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**John Leslie Iles 1937- 2021**

**John Iles, a pioneer of the telehandler industry, passed away at the end August aged 83. He began his material handling career in 1973 when he joined Manitou Site Lift - as the manufacturer's UK subsidiary was then called - as its manager. His arrival came just six months after the UK company had been established following the sudden death of its original manager.**



John Iles

**In those days the company was based on an industrial site near Southampton, where the Manitou Rough Terrain forklifts arrived from France. He relocated the business twice during his time at the helm in order to cope with ongoing expansion, and in 1979 was instrumental in moving the UK company to its current home town of Verwood.**

Most importantly he played a key and critical role in Manitou's entry into the telehandler market. It was still in its infancy when in 1980, he told Manitou owner Marcel Braud that he would rather see a telescopic forklift, than the Italian built off-centre machine that Manitou had just introduced. Braud listened and then gave his engineers 12 months to develop a new two tonne telescopic machine. When Iles saw the original prototype, the MT25, he asked that a number of improvements and changes be made and also coined the name 'Maniscopic', which is still in use today. It has also gone on to spawn a number of derivative brand names based on Mani...

In the words of John Cottineau, Manitou product development director at the time: "It was our English friends, John Iles and his team at Manitou Site Lift, who found the name Maniscopic and with his agreement we grabbed this name at Ancenis and used this label on all the range. The English also found some interesting improvements. For example, they designed the system of attaching the tooling. I understood it was a good principle and we thus standardised all attaching devices."

Iles left Manitou in 1993, at the age of 56, in order to set up his own business and agreed a 50/50 joint venture with Italian telehandler manufacturer Merlo to establish Merlo UK, which he based in Ringwood, not far from the Manitou UK base. The new premises were small, so he rented a storage and machine preparation space at the nearby Chandlers Ford depot of rental company Selwood.

A few years later, he said: "I wanted to run my own business, but I didn't want to just be an importer because in that case often the manufacturer doesn't want you to be too successful. By having a joint venture, Merlo shares in any success I have and as a result we have a close working relationship because we are equal partners."

He built the business into the leading competitor with the two market leaders - Manitou and JCB - grabbing around 12 percent of the market by the end of the decade.

He was also credited with never being afraid to speak out against malpractice, safety violations and the like. For example, he was reportedly responsible for lifting the lid on an alleged fraud at UK telehandler manufacturer Matbro, which ultimately led to a £50 million write off by its parent company at the time, Powerscreen.

John Iles finally retired from Merlo in 2011 at the age of 74.



John Iles (L) in his days with Manitou travelling with co-worker Pietro Cappelletti

**A tribute from the Merlo headquarters said:**

"Merlo UK founder John Iles passed away recently, we thought it an appropriate point to acknowledge John's contribution to the materials handling industry in the UK."

"It's fair to say that John probably did more to progress the development of the UK materials handling industry during the 1970's, 80's & 90's than just about anyone else. His career spanned long periods working with both Manitou and Merlo, him positioning him at the forefront of driving the developments that saw a seismic shift from the use of rough terrain masted forklifts to what was then a new concept of the telescopic handler."

"Indeed, as many people might be considering taking it easy and putting their feet up, John upon retiring from Manitou in 1993 embarked into a 50/50 joint venture with Merlo Group to establish Merlo UK."

"Starting out from offices in Christchurch Road, Ringwood with storage and machine preparation located at the Chandlers Ford depot of Selwoods, the interest in these innovative green Merlo machines from Italy soon flourished. Utilising John's extensive knowledge of the UK market, comprehensive agricultural and construction networks were promptly established. The Merlo products quickly found favour with many operators in the UK and with the introduction of the slewing ROTO models a new chapter in materials handling was started."

"There is no denying John's efforts and actions in those formative years laid the groundwork that has paved the way for what Merlo UK looks like today. John retired from Merlo UK in 2011, having spent the previous 18 years putting Merlo on the map in the UK."



The first Maniscopic - the MT425 - which John Iles named and helped develop

**Norman Issitt 1951 - 2021**

Norman Issitt, founder and previous owner of Crowland Cranes, passed away suddenly on September 29th. He began his crane career in 1973 as the low loader driver at used crane sales company Thorney Machinery, then owned by Glynn Rose. He soon established himself as a man who would tackle any job within the company.



Norman Issitt

In the mid-1980s Glynn Rose increasingly suffered from bouts of ill health and began looking for a potential buyer for the business. He took the decision in 1989 to sell the company to Rik's Noorman of Dutch trading firm Noorman BV, with which he had been working since 1981, trading used cranes between the UK and the Netherlands. This proved to be an opportunity for Norman Issitt, who was left to run the UK operation, with the support of Noorman.

In 1993, Issitt and his wife Anne took over full control of the company from Noorman and went on to develop Crowland Cranes, stepping up the crane sales efforts both in the UK and overseas. One memorable deal concerned the sale of a Coles Krannen HLT 4200 Mobile Port Tower Crane to a port in Cyprus, the deal included the transport and on site installation, quite a challenge at the time.

In August 1993, Norman's son Peter left his job at Leverton's Caterpillar to join the growing family business, and together they went on to expand the company still further by moving into other areas of the industry, gradually adding crane hire, new crane sales and services to their portfolio.

Peter and his wife Jenny took the company over from Norman and Anne in 2008, allowing Norman to take a back seat, while giving his full support when necessary to his son and the Crowland team.

This provided Norman with more time to dabble in a number of his other passions, one of which was collecting vintage tractors and renovating them, another was spending time on his boat in Norfolk with wife Anne.

He died as he lived, servicing his Land-Rover. Speaking of his parting on behalf of the whole family, Pete said: "He has left a massive gap in our lives."

The funeral service shall be held at 1pm at Crowland Abbey on Thursday 28th October.



**David Burns R.I.P**

David Burns began his career with a Saturday job working for Enigma Retail at a shopping centre. He joined the company full time and worked his way up through the ranks over a three year period to become a restaurant manager. He moved to Martin McColl's as a cost controller in 2004, and then three years later entered the powered access industry working with AFI, initially as a depot operations/hire controller, but promoted six years later to regional operations manager for the London region.



David Burns

Last June he left AFI after more than 13 years to join Speedy Powered Access as regional manager for the Southeast Region. A company announcement said: "It is with great sadness that we are announcing the passing of powered access regional manager David Burns. Whilst David has only been with Speedy for just over 12 months, he has many a friend among us both from his previous working life and since joining us."

"We will continue to support his family through this sad time. Please keep David's family in your thoughts as they go through this difficult time."

He leaves behind wife Helen and four daughters.

**Brian Ross Blackburn 1952 – 2021**

Brian Blackburn, a previous chief principal engineer at JLG in McConnellsburg, has died aged 69. He passed away at his home with his family around him on September 8th following a long battle with cancer.



Brian Ross Blackburn

Blackburn graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1974 with a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering and a Master of Science degree in manufacturing systems engineering. Later that year he began his career as a programme engineer with cooling and ventilation company Miller-Picking/ York International. After almost 24 years with the company, he left for JLG, starting with the company at the end of 1997 and staying there until he retired in May 2019.

His family obituary said: "Brian was an avid motorhead, proudly rebuilding a 1968 Camaro, rode Blackwater and Pikes Peak on his Bultaco motorcycle, a handyman extraordinaire, able to fix anything, a true beach mechanic, and a fan of all things Pittsburgh, especially supporting Pitt Panther football as a season ticket holder. He was always eager to lend a helping hand to others and his kind soul has blessed and enriched our lives and he will be missed immensely."

He is survived by his wife of 45 years Delores, children Brian and Natalie and two grandchildren.

**Memories of Arthur Arundel 1924-2021**

The following letter was received following the obituary we ran in the last issue of Cranes & Access regarding the passing of Arthur Arundel of Priestman Cranes and Excavators and Coles Cranes.

Leigh,

*I was deeply saddened to read of dear Arthur's passing. Arthur was my first mentor as a 17-year old during my early days in Priestman's Export Dept. In the open plan office Arthur worked across the parapet in the home sales dept. Everyone loved Arthur's quiet good humour even though he wasn't well treated by the company and was long frustrated before belatedly being offered a field sales position. One Saturday morning he invited me to join him to witness two Priestman hydraulic excavators - a Beaver II and Mustang 90 - on demonstration to Swire W Swift, a local drainage contractor. That field trip together with some excavator operating experience imparted to me by Priestman's senior demonstrator Ted Naylor, gave me my first real taste for the business.*

*When Coles bought Priestman, managing director David Steel visited Hull to interview the eight members of our export dept. I was one of three offered a job at Coles, based in London. That evening Arthur drove me home in his Morris Minor (I biked to work each day). I was uncertain whether to leave excavators behind and get involved in mobile cranes which - at the time - seemed relatively boring products! Arthur came into our kitchen and talked with my mother, gently persuading her that I'd be okay and that a move to London would be good for me.*

*Mam took Arthur's advice, and the rest is history. Once ensconced at Coles Eastcote, Pinner headquarters, Arthur would sometimes invite me to join him and his wife Mary for dinner at their home in Birkhampstead where we'd share memories and laughs at some of the quirky characters back at PBL in Hull. A lovely man.*

*God bless and RIP Arthur*

*Stuart Anderson*