

Readers Letters



Hi Mark/Ed,

Just a quick one really to say that last month's comment in C&A was a very well written, a good read which I completely agree with. Hopefully the industry will keep having great characters who enjoy what they do! Cheers

Best Regards

Alex Weston

Dear Sir,

The HSE (GB) is finally prosecuting a company and its owner for the fatal tower crane collapse in Battersea in 2006. Details of this can be found on Vertikal.net, the online information site for the crane industry.

Failure to follow H&S law can destroy a business, those within the industry may find the Battersea case of particular interest as it is nine years from incident to start of a prosecution in court. In line with their terms of consistency HSENI should now take a similar line of action regarding an incident at the Dunmurry premises of a Highway plant hire in 2008. This incident produced a very damning inquest for HSE(NI) in May 2014.

These very sad yet similar situations date from a time when crony capitalism may not have been so well understood by those in power.

Trevor Bailie

Aghalee, Co Armagh

On investigation it seems that this letter is driven by the fact that Mr Baillie was pursued by HSE(NI) following an incident with one of his self-erecting tower cranes, which resulted in two attempts to prosecute him for Health & Safety offences, which in both cases the jury ruled in his favour. The 'persecution' he claimed (See letters C&A October 2013) was due to "a competitor, a croney of one of the local HSE inspectors" trying to blacken his name. He accused the service of being corrupt and subject to cronyism. Something that the HSE(NI) denied in a letter to the editor the following month (C&A November 2013). The Highway Plant incident he refers to concerns the tragic death of Gareth Keys, who died after a JLG 500RTS overturned while he was giving it a post rental check over. The inquest ruled that the machine had failed due to two defects, which it said should have been detected at the start of the check, before Keys went up in the platform. As a result it found that he had not received sufficient training or supervision. The HSE(NI) however found that Keys had been trained properly by a fully qualified and experienced trainer and as a result did not bring a prosecution.

We received numerous texts, emails and letters regarding Vertikal days all of which were highly positive, although some complaints over the management of the road construction under the M6 were far less complimentary. The following sum up the general tone of the communications so far.

Dear Leigh,

I just wanted to send a note to thank you, Pam, and the rest of the team for the amazing support you gave me at my first Vertikal Days showing. As a new business, with a slightly 'off the wall' product, approaching such an event was quite daunting, but I was helped enormously by all of the team for which I am very grateful.

As you know, I felt that I had a really good show commercially, and you can rest assured that I will be booking very early for next year and anybody that asks me if the show is worth it for a new business will receive a very positive response.

Over the years of attending the show as a visitor, I had never appreciated the amount of work that you and the team put in to making the show a success for exhibitors and visitors alike and it would be very easy to take the smooth running of the show for granted, so once again very many thanks.

Best regards

Gary Brady

The Furniture Hoist Company

Dear Pam and Leigh

Just wanted to send a quick note to say we had a great show - the best ever yet I think - so thanks very much to yourselves and the team. We had a good, steady stream of visitors throughout the first day, although yesterday was noticeably quieter there were definitely different faces to the day before.

I think some of your tweaks worked really well too - the two-ended serving areas for food...and the designated dance area in the middle!

Great show guys

Kind Regards,

Lucy Bebbington

Peter Allison 1924 -2015

Peter Allison has died at the age of 90, following a highly successful career selling UK construction equipment on the international market. Born in Glasgow in 1924, he was the second-youngest of five children. His father was Peter Hullachan Allison, a music hall artist, who acted under the stage name Peter Hart, and Annie MacDougall.



At the age of 15 he started work as an apprentice in the Royal Ordnance Factory's Dalmuir Docks, and he later worked as a draftsman for John Brown Engineering. After the Second World War, he moved to St Albans with his first wife Isabel, who he married in January 1949. They went on to have three children: Ken, Jan and Christopher.

During the 1950s, he worked for Schat Davits and then in the early 1960s, joined the newly formed Overseas Sales Department of Coles Cranes. He quickly established a reputation for intelligence and determination selling in Scandinavia, where equipment regulations were more stringent than elsewhere in Europe. Coles products didn't conform to these regulations but he persuaded the engineering department - against initial opposition - to redesign the cranes so that they did comply. As a result Coles became a dominant force in the region.

By 1966, his first marriage had broken down, and after a three-year separation they divorced. In 1969, he married Jan Miller. Shortly after this, he left Coles, to join Lancer-Boss, where he worked with the company's formidable chairman, Sir Neville Bowman Shaw. In mid-1975, he was invited to join the Arabian Automobile Agency, Lancer-Boss's dealer in Saudi Arabia. His success in the role persuaded Coles to tempt him back, and - despite his initial reluctance - he re-joined the company in 1979 as export sales director. His return was said by one of his colleagues as being "Like the Second Coming, but with better jokes". He made an immediate impact, travelling the world, reinvigorating dealers and helping to negotiate a number of large deals. David Steel, the Coles managing director from the mid-1970s, said: "Peter was a man of perception and integrity, with the ability to establish strong friendships wherever he went. He was someone for whom my door was always open."

Coles entered administration as part of the Acrow group in 1984, and was acquired by Grove. Allison - now aged 60 - was asked to remain as export sales director of what became Grove Coles. He remained in the job until he retired in 1991 and moved with wife Jan to Bournemouth, where he indulged his love of golf, playing two or three times a week, as well as creating and tending a magnificent roof garden. He was also reunited with his children Ken and Jan, having lost touch after his divorce. It meant that he quickly had to come to terms with having five grandchildren, later to be joined by two great-grandchildren, and then two great-great-grandchildren.

As his wife Jan's eyesight failed he increasingly became her carer, managing to look after her at home as she became increasingly frail. After

47 years of married life, she passed away in December 2013 at the age of 98. In 2007, he asked to become honorary secretary of Cobblers - the Coles Cranes' former employees' society - and although he was already in his 80s, he took to the task with boundless energy and enthusiasm. He organised two lunches a year, both of which were always well attended. He also arranged city-breaks for groups of members, which were also very popular.

The most recent Cobblers event was a pre-Christmas lunch he organised in December, which was also his 90th birthday. Over 50 members joined the party, where they also celebrated his apparent recovery from lung-cancer. Sadly a bout of tuberculosis which had cost him half a lung during the 1950s, combined with his weakness following the cancer treatment, finally defeated him. He passed away peacefully at home on 1 April 2015 as he had always wanted to do. He leaves behind a large and loving family and many devoted friends around the world.



Peter Allison - at the front with his wife Jan - and colleagues from Coles Cranes at his retirement party in 1991

The above tribute was provided by Martyn Wilson, who was responsible for advertising and publicity at Coles Cranes for many years before establishing his own agency in London, and was co-author of the book 'Coles 100 years' published in 1979. As a colleague he knew Peter but they only became firm friends in the past 10 year, while collaborating on Cobblers events.

I knew Peter too, having worked as a co-director in the late 1980s. He was not always the easiest man to get along with, being a tough gruff Scot - possibly something of a front for a soft centre? However I came to respect him, and he could always be relied on to support you, if he felt you had a case, while equally happy trying to shoot you down if he did not agree with you. I grew to appreciate a good deal more looking back, but sadly had not seen him in almost 25 years.

Leigh Sparrow

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