

Readers Letters



Meddling with famous brand names is a minefield

Over the course of some 40 years, I have enjoyed close relationships with various generations of senior executives at both Demag and Tadano, as well as the rest of the crane industry. When asked, the advice I have given has always been factual and straightforward, including, most recently, at bauma 2019, when Tadano announced its acquisition of Demag. Those conversations remain strictly confidential, of course.

The past 18 months has been one of the toughest social and business environments we have seen, with plenty of 'bumps in the road' for many players in our industry. Nevertheless, it was with a great deal of trepidation that I read the April 7th announcement by Tadano that it plans to drop the Demag brand, one of the world's most-revered and widely recognised crane brands, especially as it came just a couple of years after the successful relaunch of the brand following Terex's realisation of its error in dropping it, back in 2004. Quite frankly, ignoring such a clear lesson from history startled me.

Branding matters are often fraught with danger and never as simple as they may at first appear. It's an area I know well from personal experience. When Grove acquired Coles and re-branded its European cranes as Grove-Coles, the Grove brand was almost fatally wounded and only regained any credibility when the Coles factory and its products were finally committed to the scrapheap. It was a decision made by my boss, Grove chief executive, J. Martin Benchoff. It was a decision he regretted for the rest of his life. Such matters are complicated and there are two sides to every argument. Amalgamating the Demag AC and Tadano ATF product lines was always going to be difficult – regardless of branding – and remains so. That's a sufficiently difficult mountain to climb without further confusion!

However, even more 'surprising' is Tadano's decision to drop the Demag brand from its lattice crawler cranes. In my opinion, the following facts are unalienable:

- Outside of Asia the Demag brand is the stronger for its All Terrain cranes and large telescopic.
- Despite being dropped for 10 years by Terex, the Demag brand remained one of the strongest and most highly respected for mobile crane technology – bar none.
- For the large-size crawler cranes, Demag is widely regarded as much of a market leader as Liebherr. Obviously, when it comes to large crawler cranes, the Tadano name has no resonance, and it will take decades to develop a reputation to match that of Demag.

Changing brands and nomenclature systems is a minefield. Surely, Terex's mistake in dropping the Demag brand for 10 years is evidence enough. Changes to the nomenclature, as announced by Tadano, can only add to further confusion and offers an 'open goal' to the competition. Frankly, I can see no overriding business benefit to Tadano's strategy. There are no easy answers and the only advice I would offer is to make as few changes as possible and take as much time as you can. In that respect it is unfortunate that this critical decision coincides with Mr. Koichi Tadano's decision to step down as CEO.

Stuart Anderson,
President, Chortsey Barr Associates

C&A: We published this letter on Vertikal.net and ran a poll asking readers what they thought, the question was: 'Do you think that dropping the Demag name from lattice boom cranes is a good idea?' When we closed the poll, 66 percent had answered 'No', 15 percent 'Not Sure' and 19 percent had responded that 'Yes' it was a good idea.

"Today I made the decision to cease trading with a customer"

Dear Leigh,

Today I made the decision to cease trading with a customer. So what? Well, the customer in question is a broker. A Pseudo Hire company with no tangible assets who sells across the UK and cross hires in from various sources, the length and breadth of the land.

The reason for no longer doing business with them was their insatiable drive for lower pricing of both hire rates and transport. This has been ongoing for some time, and they dangle the prize of potentially emptying one's yard. However, when the gloss is wiped away, the business and unending drive for lower pricing is not worth the effort.

There are a small nucleus of suppliers who will whore themselves to this broker in the belief that being busy fools is preferable to being less busy but more profitable.

However, we have seen such tactics as agreeing a hire, then sending the official order over with a different hire price for the equipment and a discrepancy on the transport. It seems that this tactic is now used on every hire.

When this is corrected, the broker sits on the invoice for the previously agreed price (which no longer matches their order) and doesn't communicate anything until the invoice is due for payment – some 60 days later! In the end, I have made the decision to close their account and walk away from their business, which has resulted in the refusal of six machines this week alone.

The point I'm making here is these types of business are killing the UK hire industry. The brokers wave big orders around for their databases that they have purloined from former employers but, in truth, they leech off the genuine owners of the assets and, over time, very cleverly slide themselves between the hire company and their own customers and, in doing so, they take a margin from the genuine hire company who almost always ends up with the same kit as they would have had anyway.

The best description we have heard is it's akin to fighting a battle against someone whom you've also provided the guns and the bullets!

These industry parasites don't own the equipment, they don't employ engineers or have trucks or workshops, but they are perfectly placed to take advantage of those who invest in these commodities. They are akin to a disease which needs to be eradicated before the UK hire industry is destroyed by appalling hire rates. They cream-off any meaningful profitability to the point of starving their own supply chain.

These individuals are too dull to realise that their suppliers need to make a profit and there is a growing resistance to wanting to deal with them, as all they are doing is driving down the rental rates for the owners of the assets to the point where certain lines becoming uneconomic.

Things must be done. I believe the leading industry players – and all of us – need to spread the word.

Regards,

Jim Longstaff

Chairman, Clements Plant & Access Hire

C&A: We published this letter on Vertikal.net and ran a poll asking the question: "Are rental 'brokers' hijacking rental company margins?" The poll is still live and while the comments are mixed so far, 66 percent of readers have responded with 'Yes', 16 percent 'It Depends' and 18 percent 'No'. If you have a view you can still vote. Note: The vote was initially affected by a glitch that managed to prevent voting with a mobile device. This has now been fixed.

Reaping what you sow

Dear Leigh,

I enjoyed your comments in the front of the recent Cranes & Access. Like many parts suppliers to access and material handling equipment, we have seen our business drop to 20 percent of normal, before rising to 20 percent above normal in less than 12 months. The difference in the way many manufacturers have handled this has been very interesting and it is now shaping our future strategy with them.

There has been a big push in manufacturing to JIT (Just In Time) supply and we have all got used to rapid deliveries. By its nature, JIT does not cope with big fluctuations – my view is, in most cases, JIT has just pushed stockholding to another point in the supply chain and current logistic and raw material issues are showing this.

Just In Time success depends largely on precise coordination between a manufacturer and their suppliers. My experience in off highway machines is that model variation and customisation, combined with poor forecasting, make this an almost impossible way of working in off-highway, but no one is bold enough to say this out loud.

Best Regards,
Peter Church
FB Chain

Dear Leigh,

I hope you are well and enjoying summer.

Just have been reading with pleasure your comment in C&A. Loved it.

See you soon,
Mark

C&A: Always nice to hear

Arthur Arundel 1924 – 2021

The following letter was received from crane veteran Dick Lloyd informing us of the passing of Arthur Arundel.

Arthur Arundel, who died on 12th June, spent most of his life working as UK southern area sales manager for Priestmans of Hull. He was a true gentleman for whom all of his customers had a great liking and respect. He was never a high-pressure salesman, but he quickly earned a reputation as a man who kept his word and looked after the interests of his customers. To quote his grandson, Thomas: "He was brave beyond words, calm and good humoured under pressure, quietly confident of his ability to deal with all of life's ups and downs and appreciative, sensitive and courteous to everyone he met."

Arthur was born in Hull in 1924. At the outbreak of World War II, he volunteered to be a bicycle courier, before joining the Royal Navy as a radio operator on a frigate tasked with protecting Atlantic convoy. He worried that, should the ship go down, he might be forgotten in his tiny, isolated cabin. However, Arthur was re-assured by the words of one of his officers: "We will never forget you, Yorkie".

At the end of the war, Arthur joined Priestman as an apprentice, before moving to the sales force. His personal devotion to this long-established manufacturer of cranes, grabs and excavators, founded in 1879, became his life. He remained with Priestman until its collapse in 1984.

As a young man, Arthur played football and hockey for the firm and met his beloved wife, Mary, who also



worked for Priestmans. In 1979, he was promoted to southern area sales manager. He moved south and lived there with his wife and family for the rest of his life.

I got to know Arthur well when I ran both home and export sales for six months. I appreciated his character and qualities. I witnessed the ill-judged attempt of a brash foul mouthed Hymac salesman trying to steal one of Arthur's customers, a very religious man who neither drank alcohol nor smoked. He was thrown out of the customer's office, followed by a phone call to the boss of Hymac saying that he only dealt with people whom he knew and trusted.

After the collapse of Acrow, Arthur and I had a joint meeting with James Priestman, the erstwhile chairman who been dismissed by Coles Cranes, to try and raise funds to rescue the business. Sadly, we failed and both Arthur and I had to find alternative employment. Due to his reputation, Arthur was soon back in employment with a German firm who needed his experience in the UK market

I visited Arthur and Mary a few times after our respective retirements, but sadly not after he started to suffer from dementia in his later years. I feel very privileged to have been asked by his family to write this obituary.

Dick Lloyd



David Alfred Wilson 1937 – 2021

David Wilson, a joint founder of UK rental company Charles Wilson Engineers, has died aged 84. He passed away peacefully in hospital on Saturday 21st August.

Charles Wilson Engineers was established in 1978 as the result of a partnership between Charles Gallagher and David Wilson, using an unusual blend of their two names. The company went on to build a brand using the CW initials – CW Access Rental, CW Tools Hire, CW Event hire etc.

The company began life in a small house in the Southdown area of Harpenden, Hertfordshire, before the business set up properly in Harpenden High Street where it has maintained its headquarters and a depot to this day. David Wilson and team entered the access market very early on, with alloy scaffold towers, but

quickly spotted the potential for powered access, adding trailer lifts, scissors and booms in the 1980s, and becoming an influential player in the market. Along the way, the company added telehandlers and now runs a substantial fleet. As the company grew, it expanded geographically to offer national coverage from 18 locations across the UK.

David Wilson was the quintessential English gentleman in every way. He was professional, always on top of the situation, a hard worker and an inspiration to all those he worked or came into contact with. He leaves behind wife Kay, two sons Mark and Adrian and daughter Sara.



Craig 'Vinny' Morelli 1969 – 2021

Craig Morelli, compliance & quality manager at the Lifting Equipment Engineers Association (LEEA) passed away in late July, following a short illness. Craig had been diagnosed in June with Sporadic CJD, a rare degenerative prion disease that affects the brain. He was only 53.

Craig had been with the LEEA since 2011, joining as training officer, moving up to senior training officer in 2014, and then taking on his most recent job in 2018. He began his career in 1987 with the British Army as a recovery mechanic, completing 24 years of service before joining the LEEA.

A statement from the LEEA said: "Craig was a consummate professional,



meticulous and conscientious in every role that he performed. Many lifting equipment professionals around the world have been trained and mentored by him over the years. He was passionate about our industry and was extremely proud of his role in lifting standards and increasing safety."

"Craig will be missed enormously by all of us. We will recognise and celebrate the immense contributions he has made, and he will always be very fondly remembered. Our thoughts and prayers are with Craig's wife, Maxine, and his family at this very sad time."



John William Gillespie 1952 – 2021

John Gillespie, a leading light of the Australian crane industry, has passed away after a long battle with leukaemia.

John was managing director of leading crane rental company Gillespies Crane Services and a director of other group companies until 2019. He was also president of the Crane Industry Council of Australia (CICA) for 16 years, stepping down in 2014, having served the association for more than 35 years. In 2002, he was awarded CICA's Con Popov Memorial Award for outstanding industry service, and in 2010 received a CICA Life Membership award. He had also served as president of the Crane Industry Association of New South Wales.



Gillespie joined the family crane business straight from school in 1969. Learning as he went, he worked his way up through the company, from cleaning up around the yard, dogging/rigging, crane driving and anything else that was needed. While in his 20s he was catapulted into a position of responsibility with the premature death of his father. By the time he retired, Gillespies Cranes was the oldest crane company still operating in Australia.

A statement from CICA said: "CICA's progress and growth under John's leadership was phenomenal. Industry representation activities, member benefits, membership numbers, revenue and assets are at record levels. On behalf of CICA, John was a strong advocate for and participant at International World Crane & Transport Alliance Meetings, this helped to create the International Crane Stakeholders Assembly (ICSA). John's service, industry leadership and passion to improve the crane industry is legendary, earning him much respect within Australia and internationally."

"John continued to be an advocate for involvement in the industry association. When asked what advice he would give to a newcomer to the industry he said firstly: 'Are you mad? Don't do it!', then: 'Seriously though, get involved with the association as it gives you the opportunity to help drive change and improvements. More contributors are always needed and welcomed. The industry can't continue to rely on a small number of volunteers, or the same few people that always seem to make the time to contribute'."

"John's positive outlook on life was undiminishing. In 2021 he received a replacement pacemaker and wanted to know how long the battery life was. The doctor told him 15 years, for which he said amidst going through chemotherapy, 'I have a new goal!!' Sadly, his fighting spirit could not overcome physical illness and John passed away peacefully on 17 August 2021. Our thoughts and condolences are with John's wife, Helen, sons Tom and Stephen, and daughter Carla, their partners and children."

CICA chief executive Brandon Hitch added: "Others in the industry have known the life of John Gillespie better than me, but from what I experienced in the 10 short years I have been in the crane industry, he was a great man. When people are walking among us, eating, laughing, sharing advice, we don't realise the immediate impact they have in bettering us. It is only in their absence that we look back and remember them, partly in

order not to forget, but also to attribute their influence on our improved character."

"Oddly, what I learned from and cherish about John is not about cranes or lifting. How John influenced me most was in leadership, generosity, and a positive, resilient outlook. He was someone who didn't need me, he had enough friends, but before he went back to get his second bone marrow transplant in May 2021, he took the time to call me. He let me know that he had pulled out a picture from 2017, that my then six year old daughter drew for him when he was recovering from his first bone marrow transplant. He said it made him smile that day. By his character, he gave me an example to share with my daughter at dinner, of how the impact of our actions can positively influence others. Three weeks ago, he spoke to her again and he told her he was struggling, but not ready to give up. John made time for people."

"John's exceptional, loyal and outstanding service and contribution have provided immeasurable benefit to CICA. The association would not be here today if not for the work of our five Life Members. Sadly, over the last 18 months, we have lost three of them."

"John was both a friend and a mentor to me. I will honour his legacy by grieving, remembering and living out a life that has been influenced by the time he graciously gave to me."

C&A: Publisher Leigh Sparrow added the following remarks:

John Gillespie was a wonderful individual who was consistently positive and always trying to do the best for the crane industry worldwide. He always made a point of stopping by the Vertical stands at major trade shows like bauma and Conexpo and talked as though he had flown in specially to see you. John could talk when he was in the mood!

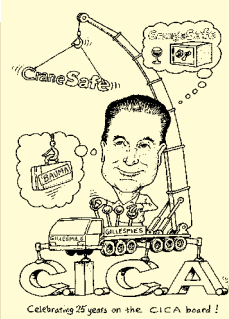
This news is both unexpected and tragic, and, possibly, most upsetting is that I was oblivious to the fact that he had even been ill. I should have guessed something was up as I hadn't heard from him in a very long time and that was simply not like John. We weren't really close, the geographic distance probably put paid to that, but he was always sending in bits of news, making a comment, asking an opinion, and more often giving an opinion and suggesting we take something up.

I think my first encounter with him was when one of the company's 250 tonne cranes had punched through a concrete floor and overturned in Castle Hill, north of Sydney. John was gracious open and explained exactly what happened and even contributed additional photographs. He was keen that others should learn from the incident at a time when most crane company owners or managers did the absolute opposite.

John Gillespie was a first-class individual and most definitely one of the good guys. The industry and the world is poorer for his passing. There will be a chair waiting for him on our stand at bauma next year.

Leigh Sparrow

A recording of the memorial service is available to view until the end of November. It can be found on: <https://view.oneroomstreaming.com/>



One of Gillespie's first cranes in action



(L-R) Reg Eggleton with John Gillespie and Anthony Davis on the awarding of CICA Life Membership in 2010

David Single 1953 – 2021

In mid-July we received the sad news that Australian aerial lift and telehandler veteran David Single passed away following a long battle with cancer. He was 68.



For the past seven years or so, David had worked as an industry safety consultant, interspersed with spells in hospital from where he would continue to work. He was a regular contributor to Vertical.net in terms of information, ideas, suggestions and, from time to time, constructive and well-founded criticism.

The news of his passing came overnight when his son Neil posted this message: "Dad passed away this afternoon after a long battle with illness. He asked me to write this post after his death and to thank everyone for their friendship and support over the years. He will be missed terribly."

David Single began his access career as national service manager with Crown Equipment based in Sydney, initially with forklifts and lift trucks. He then moved into Crown Access Equipment division, which at the time included Talon Access Equipment. David also helped set up Crown's service operations in Singapore. In 1990, Crown sold Talon to Snorkel to become Talon Snorkel, and David moved with it, becoming operations manager. His role included product development for Australia and Asia, as well as responsibility for the service, training and technical support teams in the region.

In 2004, he joined JLG Australia with responsibility for new product development, product marketing, sales and training before being promoted to national service manager in 2007. He also played a significant role in the development and refinement of the Australian Standards for telehandlers and assisted with the Singapore aerial lift standards. During his time with JLG, he served as vice president of the newly formed Telescopic Handler Association (TSHA).

In 2014, David was obliged to retire from his job at JLG. Speaking at the time, he said: "I have retired from JLG as international and interstate travel has become extremely difficult after complications after back surgery. JLG is fantastic company that gave me every advantage and opportunity to grow the stature and respect of myself and JLG within the development of Australian Standards and development of Standards and Codes of Practice in other regional countries. The opportunity to have access to regulators to discuss issues affecting our powered access and telehandler industry and starting from my Snorkel days to continue the product training with regulators and include the other manufacturers in the process has allowed a better understanding and interaction with the regulators. This really proves the quote, "the sure way to miss success is to miss the opportunity". To gain the success with the regulators and other industry groups, we first need to make the opportunity."

Shortly after becoming an independent consultant, Australia's Elevating Work Platform Association (EWPA) made David concept leader for the 'EWP Incident Investigation Document Australia'. Speaking of the task when it was completed in 2015, he said: "We identified the need for a document similar to those used by airline investigators, for inspecting or investigating an aerial lift incident. There are many 'experts' around Australia, and their investigation experience needs to be used provide a competent investigation checklist document. With the go ahead from the EWPA, my task was to bring together a group of EWP industry experts to develop and complete the 'EWP Incident Investigation Document'. This has been completed and ready for release by the EWPA at the Adelaide 2015 HRIA Conference."

"I thank all the industry persons that provided input, support and reviewed the document. For the guys that came to my home, as travel for me is difficult, and provided personal support, I thank you all. During a difficult personal time dealing with the two cancers at once and anaemia, the hospital visits, and early forced retirement at 61, this project has been a great distraction, even though I was the instigator before the news of cancer was confirmed. Sitting in a hospital bed with a laptop and working out details of the document has been a great distraction. My wife has been so patient with me invading her space, being stuck at home. Now it is on with the adaption of the document for other markets."

David Single was a very special person. He knew the aerial lift industry inside out and was one of the foremost experts on safe use and safety standards. While he had a complete command of the theoretical side, and was incredibly diligent, he was also very practical and rooted in the real world of getting the job done.

On top of all this he was a thoroughly decent and open human being. Although David was tough and 'to the point' - he could curse with the best of them at the sight of abuse and misuse of aerial lifts - he was truly a nice person. His passing will be mourned by the hundreds of industry people around the world that knew or worked with him over the years. The industry has lost a class act.





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Alf Odrell 1940 – 2021

Swedish/Nordic access industry veteran Alf Odrell sadly passed away on August 9th, just six weeks after his 81st birthday.

A larger-than-life character, Alf Odrell began his access career in November 1974 when he joined the European division of the UpRight group. At the time, UpRight traded in Europe as Vectur. Alf was based in his home country of Sweden and his job was to sell the company's alloy tower and other access products, including the company's self-propelled scissor lifts that were just coming on stream. As part of his remit, Alf was instrumental in setting up the company's Swedish subsidiary – Vectur Aluminiumställningar – in Gothenburg.

As the business developed, Alf adopted a different approach to all of the other European distribution subsidiaries, which ran sales alongside rental operations. He firmly believed in selling both the towers and the scissor lifts to rental companies, and therefore not competing with them. His policy yielded positive results and over the next two decades he overcame local and international competition to make UpRight/Instant the market leader in Sweden for both alloy scaffold towers and, by the 1990s, scissor lifts as well.

In the 1990s, the decision was taken to sell off the European distribution companies and operate purely through independent distributors. Having helped sell the Swedish operation – which had been rebranded as Instant Sweden some years earlier – to Stockholm-based Zip-Up Svenska, Alf Odrell said: "Well there is no need or place for me now, so you had best make me redundant and I will take early retirement." However, Alf was given an immediate 'no' and became the company's district manager for the Nordic region. His connections with Finland's A-Rakennusmiehi, which became Ramirent, spearheaded UpRight's early move into the Russian market, becoming one of the very first Western aerial lift manufacturers in the country.

When UpRight was acquired by Tanfield, and then merged with Snorkel, Alf remained on board as a valued member of the sales team. Finally, in 2011, at the age of 71, and after 37 years with the business, he retired. However, Alf couldn't keep away and while tagging along with a customer group visit to Italy the following year, he promptly agreed to help Cela with its sales efforts in Scandinavia, becoming involved in the truck mounted lift market. Eventually, he faded out of that role but always turned up at trade shows and kept in touch with his old customers. As an occasional gambler, Alf's favourite exhibition was Conexpo, purely because it was held in Las Vegas. Sadly, he missed last year's event due to the growing dangers of Covid, along with some ongoing mobility issues.

Many years ago, when still in his prime, Alf suffered a heart attack. In typical Alf-style, he bounced back, and it hardly seemed to impact his life, as he resumed his work patterns and appeared to abandon some of the spartan diets and recommended regimes.

Alf Odrell was one of life's characters. He was a one off, enjoying life and people, often making a real difference. When UpRight Ireland engineering manager Brian Madden retired in 2006, he thanked some of the colleagues that he had worked with over the years. When it came to Alf, Brian said: "Alf Odrell, the irrepressible Prince of Sweden, who combined super salesmanship with immense personal warmth, and a gift for people". That was the true Alf Odrell and the access industry has lost another true character.



Alf Odrell earlier this year



Alf Odrell with long term co-worker Lasse Sunnergren (L)