



The following is a highly abbreviated letter from ex-IPAF managing director Paul Adorian, which also calls for UK rental companies to work with the fire and rescue departments. We will publish that in the next issue.

This Tragedy Should Not Have Been Allowed to Happen!

Despite the fact that the media has had a field day over the Grenfell Tower tragedy, it took nearly two weeks for BBC London to zero in on the fact that London Fire Brigade has let down the people of London, particularly those living in tower blocks, through its utter failure to realise that multi-storey buildings constructed of steel and concrete can burn. When one looks at the number of high rise flats and office blocks in London, there can be no doubt that London Fire Brigade is seriously under-equipped to deal with such fires and it is only a matter of luck that such an accident had not happened sooner.

When construction on these particular high rise flats commenced in the 1970's, I ran a company within the John Laing Construction Group which was responsible for distributing a wide range of powered access equipment. At that time the largest aerial platform in the world reached 150ft (15 floors) and was available in a firefighting version. I spent a considerable amount of time trying to persuade three successive chief officers of the London Fire Brigade to look at and try out such a machine for firefighting and rescue duties, explaining the need if they were faced with a serious fire on a multi-storey building. At that time the largest machine available in the UK was only 85ft (8 floors).

There are now at least three companies in Europe manufacturing machines capable of reaching 30 floors, all mounted on chassis which comply fully with UK road regulations and one of them has been supplying them for firefighting and rescue for years. There can be no good reason for London Fire Brigade not to be equipped with such machines. The current commissioner sounds like her predecessors from the 1970's, who could always find reasons for not doing something, instead of taking positive action to prevent unnecessary loss of life, such as we have so sadly witnessed at Grenfell Tower.

We are told that the fire started on the fourth floor and from news film, it seems that the initial spread of fire upwards was relatively slow. But once it took hold on the outside panelling, it proved highly combustible and part of it was almost certainly oil based. In view of the lack of appropriate firefighting or rescue equipment and access problems to the site, a risk assessment would have shown that the best way to fight such a fire would involve the use of foam cannons, such as

those mounted on airfield crash tenders. Four portable foam cannons could have been set-up around the building very quickly with a high pressure water supply fed from fire appliances parked well away from the building.

As long ago as the mid 1970's my company supplied two such foam cannon, mounted on truck mounted scissor lifts to the BP Oil refinery on the Isle of Grain to cover the tanker unloading dock and oil storage tanks. These machines were relatively small, lightweight and could be readied for action in minutes. Being mobile and small, they could almost invariably be placed where they were needed.

Had London Fire Brigade done their homework they could so easily have had such equipment available at relatively low cost, and once the foam cannon were in position it would only require two standard fire appliances to provide the water and foam. This apparatus could discharge foam to a height of 200ft (20 floors) and I believe that such an arrangement would have extinguished the flames at Grenfell Tower in minutes, had it been available on site shortly after the original call.


What more will it take for London Fire Brigade to wake up, demand the immediate finance from the Home Office and place an order for two or preferably three machines for London. Three million pounds is petty cash on top of the total cost of this disaster

Paul. A. Adorian

Tim Whiteman's letter to Sadiq Kahn letter

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17 July 2017

Dear Mayor Khan,

The Grenfell tower is 67 metres tall. The tallest aerial platform vehicle operated by the London Fire Brigade can reach 32 metres.

There are commercial organisations in London that own and operate hydraulic aerial platforms that can reach to 90 metres.


The International Powered Access Federation is a UK-based, non-profit, organisation representing the manufacturers and owners of such equipment. Our members would like to investigate with your office whether such resources could be made available in emergency situations.

The machines I am referring to are lorry mounted mobile elevating work platforms which are able to reach more than 90 metres and transport up to six people. They are similar to the equipment used by the London Fire Brigade but have been developed for commercial use.

There are important differences in design and use, but our members would like to review whether such equipment could play a useful role in responding to any future emergencies involving high rise buildings. I would welcome the opportunity to meet relevant representatives to review whether there could be merit in this idea.

Please let me know if you feel a meeting would be useful. I can be reached on 015395 66700 or via email at tim.whiteman@ipaf.org

Yours sincerely



Tim WHITEMAN
Managing Director & CEO
International Powered Access Federation

Brian Wiggins R.I.P

Access industry veteran Brian Wiggins - of Wyse Plant, SEV/Aerial, Instant Zip-Up, Go Industries, UpRight and Snorkel - passed away on July 11th, following a long illness.



He began in the construction industry working in Africa and the Middle East before joining the emerging powered access industry in the UK. He worked at Wyse Plant which sold Genie booms and Fabtek/Hyster sigma type scissor lifts before moving to John Rusling shortly before it became Instant Zip Up - and later UpRight UK - working in the major accounts team. He also worked with UK manufacturer Go Industries in Thetford, later joining SEV/Aerial access where he looked after export sales. That business became part of Tanfield which then acquired UpRight and later Snorkel. He remained on board after both acquisitions and through several restructurings and covered most of the less developed territories including the Middle East, Africa, Russia, the Baltics and China. During this time he laid the foundations for some of Snorkel's most successful international dealer relationships, many of which still endure.

He rarely had a bad word to say about anyone, took great pleasure in closing a deal and was known and loved around the world. He never really retired, even after deteriorating health forced him to reduce his travelling, bringing an end to permanent employment. He continued as a very successful freelance salesman working with a number of companies selling new and used equipment.

In the words of someone who worked alongside him: "Brian was a friendly, funny, very loyal and occasionally frustrating - he didn't believe there was any such word as 'no', and great company with a vast store of war stories. He was a good man and I rarely heard anybody with a bad word to say about him. He belonged to a different era when the access industry consisted of a handful of machines outside the USA but remained relevant and busy to the end. He will be sadly missed by many people in the business worldwide."

And in another moving tribute:

"I was deeply saddened to hear the passing away of the legend, Brian Wiggins. As someone who tutored me and countless others in the Middle East and beyond, the industry has lost a true and incredible legend. I would go as far as saying that it was Mr. Wiggins who introduced MEWPs in the Middle East. "It was a true honour and privilege to have been under his tutelage. I am sure Brian is giving an 'uplifting' talk where he is right now.

R.I.P my guru Brian

Srini Kadaba

Gary Smith 1955 - 2017

UK powered access pioneer Garry Smith passed away peacefully on July 14th following a short illness, he was just 62. Smith was chairman and shareholder of Bella Access which he jointly founded in 2010, having spent most of his working life in the UK access rental industry.

He started out in the early 1980s at scaffold company Deborah Services where he managed the powered access division. The company was later acquired by Scott Greenham and Smiths powered access business was merged with SG Access. In 1987 conglomerate BET acquired both Scott Greenham and powered access pioneer PTP which was merged with SG Access under the PTP banner becoming the clear UK market leader. Smith became a member of the senior management team and played a major role in developing a network of northern depots.

Towards the end of the 1980s he left PTP and joined David Wraith to establish a brand new powered access business - Nationwide Access Platforms. After building the company into a substantial business the two sold out to David Price in a Cinven supported MBI in 1992. The business became the first building block of Lavendon, which went on to become Europe's largest powered access company.

After a few year's respite Smith founded Kimberly Access with Peter Piekarus in 1994, selling the business to a Management Buy In led by Ray Ledger and LDI in 2007. In his most recent venture - Bella Access - he took a back seat role as chairman and joint owner, guiding a new generation with Jason Dalmas as managing director.

The UK powered access industry has lost a good man who played a

significant role in the formation of the modern access rental industry. The follow are excerpts from some of the input and emails received:

"Gary was undoubtedly one of the pioneers of the powered access industry and he possessed an imagination and foresight that was before its time and yes he was a character, try buying a business from him! I send my deepest sympathy to Kim and the family."

"Gary was not only a fantastic business man and mentor, but a great husband, father and grandfather, he will be truly missed. The support shown by the industry would truly overwhelm him as he thought he was all but forgotten in the industry but obviously not."

"He did truly live and breathe the Access Industry, it was his passion and love."

"He was one of the early founding fathers of our industry, particularly up here in the north. He did exceptionally well in his life and had an impressive influence on our industry during its formative years."

"Gary was a true Gentleman, a Businessman and a great Boss to work for. He knew the industry inside out and had a lot of respect for the people within it."

"He was not only one of the pioneers in its formative years, but one of the great characters of the UK powered access industry over decades."



Garry Smith



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