

# PRESS INFORMATION

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## BOUGHEY GETS MORE IN LESS SPACE WITH ATLET

Boughey has expanded its distribution facilities in Wardle, Cheshire with three new warehouses. Atlet helped to design the layout and recommended warehouse trucks which maximise storage capacity. The latest order covers a wide range of warehouse trucks and extends a relationship between the two companies that began in the 1980s.

“We believe Atlet offers the best value,” says Bernard Murphy, Depot Operations Director at Boughey. “We are in a demanding market where service is everything and availability on the shelf is the only key performance indicator that matters for some customers. Everything we do here is geared towards customer service and that is affected by our suppliers which is why we buy good quality.”

As the UK’s leading ambient grocery distribution and storage specialist, Boughey offers a complete set of services to customers who include some of the best known food brands as well as numerous smaller businesses. The company’s consolidation, repack, storage and distribution capabilities enable it to service over 140 national and international accounts ranging in size from just a few pallets to well over ten thousand.

Three new warehouses were constructed at Wardle in response to increasing demand from existing and new customers. Each covers 100,000ft<sup>2</sup> and accommodates 19,000 pallets in a combination of mobile and conventional racking. The development brings the number of buildings on site to 15 with a total capacity for over 100,000 pallets.

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Atlet first supplied trucks to Boughey in the late 1980s. The relationship grew steadily and over the past eight years Boughey has more or less standardised on trucks from the Swedish manufacturer. As always it approached other leading suppliers to discuss its requirements for the new warehouses. The choice of racking was designed to maximise storage capacity. To make the most of this the reach truck specification demanded the capability to handle full pallets weighing as much as 1250kg in any location, including the top beams at 10.8m. Boughey also wanted to introduce greater flexibility into its picking operations.

“We looked at the leading truck suppliers and asked them what they could offer,” says Chris Foster, Warehouse Operations Manager. “We had a rough idea of what we needed but Atlet and some of the other suppliers ran simulations. These came out much as we had expected but it was good to see we were on the right lines.”

Atlet proposed the heavy duty version of its UHS Forte reach truck for the general pallet handling requirements. This is designed and manufactured by Atlet to deliver the high performance, safety, reliability and ease of operation that are essential in maintaining the sustained productivity and minimal truck down-time demanded by today's busy distribution centre warehouses. Arguably the safest high-performance lift truck on the market, the Forte is fitted with Atlet's unique Stability Support System - S3 - that automatically provides higher truck stability by governing speed and acceleration, and the interface between speed and steering sensitivity. For the other picking and handling duties, Atlet recommended a selection of low level and man rising order pickers and powered pallet transporters. The resulting order, comprising over 40 trucks supplied on a five year lease, was the largest Boughey had ever placed with Atlet.

“It was a big issue for us to get 1250kg to the top level but Atlet was one of the few companies able to supply a suitable truck,” says Chris Foster. “Atlet was in a strong position because we knew them and although they were not the cheapest they worked hard to close the gap by offering guarantees on call out times, response rates and 24/7 support.”

The service offered by the potential suppliers was one of the key decisions in the selection of the trucks. A dedicated Atlet engineer has been on site for some years to support the 24/7 operation. This enables Atlet to include a range of preventative maintenance services that aim to identify and fix any technical issues before they impact on the warehouse operations.

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Information from on-board computers is used by the engineers to assess each truck's status and to intervene when required. This can be supplemented if needed by the engineer based half an hour up the road at Boughey's other site in Deeside. Boughey also recognised that modern lift truck operations are about whole life costs instead of initial purchase price. The improved reliability of trucks and more efficient maintenance regimes offered by suppliers over the past couple of decades means that fleets are now very lean and there is little spare capacity.

Atlet provides regular reports and raw data to Boughey that contain a range of performance and maintenance metrics such as hours worked, truck availability and so on. This allows Boughey to assess overall fleet performance and, crucially, the real cost of ownership.

"The service level agreement is important because one company may appear cheaper but when spares and service are taken into account they are more expensive," says Dave Vernon, Warehouse Manager. "We knew Atlet would not do this because we knew how they worked. Improvements in technology have helped us to cut fleet requirements but we also have a greater awareness of overall costs."

Operations in the new warehouses are reasonably standardised. Stock for each customer is allocated to specific zones for simpler resource management. Pallets are stored in the higher locations and brought down by reach truck for picking using the other trucks. Handling full pallets to the top beam of the racking requires precision and although Boughey's warehouse team had been used to working at lower maximum heights in the existing warehouses it was decided that their experience and the use of the trucks' on-board height indicators would avoid the need for cameras mounted on the forks.

The choice of low level order pickers and ride-on powered pallet transporters was relatively straightforward but the addition of man rising order pickers to the fleet was a novel departure for the site. Around a quarter of picking in the new warehouse is by case and the use of man rising trucks supports greater flexibility because items can now be accessed from any location in the warehouse.

"We recognised that man up trucks presented an ideal solution," says Dave Vernon. "These were new designs of truck for us but the response from our operators was good."

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Atlet offered a number of battery charge and change options with the trucks and Boughey went for a simple management and rotation system to ensure the most efficient use of energy resources. Battery changing is facilitated using two of the company's Battsman changeover units. These are in effect modified versions of powered pallet transporters and used to transfer batteries between a truck and its charging position. These eliminate the need for the larger trucks to enter the area which is simpler and quicker.

The use of sophisticated ERP and WMS facilities that interface with customers' own systems ensure the new warehouses are operating at almost 100 per cent occupancy. Most deliveries are despatched to RDCs operated for or by multiple retailers and Boughey estimates it has in excess of 1000 locations to serve each week using its transport fleet of 140 vehicles. The company will be taking delivery of a further six man rising order pickers at the end of 2008.

"We are getting more out of less space with this combination of truck and racking," says Bernard Murphy. "You get what you pay for and if you buy good quality you get good service."

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