

Bishop First to the Wire

Syd Bishop & Sons Demolition Ltd is rapidly approaching the completion of a contract to demolish a former cable works in Kent, the latest phase in the vast Thames Gateway development that is reshaping the Garden of England.

With almost 70 individual buildings scheduled for demolition, the redevelopment of the former TT Electronics site in Northfleet, Kent is a massive undertaking by any standards. The site encapsulates the works for AEI cables and Henley Electronics, inventor of insulated conducting wire and whose original machine now resides in London's Science Museum.



Hitachi Central

The 68 buildings being demolished for client SEEDA are on two adjoining sites dissected by Crete Hall Road, which runs alongside the River Thames. The 42 buildings on the Rosherville site to the south of the road have already been cleared. These consisted of a collection of three or four storey steel framed buildings that were felled by an Hitachi 600 fitted with a 34 metre high reach boom and pulveriser combination. In typical Syd Bishop style, this high reach machine was supplemented by a wide range of Hitachi excavators including a 470, a 350 with a material handling grab, two 280 units equipped with pulverisers, and a pair of 250s fitted with shears or buckets. The site's Hitachi fleet is completed by a 130 model that is used for general clearing work.



Although there was a fair amount of asbestos on site, this was removed and a soft strip completed in November 2009 before demolition began in earnest. "The site clearance has gone extremely well, and the Southern site is now clear," explains project manager and third-generation demolition man, Michael Bishop. "The real beauty of this site is that we can use the recycling facilities of our sister company Pinden located close by at Longfield. The Pinden facility is perfectly equipped to deal with the millions of wood blocks that covered the floors of the buildings here."

While progress on the Southern site provided relatively straightforward, preservation orders on several buildings on the Northern site has required a different, more delicate approach. "At the moment the massive manufacturing works building, which is still in

operation, will be preserved for conversion into residential flats," Bishop continues. "The marvellous Art Deco Henley building that fronts the Rosherville site has also been spared, and is due for renovation when the site is redeveloped."

Pleasant Surprises

Apart from working around a 660v electrical ring cable affixed to the perimeter building walls, a public tow path, a live manufacturing plant and hot bitumen tanks, the site has thrown up a few unforeseen challenges for Michael Bishop and his team to contend with. "On the Northern site, once we had removed 19 massive steel bitumen tanks located in the basement, we started work dismantling the Fleetway building," he says.

And, as Bishop explains, the salvage operation did not end with the steel. We have started to backfill the basements with recycled aggregate from the site, and are recycling all other materials" he says. "We have recovered a large number of bricks. The wooden floorboards and joists are also exceptionally high quality and these have been carefully removed for cleaning and reuse in furniture. We have also recovered all the old fixtures and fittings in the office block. It would be nice to think these will go into a new building at some point."