

ONLY THE BEST AT BREST!

A drilling contractor who knows just what he wants

Productivity at 10 granite and quartzite quarries in France is increasing dramatically – thanks to the high performance of a robust crawler rig and the introduction of a powerful new rock drill.

French drilling contractor Forage Le Hir has been working in the Brest area of north-western France for decades.

The ten quarries in which the company operates are within a 100 km radius and account for 75 per cent of its total workload, the remainder being stabilisation operations in ports and harbours.

Atlas Copco has been the main equipment supplier to the company since 1980 and the current rig fleet comprises a ROC F7, a ROC 460 and a ROC F9 unit equipped with the high-powered COP 2550 rock drill, which delivers up to 25 kw impact power.

Working on 18 metre-high benches, the ROC F9, equipped with Secoroc



Power all the way: The new high performance ROC F9 rig equipped with the COP 2550 rock drill. The other picture (top right) shows blasting operations in one of the quarries.

T-51 rods, achieves an average penetration rate of one metre per minute drilling 89 mm diameter holes. This compares to an average of 0.75-0.8 m/min using the ROC F7 rig.

Specific aim

Bernard Le Hir, owner of Forage Le Hir, purchased the ROC F9 in September last year with the aim of reducing drilling time by 20 per cent and achieving smoother production all round.

As a sub-contractor, he is effectively paid for the number of metres drilled – so a 20 per cent increase in productivity has the potential for a significant increase in earnings.

He says: “We are delighted with the new equipment, which is a good solution for us. It makes us more competitive and the higher productivity means that, in the long run, we can increase the amount of work we undertake. And that will more than compensate for the extra fuel consumption required by the larger engine on the ROC F9.

“It is another good solution for us to have a really powerful rockdrill like the COP 2550. It means that we will be very competitive for future work.”

Self-sufficient

Mr Le Hir has a staff of five employees, one of them in administration and four drillers. He says that the company had just one drill rig operating in two quarries in the 1980s

Now the ROC F9 and ROC F7 rigs service 10 worksites with a total annual production of four million tonnes per year – which illustrates just how far drilling technology has advanced over the past two decades.

Benoît Etienne, Business Line Manager for the French subsidiary Atlas Copco Forage et Demolition, describes Forage Le Hir as “a self-sufficient contractor”. It is a company which prefers to manage and service its own equipment – but counts on Atlas Copco to help with specific issues. And it is a relationship that suits both parties.

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Company owner Bernard Le Hir (right) with Benoît Etienne, Business Line Manager at Atlas Copco in France.