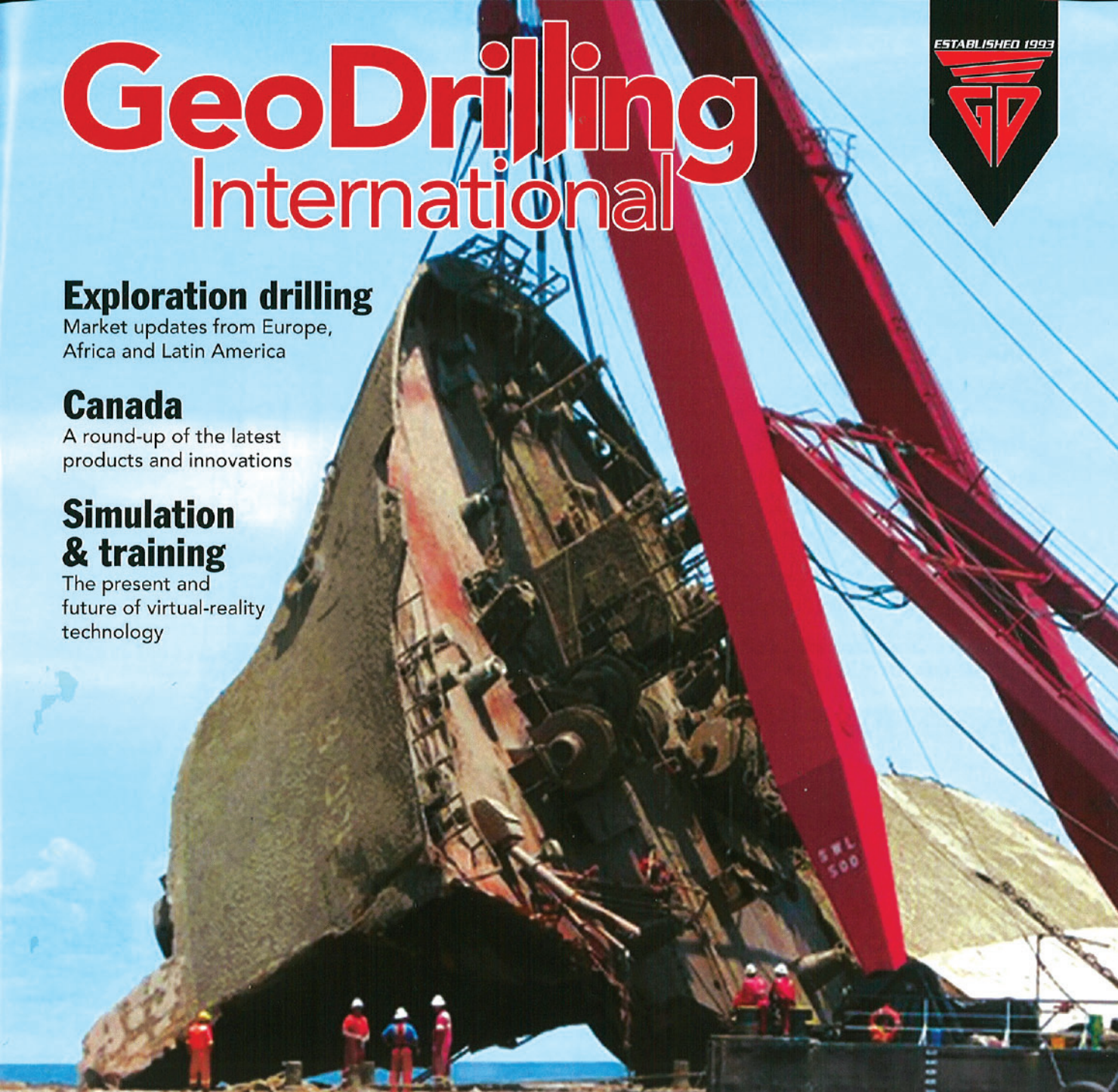
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SPT
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the numbers of rigs in their own fleets.

"Instead, we see them continuing to replace rigs in their own fleet as and when required but using hired equipment to meet any short-term increase in their workload and when they do not have equipment to carry out particular projects that are outside the capability of their own rigs."

Colets' HBR 204 MP has been carrying out augered minipiling operations, both hollow stem and open hole, with diameters ranging from 300mm to 600mm and depths up to 25m. Colets'

rigs both have masts with 8.4m stroke as standard, but the latest rig was delivered with the short mast option and this is proving popular for hirers with projects having restricted headroom.

Colets will shortly be taking delivery of a new Casagrande B125XP rig in continuous flight auger (CFA) mode with a high-speed rotary head specifically designed for CFA drilling in the 300mm to 600mm diameter range. ▽

Right: Colets Piling took delivery of a second HBR 204 MP minipiling rig at the end of 2014



Well equipped

Robin North, the former managing director of Soilmec (UK), talks to *GDI* about his new drill-rig rental company, North Equipment

Q When was the company formed and what does it offer?

North Equipment started trading as from January 1, 2015. We took over a company that owned five rigs of different sizes, and bought an old recycling centre in the middle of a place called Oundle in Northamptonshire. We're operating out of these new premises, hiring out Soilmec drilling rigs.

The idea is to buy new rigs from Soilmec – possibly from other manufacturers down the line, but at the moment only Soilmec – and rent these to the general market for continuous flight auger and rotary piling.

Our range of rigs currently goes from 40t up to 75t in weight, and the different rig types include three SF-50s, one SR-60, one R-625 and two R-312s.

The big advantage of having new equipment, of course, is that we have a 12-month warranty period, which helps us labour-wise.

Q What does the company add to the current UK drilling market?

There are other people renting out second-hand rigs, but not

necessarily new rigs. Currently, I can think of one company that has bought new equipment, but it does its own foundation-piling work and hires its equipment out as well. As far as I know, we are ▸



"The idea is for the company to have at least three if not four different products to offer; we don't want to be standing on one leg"

North Equipment's rental fleet includes three Soilmec SF-50 rigs

- ▶ the only company in the market hiring new equipment out, at the moment anyway.

Q What are your expectations for demand for the rental products?

We're working on the basis that we need at least 50% utilisation on the fleet of rigs that we have. Some rigs, such as the SF-50s, will probably hire out a lot better than that. The bigger rigs, such as the R-625, are a little bit more specialised, so the utilisation is not as high, but we can get a better, higher rate for them.

At the moment we're in a dip for rental sales because rental is always quiet in January/February, in fact this can carry on till March. As the summer months come closer, things will pick up.

The market place is changing as well, and Soilmec has brought out new rigs in order to meet changing demands in the market

place. Hopefully we'll be able to provide those new rigs and follow the trends.

Q Do you have any plans for expansion?

We're trying to make sure that we're well organised within the markets we're currently operating in before looking at any further options. However, the idea is for the company to have at least three if not four different products to offer; we don't want to be standing on one leg. We can't rely on the hire market solely.

We have to look at other markets. For instance, we'll also be marketing a mud pump, which goes on the end of an excavator to help clear canals, rivers, ponds etc. In view of what's been happening with flooding, I think this is a situation that is going to get worse.

Our aim is to have an excava-

tor with a pump on it, so that we can demonstrate and possibly do hire with option to purchase, or we can do straight sales. In order to break into this market, we've got to be able to demonstrate that we have a unique piece of equipment; we're going to make the investment that is necessary to do that.

The mud pump is from an Italian company called Mecbo. We're co-operating with Mecbo to bring that to the market place.

One of the areas we will move into eventually is used equipment. We won't be keeping the hire fleet machines for more than a 2.5- to three-year period because they need to be in good condition, and they tend to get a little bit abused in the general market place. Also, we need to keep up with the latest technology.

Q What is your view on the current state of the construction market?

I'm a little bit wary at the moment. I think in the last two years people have been investing quite a lot of money into machinery and the market place itself – that's going to reach full on the dial – and they need to keep that equipment maintained. That may affect the hire market.

And the UK is no longer an island. The rest of the world has a lot of influence on what happens to our markets. Talking to people and going round, everybody seems to be feeling buoyant. But my experience, which is about 30 years in the foundations market, is that that can change quickly.

We don't have the same markets abroad any more. In the past, when we've been down, the French market's been up, so we've been able to sell used equipment outside the UK. Those markets are still there, but they're not very buoyant at the moment. ▼

“Those markets are still there, but they're not very buoyant at the moment”



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