

A highly respected safety Inspector Bernard James 1934–2012

C&a

Bernard James

Bernard James, the well-known and widely respected safety inspector in the UK and a strong supporter of the powered access industry passed away at the end of March following a short illness. James was charged with taking the fledgling aerial lift industry in the UK 'under his wing' and became closely involved with and widely respected within the powered access industry. We take a look at his life and career.

Bernard G. James was born in central Cardiff in 1934. The youngest of three boys, he was the first child in his area to be selected to attend a grammar school - Howard Gardens High School. Times were hard in the James household, but the boys had a very happy childhood and young Bernard often recounted his gratitude to his father, who worked on the docks, for the overtime he worked in order to pay for his uniform.

The young James boy was an enthusiastic and talented sportsman from an early age, playing rugby, football, cricket, table-tennis and snooker to a very good level. Much of his spare time was spent at the local boys club where he recalled being taught how to make a good bridge with his hand by Joe Davis, the world champion snooker player who visited the club.

He went on to play football for the Fair oak club in Cardiff and gained a substantial collection of medals for his efforts. He later had to choose between rugby and football, eventually coming down in favour of the former and always claiming that it had nothing to do with the beer.

After finishing school he won an engineering apprenticeship at the Royal Ordnance factory in Cardiff after which he became a draughtsman at the civilian dockyard in the City, before doing his national service in the Royal Navy's engineering section. After completing his service in 1959, he became a technical assistant at the ministry of supply in Bridgewater Somerset.

In 1962 he moved to a ministry of defence research establishment near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, as a mechanical engineer



A young Bernard James

responsible for developing inspection techniques for solid-propellant rockets. Once the move was complete he joined Aylesbury Rugby Union Football Club and captained the first XV team in the late 1960's when, according to his son David, they were the best side in the county. He later became the only person to have been a former captain, life-member and trustee of the club and remained in contact long after he moved from the area. In May 1967 he started the career that eventually brought him to the attention of the access industry, when he joined Her Majesty's Factory Inspectorate as a mechanical engineering inspector, specialising in boilers, pressure vessels, load lifting/handling systems and hoists. In 1973 he was promoted to principal specialist inspector at what is now the Health & Safety Executive, with national responsibility for the safety of lifts, hoists, escalators, passenger conveyors and powered access equipment. He represented the HSE on various standards and regulatory committees and authored a large number of papers on the safety of



Bernard James on his travels – we are not quite sure where

lifts and hoists etc... a role he held until his retirement in 1994.

In 1984 he moved to the Wirral when the HSE was relocated to Bootle near Liverpool and he became a member and keen supporter of Hoylake R.U.F.C. travelling to club and country matches all over the world, when he could.

While his government career ended at 60, he still had a great deal to contribute and became a very active industry consultant and adviser. He enjoyed the work, especially as it enabled him to "keep his hand in" and continue to work with people he respected, many of whom had become great friends in an industry he was passionate about. In addition to advising on safety matters, he spoke at numerous conferences around the world and continued his regulatory work, sitting on and chairing a number of British Standards committees. He became a director of the British notified body PAC and became a member of the CPA construction hoists group.

His passion for lifting equipment was passed on to his son David



who joined BT Rolatruc - now Toyota Material Handling. Talking of his father he said: "I had the pleasure of meeting many of Dad's business friends and acquaintances over the years and was always impressed by the respect they showed for his knowledge, advice and opinions and how they seemed genuinely fond of him. He was a modest man, but I know how greatly he appreciated that."

"He loved to socialise and meet people. He enjoyed good food, good wine, travel and language. He always had a crossword torn from a newspaper in his pocket and attended quizzes and of course watched his beloved rugby. He was a proud to be Welsh and British, yet was always keen to make new friends in new places and to learn of their history, culture and traditions."

Bernard James leaves behind his second wife Yvonne and son David, his first wife Barbara, pre-deceased him by two years. For a further view on Bernard James' contribution to the access industry see letter from Paul Adorian on page 67.

