

Readers

Letters



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I wanted to let you know I liked the review of Bauma in the magazine this month, it was nice to have so many pictures and not so many words. I was at Bauma but saw many things in the report that I did not see at the exhibition. Maybe next time you can do this review before I go!

Very good job!!

Benny Stillman

Tadano and Demag

Looking at this month's front cover I could not tell who appeared happier, Koichi Tadano for thinking that he had stolen Demag from Terex, in a deal that would give his company the tools to overtake Liebherr, or John Garrison of Terex relieved that he would no longer have the problem of trying to 'fix' Demag production efficiencies or invest in updating the 'oldy but goody' cranes at the upper end of its range.

When we look back in five years who will have done the deal of the century? Tadano or Terex? I am not a betting man, but if I was..... I think my money would go on Terex?

The mag is a surprisingly good read for an industrial type publication, long may it stay so,

All the best.

Name withheld for "commercial sensitivity reasons"



The following was submitted by a regular reader and given the content, we posted it as the first guest editor contribution, we have edited it down slightly for space reasons. The item generated a fair few comments online that added to the debate. You can access the original online version at <https://www.vertikal.net/en/news/story/33102/we-are-being-under-sold>

Dear Sir,

I am a highly experienced freelance heavy crane operator, and for the past five months have been looking for work outside of the U.K. as a precautionary measure should UK work become scarce due a Brexit induced slow down.

During this time I have made a startling discovery, it seems that we are now among the lowest paid heavy crane operators in Europe, and it's got nothing to do with Brexit.

Yes Brexit is causing us some grief as I have been turned down for two contracts so far that are due to start in Europe, where they actually told me on the phone "sorry but due to the uncertainty with Brexit, we can't take you until it's all cleared up!" it's not the fact we are leaving so much, it's the mess our politicians have made by not leaving.

Getting back to the rates, over the past few months I spoken with many large European crane companies and also chatted to some of the guys that work for them, mostly to get an idea of what they are like to work for, and to find out what sort of money their operators take home each week. And what has shocked me the most is the difference between what these lads are getting and what the same companies are offering UK operators for doing the same work. In one case, a French Guy I know is getting €50 an hour, plus all the perks like hotel and flights etc... The same company offered three UK workers, including myself, €35 an hour, now that's a massive difference by any standards. Now don't for one minute think that I am being ungrateful for this offer as even €35 is still great compared to the awful rates for operators in the UK.

€35 an hour is around £25 to £26 an hour when converted and you are not spending money on digs or travel, unlike working for a British crane company. So my conclusion is that the UK will start to see a fall in skilled crane operators over the next few years, especially within the heavy crane industry. Why would you work for £15 an hour and have to pay out for digs, food and travel when you could work for a European company and get £25 to 26 an hour plus everything paid for?

Name withheld at his request.

Roger Wickens 1957 - 2019

Roger Wickens, group technical manager of Loxam's powered access division - formerly Lavendon - passed away on the 17th May, following a courageous 17 month battle with cancer. He was just 61 and eight weeks short of completing 30 years' service with the company - the longest serving male employee at Nationwide Platforms.



Wickens began his 40 year career as a trainee mechanic working on the transport fleet of Starch Products. In 1980 he joined Greenham Plant Hire as a service engineer for aerial work platforms, followed by a short spell at the Colbrook depot of Isis plant before rejoining Greenham, which was later merged with Scott Crane Hire after the Scott brothers acquired Greenham's crane and aerial lift operations to create Scott Greenham, and later SG Aerial Platforms - both of which were based at Alfreton, Derbyshire. The business was then acquired by BET and he was appointed as national service manager shortly before the business was merged with PTP - following its acquisition by BET - where he worked mostly with JLG, Grove Manlift, Marklift and Benford products.

In 1989 he joined Nationwide Access - as it was then - as national service manager based in Scunthorpe, at the time the company ran a fleet of just 200 units, mostly Genie booms and UpRight scissor lifts. The business had only recently been acquired by David Price and his new company Lavendon - supported by CinVen - in a Management Buy In. As the business expanded he played a significant role in the technical integration of several UK, Belgian and German acquisitions, and the later launch of operations in Dubai, Spain, Hong Kong and France which led him to his final role as the group technical manager of Loxam's powered access division, following its acquisition of Lavendon in 2017.

During his career he worked closely with powered access manufacturers to develop new products and technical enhancements, while being actively involved with IPAF and later joined the European Rental

Association's Technical Committee.

He was an avid collector of crane and aerial lift models amassing a collection of around 100 cranes and more than 250 platforms, he eventually had to curb the crane collecting due the rising costs of the models and space limitations. He would often dismantle new models and painstakingly repaint them in a company colours, complete with miniature decals.

He met his wife, Anne James shortly after she joined Nationwide Access in 1996, they became a couple in 1997, but did not get married until 2004. As well as Anne, he leaves behind two stepchildren - Lauren and Richard.

Roger Wickens was one of the 'good guys', modest, quiet, yet exceptionally knowledgeable, and always interested in finding ways to improve safety and good practice. While he could hardly be described as 'larger than life' or 'exuberant', he was highly knowledgeable and had a dry yet highly tuned and well developed sense of humour. He had a subtle and engaging smile which lit up his face, when relaying an observation or piece of information that he clearly found ridiculous or nonsensical without ever saying so. In the hope that you might take up the fight, although he never directly suggested such action.

In this way he played a more substantial role in the development of new product standards, than is appreciated, all too often he would simply point out or highlight issues to others whom he knew would take up the issue in a more forceful way than he could, and yet if he cared about an issue he was more than able to fight his corner in a highly determined and effective manner, without ever getting heated or unpleasant. In fact he came over as simply wanting to solve the issue. It seemed at times that he underestimated the respect that he was held in and therefore how much 'real power' he wielded.

The industry has lost a kind, warm and intelligent individual, a true gentleman. He was missed already, but more so now that we know he will not be making a comeback. His funeral was held on Monday June 10th, with dozens of ex colleagues, suppliers and others filling the crematorium to the point where it was standing room, all wishing to say their goodbyes to a quiet man who made a difference.

Jan Westerhof 1941 - 2019

Dutch access industry veteran Jan Westerhof passed away on May 22nd following a period of ill health, he was 77. He entered the access industry in 1976 when he joined the UpRight sales and rental subsidiary in the Netherlands - Vectur, in order to set up the new Rotterdam branch in Schiedam. Over the years he won numerous sales awards, achieving Salesman of the Year on several occasions.

In mid 1992 he participated in a Management Buy Out of the Dutch

business, which had been rebranded as Instant Holland in 1990. He and his son Erik bought out the Rotterdam branch - by then largest of the three locations - the others being Apeldoorn and Amsterdam, each run by a father and son team - The Westerhofs, the Koldenhofs and the Mays. The Westerhofs sold the Schiedam operation to Peinemann a few years later.

Erik Westerhof went on to establish Rotterdam-based rental company Xtra Materieel in 1998, originally as a general rental company but over the years it has expanded increasingly into powered access.

Richard 'Rick' Gross

We have learned very belatedly of the passing of US lattice crane product and sales manager Rick Gross. We understand that he passed away within the past 18 months, following a fairly long period of ill health. Sadly we have been unable to find out exactly if this is so, and if so when and where, although we understand that he had moved from Pennsylvania to a care facility in Oklahoma, near to his daughter.

Born in Ohio he worked for the Lima crane division of Clark, joining Grove Manufacturer in Shady Grove Pennsylvania as lattice cranes product manager when it purchased the Lima crane designs and other intellectual property in 1981. Grove quickly discovered that it had little

immediately realisable value, but it did 'acquire some knowledgeable staff, including Rick Gross, who worked with Paul Church and others to develop Grove's hydraulic lattice cranes the HL150 truck crane and HL150C crawler, which although they did not sell in great numbers - Grove was perhaps too telescopic minded - were widely acknowledged as being first class innovative products, a good deal of which was down to Gross' enthusiasm and knowledge. After leaving Grove when it dropped the lattice products he joined Liebherr dealer Schiller International which was later acquired by Liebherr America. He retired around 2010.

If anyone has more information, please do not hesitate to contact us.