

Shoremaster  
also supply the  
modular dock  
system shown  
here

# WANNA LIFT?

**A few years ago boat lifts in the UK were as rare as hen's teeth. These days they are more commonplace. I was at TTT's Waterski Club near Oxford recently and to my surprised counted 16 on lakeside jetties. Why bother though? Well, in essence a boat lift is a sensible solution to a variety of potential problems and inconveniences**

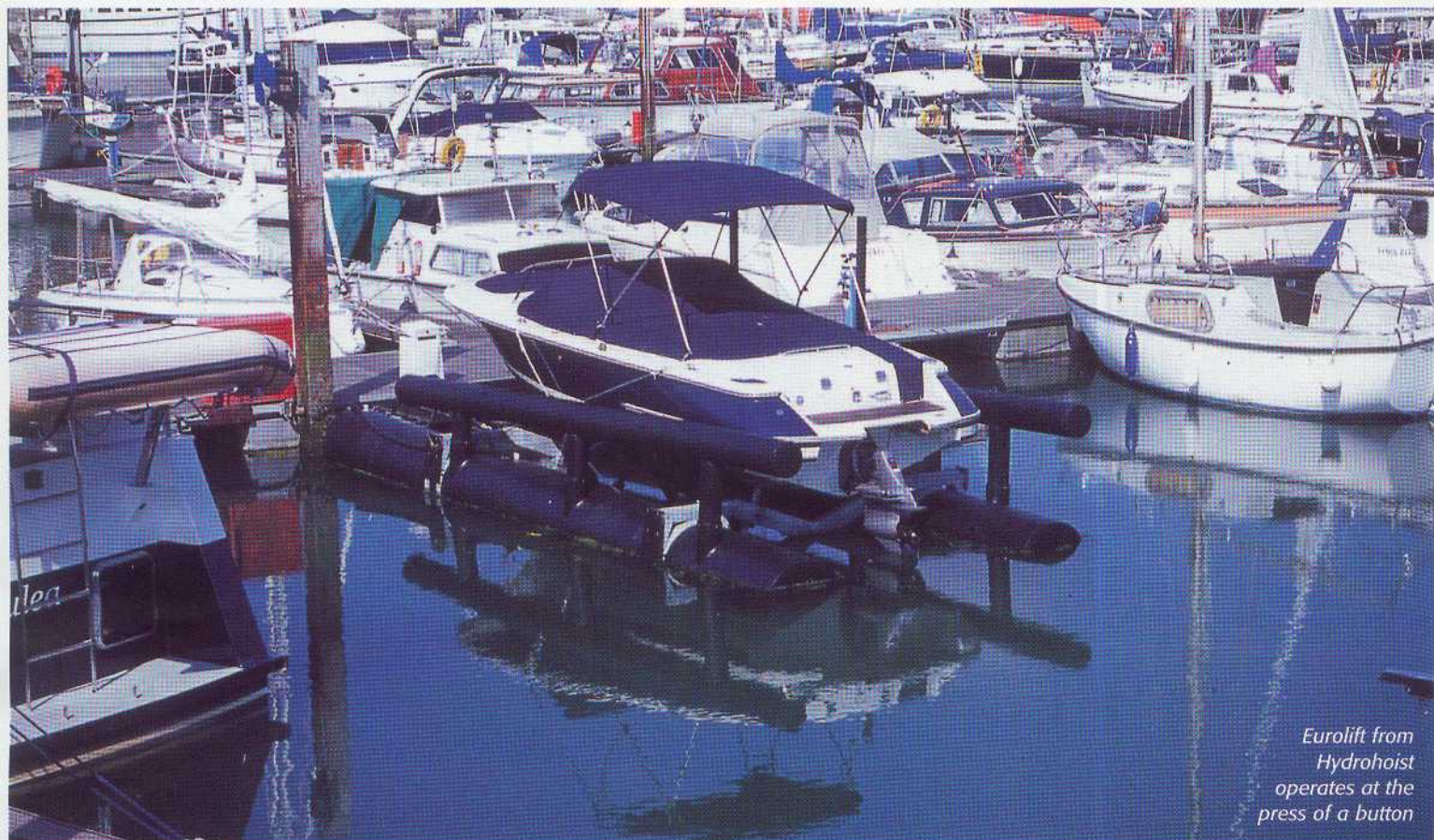
**F**irst, craft last longer when they are not subjected to long-term immersion. The hull, props and drives all deteriorate with prolonged exposure to water. You run the risk of gel coat blisters and possibly osmosis. Second, by hoisting clear of the water, you don't need to antifoul. This is a costly and tedious job and increasing numbers of antifouling products are being banned because of damage to the environment. Don't forget that you can lose up to 10mph just by having a dirty bottom! Next there's the security issue. A boat on a trailer can be easy pickings for thieves but one that's two feet in the air is a tad more difficult. Lastly consider the hassle factor - no more trailering either all the way home or just to the compound on the bank.

But boat lifts are an expensive accessory for your boat costing several thousands of pounds. We look at some of the lifts available in the UK at present to weigh up the pros and cons. There are several methods in which to lift a boat out of the water.

There's the mechanical or electrical kind which

*Airberth has a jet spray system for rinsing the hull*





*Eurolift from Hydrohoist operates at the press of a button*

attaches to a fixed dock, harbour wall etc. There's the free-standing mechanical or electrical lift with adjustable legs enabling the unit to be installed in most reasonably shallow waters or a floating lift based on tubes which are either full of water or air. The tubes or tanks are usually aluminium, fibre-glass or polyethylene.

On a blistering weekend, we took a trip with a photographer to Ramsgate to take a peek at a Eurolift Hydrohoist in action. Having located the owner Jim Lawrence, we arrived at his berth where he proudly lifts his beautiful 7.5m Chris Craft Launch 22 clear of the water on his new

for those who would prefer not to leave their craft in the water. Coping with weights up to 15000kg, the lift will fit comfortably in marina berths or wherever your berth happens to be. With modifications it can cope with vessels over 15000kg. The operation is simple. Just set the controls to lift and the blower forces air into the submerged chambers, lifting the bow first. Once up, the controls are set to dry dock, and Bob's your uncle. Launching is just a matter of reversing the process, without the blower. What could be simpler? Prices start from £4,758.75 but that includes delivery, installation and VAT.

Next we set off for RA Marine in Chipping Norton near Oxfordshire. The company was formed by Anna and Richard Horn, after they decided to buy their own lift. It was a 'Victor Kyam' style story. Having visited the manufacturing plant in Minnesota, they liked the product so much... Shoremaster lifts were designed originally for the remote, shallow, glacial waters of Minnesota so the lifts had to operate without power. This makes them an ideal option for venues without utilities as they are totally mechanical. Shoremasters come in an easy to assemble modula format making them adaptable to most criteria. A basic package starts at £2,975 and the surrounding decking is modula and can be added in sections to suit the surroundings. The lift operates by a simple wheel mechanism and the boat is lifted fairly effortlessly. There is a hydraulic option available too. An electric motor can be fitted to operate the winch which is run by a solar charged car battery. The boat is easy to navigate on and off by either runners or 'lollipops'. The Shoremaster is made from



*Basic lifts have great accessories available...*

aluminium and stainless steel with a vertical moving cradle. It will lift boats up to 30-feet long weighting up to 3.5tonnes and comes with a 15-year warranty. Whilst the company claim installation is straightforward, a charge of £250 for the procedure seems a snip! Taking between half and a full day to erect, I'm sure the experts would make it look simple. This system is also easy to relocate should you decide to 'up sticks'.

Similar to the Hydrohoist system is the AirBerth Boat Lift. We first saw this lift impressively in action at this year's Ribex show. Wave Seven Marine, the UK distributor for the lifts, teamed up with the Cowes Inshore Lifeboat to demonstrate the ease and speed with which Air Berth scooped the huge RIB into the air. The lifeboat was driven onto the submerged AirBerth and the positioning ropes secured her in position. Once the hoses from the portable Dockbox Air Control were attached the displacement of water from the primary floats started. Within minutes, the



*...such as matching canopies*

Hydrohoist. Eurolifts are built by Hydrohoist International Inc. from Claremore USA and sold through Barnet Marine of Barnet, Hertfordshire. The company have been building lifts since 1964 and are confident their product is one of the best around. Using standard electrical power, a zinc galvanised steel cradle and polyethylene chambers, the Eurolift combines practicality and ease of use, to offer a quick and simple solution



*The Basto lift comes as a self-assembly kit if required*

lifeboat centred itself and AirBerth shaped to her hull.

AirBerth comes with compression pads to disperse the load to give the boat a more even support. The tail pipes are used to flood the main buoyancy chambers when lowering the boat into the water and again to pump the water out when lifting and apparently is dead easy to do.

The weather proof dockbox can be permanent or portable. AirBerth simply attaches to your current jetty, pontoon or marina berth making relocation simple and there are no submerged metal parts to the lift. A very sexy addition is the spray jet system which rinses the hull when attached to a freshwater hose.

Jenkins Marine in Poole are the UK distributors for Golden Boat Lifts. This company is one of the largest suppliers of lifts and manufacture several different types.

The Florida based company produce a full range of dock products including davits, cradles, boathouse lifts etc. and have over 18 years of manufacturing experience. All their lifts are made from marine grade aluminium and their hardware, cables, and motors are stainless steel. The gear box connects directly to the drive shaft with a stainless steel adapter, powered by either a 3/4 or a 1hp motor with V-belt or chain drive input. If the chain or belt comes off or breaks the gear box locks the shaft, therefore preventing damage to the boat, lift, or worst yet, an injury.

The lifts come with carpeted bunk

boards, guide poles, and electrical switches. There are no plastic parts to wear and the pulley or chain covers are cast aluminium and are fitted with maintenance free, oil bath gearboxes. These lifts carry a ten year structural warranty, a five year warranty on the drive system and two years on all other parts. Each boat lift cradle is engineered and designed to fit the boat manufacturer's recommended bunk placement. Prices start from just under £4,000 and because of the many different types of lifts it is best to call for installation prices. We have to admit to not seeing this one in the flesh.



*Each Golden lift cradle is designed to fit manufacturers recommended bunk displacement*



*Shoremaster operates mechanically and without power and is the cheapest we found*



*A Hydrohoist in situ in Ramsgate*



*Golden lifts have a 10-year structural warranty*

Our search for boat lifting excellence took us next to Yorkshire. MasterCraft Europe are the European distributors for the Basta Marine Over-Center (formerly called Nyman Boat Lift). The locking design of this lift is very simple and efficient. Powered by a 12v solar charging system it can be remotely controlled or manually operated. This lift is very fast, travelling up or down in just 40 seconds. Available in aluminium and galvanised steel, it is suitable for both fresh and salt water installations. It is very easy to assemble, in fact Ian Birdsall from MasterCraft erected one in under an hour for their stand at last year's London show and he assured me a novice could have his erect in

only nine major components with 130 parts in total including all nuts, bolts and washers and it comes in a box that will fit in a small pick-up. This lift is definitely the one if you're looking for self-assembly. Prices start from £3,995 and if you think DIY stands for Don't Involve Yourself then installation costs around £500.

As you can see boat lifts are not cheap, but then neither are boats. The type of lift you choose will depend on the lift site and the facilities available. The cost is going to be between £3,000 and £5,000. Consider the cost and inconvenience of trailering, antifouling, security, insurance and potential damage and you could find yourself a long way towards meeting those costs.

under two hours, if you get my drift. Built in Washington the hoists looks very rugged and simple to operate. The load-bearing pins at all pivot points are stainless steel, and nylon insert locknuts on all moving parts improve durability in the water. There are

#### **For further information contact:**

##### **AirBerth**

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##### **Basta Marine (Nyman)**

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##### **Golden Boat Lifts**

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