



A mighty Mediterranean Shipping Company vessel alongside at the Port of Felixstowe

Second landmark building doubles capacity for agents

Mediterranean Shipping Company (UK) is expanding its headquarters on the outskirts of Ipswich by building new state of the art offices adjacent to its landmark building Medite House. **David Petchey**, the chairman of MSC (UK), spoke to **Sheline Clarke** about how the company is growing and planning for the future

MEDITE HOUSE was one of the first office buildings to be erected on what is now known as Ransomes Europark, strategically positioned on the A14 between Ipswich and Felixstowe. From the outside this imposing building with its distinctive red brick still looks like new, despite being more than 12 years old. Inside, charming reminders of this company's connections with the sea and maritime trade are all around. It is a fine building which has served its inhabitants MSC (UK) very well. Very well, that was, until it became too small. Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) has grown to become the world's second largest shipping line and MSC (UK), which handles its agency, has expanded in its wake.

"We have outgrown this building," said chairman David Petchey, "and when we bought this plot, we also bought the plot next door which is where the new building will stand."

Buying the plot next door was typical of the vision and foresight of the late Roy Davies who founded the company back in 1977 with five colleagues above a shoe shop in Hull. Back then it was called Medite and was formed as a joint venture with MSC to handle the agency for the line's vessels sailing to East Africa and the Red Sea. In 1982 MSC decided on a UK port change to Southampton and Medite transferred its operation there shortly afterwards. But the expansion of containerisation cut short



Managing director Daniel Everitt, left, and chairman David Petchey.

Medite's stay in Southampton and just two years later it moved to Felixstowe where it moved offices twice to cope with its expansion until Medite House was built in the mid 1990s.

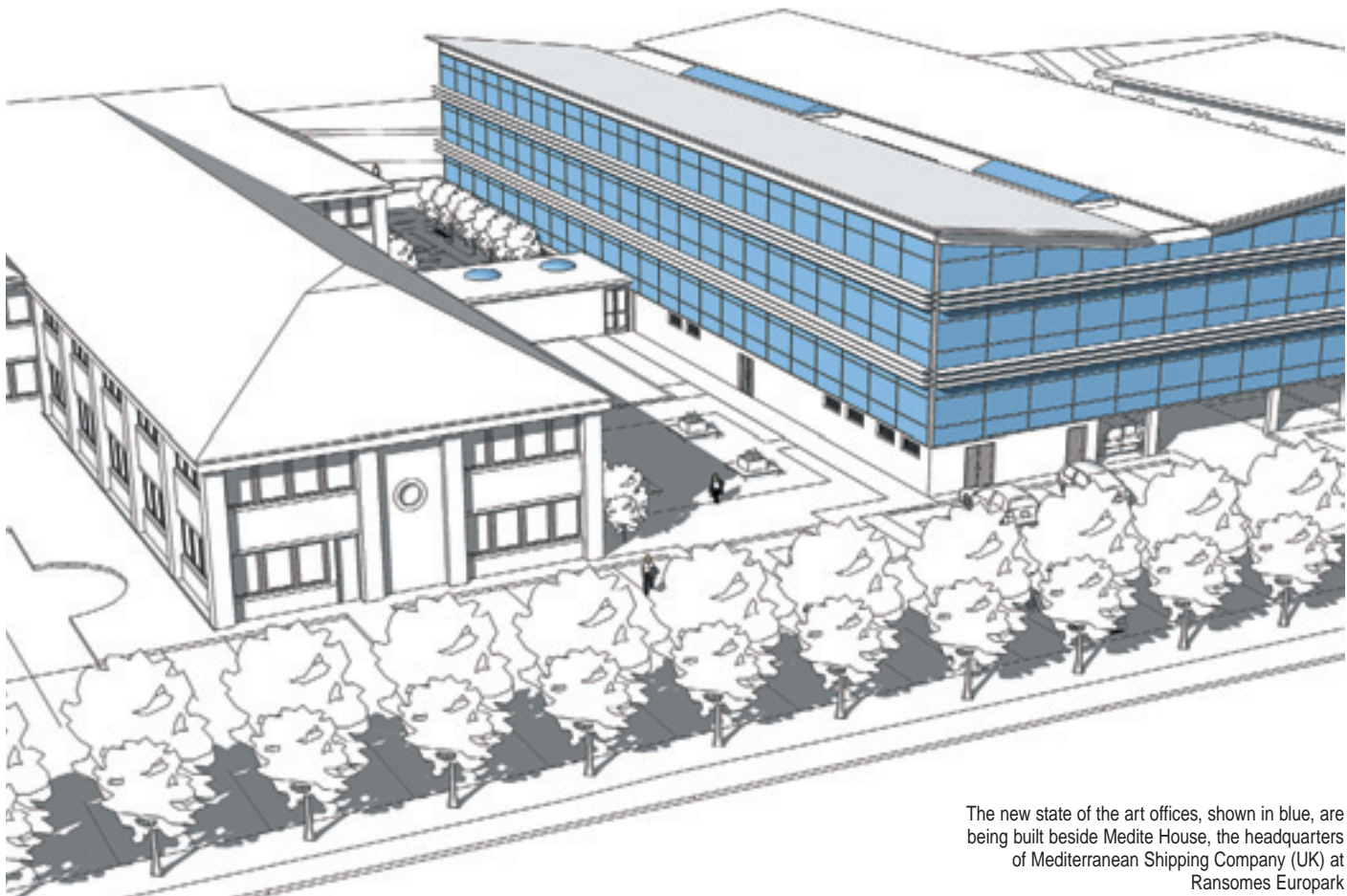
The company now employs 500 people, the majority of them in Suffolk, with others based in strategically placed offices around the country in Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Bristol, Tilbury, Leeds and Birmingham. Ipswich remains the heart of the operation which offers customers a comprehensive range of services from computerised booking and electronic data

interchange to independent road and rail transport services, agency supply chain management, freight forwarding, cargo consolidation and warehousing.

Medite changed its name to Mediterranean Shipping Company (UK) four years ago to reflect the global branding of MSC.

Mr Davies passed away in July 2006.

David Petchey, who was already managing director at the time, has now taken the more strategic role of chairman of the company, and Daniel Everitt is the new



The new state of the art offices, shown in blue, are being built beside Medite House, the headquarters of Mediterranean Shipping Company (UK) at Ransomes Europark

Peter Wells, partner at Barefoot & Gilles said: "The new building is a team effort and the design team (which includes Barefoot & Gilles, Jacksons Civil Engineering, SEH French, MLM Consulting Engineers, Bower Fuller and Castons) has been able to respond swiftly to our client's requirements. In the autumn we will deliver an exciting new expansion of the headquarters building which will enable MSC to consolidate its workforce in Suffolk, supporting the companies continuing global expansion.

"We are excited to be working in partnership with one of the world's leading shipping companies, whose new building is intended to reflect the confident, clear-sighted approach that the company takes to a very competitive industry."



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managing director.

So it is with a new management team that the company is pushing forward with its investment in the infrastructure of the business which not only reveals a confidence in its future growth but also underlines its commitment to Felixstowe Port.

"The decision to come here was because Felixstowe is a convenient port because of its proximity to the Continent and the European ports, because you don't want to be steaming vessels any further than you have to, especially with the cost of fuel," said David.

"Medite House has stood the

test of time but we have a situation now whereby we have staff in satellite offices and we really want to bring them all in together on the same site. The new building will double our capacity and will house all our staff – and that's about 400 people in Felixstowe – and give us room for further growth."

As anyone who has driven past the site in recent weeks will tell you, the new building has a steel structure and will be glass-walled to a design by local architects Barefoot and Gilles. It has parking at ground level and then two floors of office space above, all built to

the highest environmental standards and with the well-being of its staff firmly in mind, perhaps a legacy of the founder's hands on approach and personal touch.

The building is on target to be finished by the end of October, with staff moving in towards the end of the year.

"We are an expanding business," said David. "World trade is expanding and MSC is growing and of course we are expanding alongside them. We expect world growth to continue and our track record has been to grow just that little bit faster.

"Our challenges at the moment are to cope with the

congestion in the ports both here and around Europe. Trade has grown quicker than the infrastructure to cope with that growth, so the ports get congested and busy and you get delays on the road and on the railways.

"We also expect there will be consolidations in the shipping world, mergers and acquisitions, but that has never been our way; we grow ourselves."

And what of the slowing of world trade that is being talked of?

"Things go in cycles," said David, "we haven't really seen a slowing, not yet, so we are just getting on with it."