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READERS LETTERS

Dear Sir

Following Mark Darwin's comment in the current issue of your magazine, I would like to add my comments, after spending a lifetime in the construction industry.

When I started working in the Scaffolding Industry 50 years ago, safety standards were nothing like they are now. No TBT's, no safety harness or other fall prevention etc. Your safety at work was entirely down to yourself. Slowly standards improved and this saved many lives due to Training, Inspection etc. Lately though I fear things are taking a backwards step as indicated in the increase in fatalities arising from falls from height.

I would like to describe my experiences that brings me to the above conclusion. I made progress over several years to go from being a scaffolder's labourer (1969) to advanced scaffolder (1976) to Foreman scaffolder in control of eight 3 man gangs running scaffold operations on multi million pound contracts. I started my own small scaffolding firm which operated for numerous years (Never came across HSE once in 18 years). 25 years ago I decided to change tack, I went back to Education and passed NEBOSH exams and the basic and advanced scaffolding inspection certificate (One week each at Safety & Access Ltd). I ran a successful H&S Company for more than 28 years employing my son who is Grad IOSH. 10 years ago, the HSE in their wisdom decided to accept scaffolders inspection of their own work (Fox looking after the chickens?) despite them only being required to inspect one scaffold as part of their CPD training.

Needless to say, many, many companies then dispensed with the cost of hiring external inspection services. Such has been the drop in work that the company has now had to cease trading. I have now retired, and my son has had to change career.

Kind regards

Tom Helsby (Retired)

Tech IOSH

Albany Safety Services Ltd

Dear Sir,

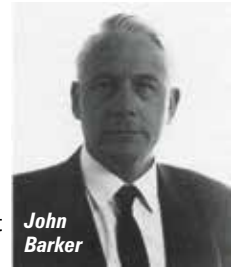
I felt that I must place on record my regret on hearing that John Barker had passed away last week. I first met John when he was appointed MD of Simon Engineering, Dudley many years ago and my first thoughts then were that he might be the wrong man for the job.

My concern was soon dispelled however, and we developed an excellent friendly relationship which lasted for many years until his recent sad death. John was a successful champion of his industry and lived to see Aerial Work Platforms adopted by industry worldwide in the enormous numbers that now proliferate in so many roles today.

I feel sure that he will have died happy in the knowledge that his personal contribution to a very successful and much needed industry has been of great value and will have contributed seriously to the personal safety of huge numbers of people in so many industries which use machines for lifting people.

Paul Adorian

Note: we published the tribute to John Barker in last months issue of Cranes & Access, July/ August



John Barker

THANK YOU

Dear Leigh

Thank you for publishing the report and comment on the 2019 fatal incident in Great Yarmouth Leigh, as my experience matches yours.

That is Silence is enforced by directors and managers on pain of dismissal for anyone who speaks out.

The effect of this is that safety is not managed correctly, with little or no attempt to mitigate Workplace Hazards. Relying instead on "we have always done it that way."

Keep up the good work.

Kind Regards

Mike Ponsonby

The incident at an onshore facility in Great Yarmouth on the 17th of October 2019 resulted in the death of Stephen Picken, 62, while Mark Kumar suffered life changing injuries. The two were working as 'Top Men' for Veolia Environmental Services (UK), dismantling a North Sea gas rig. See: page 9 or it can be seen at <https://vertikal.net/en/news/story/44310/3-million-fine-for-boom-lift-fatality>.

The comment Mr Ponsonby refers to is as follows:



Vertikal Comment

One of the many sad things about this announcement is that valuable lessons that can be learnt from this incident are only being communicated five years after it occurred. A month after the original incident occurred, we contacted the yard to confirm what we had learnt unofficially, But everyone we approached at the company refused to speak to us or even respond. If I recall correctly none of the key individuals would not even accord us with the dignity of a response. Fortunately, we were provided with a volume of unofficial information and photographs from the site and were able to report on the incident - once we had found out about it. But not sufficiently for all the lessons to be picked up.

In comparison look to the fatal Swedish hoist incident last December where there was a full and comprehensive report, complete with photographs, drawings with every detail of exactly what happened. With this incident all we really have is that it was not planned properly, the company has accepted the blame and been fined £3 million! It is not good enough.



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Dear Leigh,

I have read the comment in the latest issue of *Cranes & Access* regarding possible European tariffs on aerial work platforms with interest, but think it might be missing an important aspect. Of course, free world trade is desirable. Competition is important, both in terms of technical progress and in terms of reasonable prices for customers.

However, when assessing the EU's measures against Chinese manufacturers, it is important to consider the subsidies granted to local manufacturers. This distorts competition and leads to unfair trade. It is no secret that China's political objectives are linked to this.

Name withheld

We did respond, as we do to all letters, and do believe that this subject is a good one to be discussed. It should also be pointed out that the investigation did switch half way through to look at possible unfair subsidies to some manufacturers. Several respondents pointed out that the original investigation was looking at the wrong companies.

It also needs to be said that there are very few if any countries which do not provide subsidies to what they consider critical industries - Steel production has been a classic one over the years, along with cars and now batteries. Airbus would never have got off the ground and faced up to Boeing if it had not been for massive subsidies and loans. This is a subject we are keen to cover in more depth and it has many aspects to it. Contributions and opinions are most welcome - attributed or confidential.

JOHN HOFFPAUR 1969 - 2024

Crane operator, John Hoffpaur, 55, from Louisiana died following an incident on August 5th while carrying out a lift at a wind farm construction site north of Casper, Wyoming. He was working for Blattner Energy at the Cedar Springs wind energy project, part of a 200 turbine, 532 megawatt wind farm near Douglas, Wyoming when he lost his life after a large Rough Terrain crane he was driving ran out of control and ended up in a body of water.

Hoffpaur started out as a paramedic before deciding to train as a crane operator, then choosing to work in the wind power sector, travelling all the country. He leaves behind four children and five grandchildren.



John Hoffpaur

BRIAN WILLIAM BLACK 1948 - 2024

We received the sad but belated news in early August, that access industry veteran Brian Black had died. He passed away peacefully on 2nd April at the age of 75.

Born in Seattle, Washington, he studied in both the United States and Germany with spells in South America and Asia. He returned to the US in 1965 and joined the army gaining Airborne/Ranger/Pathfinder qualifications, while seeing service in Vietnam, and becoming a member of the rifle team at Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

He then began a 40 year career in the international construction equipment business, working mostly in international sales and major account roles for Caterpillar, Snorkel where his access career started, Grove Manlift, JLG, Genie, Terex Construction, Teupen and finally Skyjack where he was appointed vice president of sales in 2012, retiring in 2014.

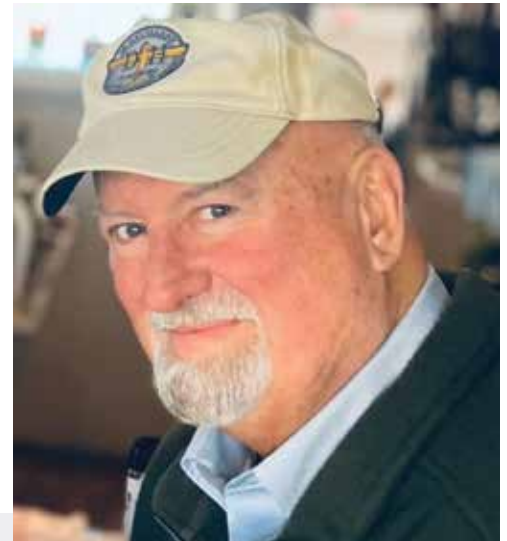
In the years since then he has worked with church outreach programmes building schools, clinics and orphanages in Mexico and Guatemala. He was also involved in a Prison Ministry programme (Kairos) to mentor incarcerated men in Spain and Portugal as they prepared to transition back into society.

He is survived by Jody, his wife of 47 years, two daughters Stacey and Allison and two grandchildren. His funeral was held on June 7th at the Florida National Cemetery in Bushnell, Florida.

Brian came across as an intelligent, gentle, likeable man of the world, multilingual and extremely well-travelled. He was interested in different cultures and people, and never seemed to have a bad word to say about anyone. He was unashamedly devout in his religious beliefs, but never tried to foist them onto others or even raise the matter, unless it came up in conversation and context. The world has lost a gentle giant.



Brian Black



Some of the online comments

"He was one of the nicest people I've ever met in the access industry." Brun Batista

"Very sad news, I'd met Brian many times over the years and thoroughly enjoyed his company. Although never having worked with Brian, I do know his colleagues held him in the very highest regard. My condolences to them and his family." Paul Richards.

"This is very sad news. Like Kevin, I also worked with Brian at two companies, he was a true gent and was very well liked by all who worked with him and his customers around the world. He had a passion for the industry and was a very helpful and caring man, he will be a great miss from our industry. Condolences to the family, RIP Brian."

"Brian was a true citizen of the world. He was able to converse in several languages and travelled to more than 100 countries. He loved studying history, geography and traditions of the places he visited."

"Brian was a strong man of faith, the eternal optimist, a true gentleman and a man of integrity and compassion. He will be greatly missed by all who loved him, befriended him and were mentored by him."

"Very sad to hear the passing of Brian, I worked with him at a couple of companies, a lovely man, sincerest condolences to his family, RIP Brian." Kevin Fox.

"RIP Brian, my travels with you through Asia back in the day, where everyone knew you no matter where we went and the respect you received was a real gift to see in person. The world will miss you." Dion Calder.

"A true gentleman, very sad to hear the news of Brian's passing - RIP." Ian James.

"Super sad news. Brian was a very nice man. RIP". Pete D'Alessandro

LEE SADLER 1962 - 2024

In mid-August we learnt that Lee Sadler, general manager of UK based Sparrow Crane Hire had died. He passed away peacefully on Sunday August 18th at the Dorothy House hospice in Winsley, Wiltshire, surrounded by his family, following a lengthy battle with cancer. He was 62.

Lee left home in 1977, at the age of 16, to join the Army and, following his initial training, was posted to the Marchwood military port in Southampton. Over the next few years, he worked on port operations and received training on operating both mobile and ship cranes.

In 1982, he saw service in the Falklands and, towards the end of his time in the Army, he was posted to Norway. After seven years of serving his country, he left the Army and returned to civilian life, taking on various driving jobs until he spotted an advert looking for crane operators at Gordon Sparrow Crane Hire.

Speaking just a few weeks ago, he recalled: "I rang the number and who should answer the phone but Gordon Sparrow himself. Gordon arranged an interview with Barry Mildren and Geoff Hillier at a pub in nearby Hanham. This was the start of my career in the crane hire industry."

Lee remained in the crane industry for the rest of his life, moving to Capital Crane Hire and then Hewden Stuart, where he was soon promoted to depot manager.

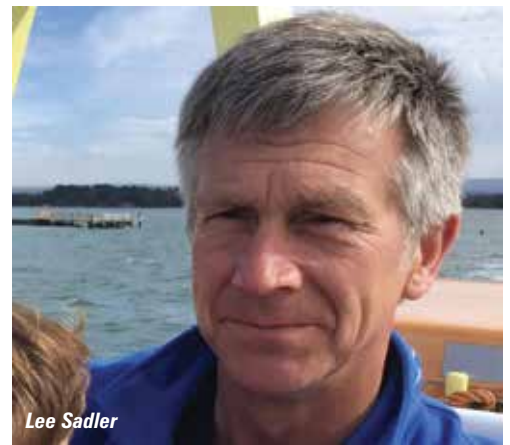
Speaking of his next move, having decided to leave Hewden, he said: "I contacted Tim Sparrow to ask if there were any vacancies, and joined the business in August 1998, starting out by going to look at jobs then go back to the yard get a crane and go do the jobs. The business grew at a steady pace with larger cranes added to the fleet. We also introduced pedestrian operated tower cranes, spider cranes and mini crawlers and developed the training department and installation services. During that time, I worked my way up to become general manager."

During his second spell working for the Sparrow crane business, he met and married Gordon Sparrow's daughter Emma. The couple settled down in Keynsham, not far from the Sparrow crane hire yard and they had a son together - Jack.

Unassuming, but quietly competent, Lee Sadler was incredibly well liked within the UK crane rental industry. He was always ready to crack on with the job, without making a fuss. He loved his motorbikes, family life and his work. He insisted on going into the office and working normally every day even when it became a physical struggle for him. He only stopped when it became impossible to work over the past month or so.

Lee Sadler leaves behind his wife Emma, children Jack and Lauren, as well as step daughter Chloe, along with both his parents, a brother and a sister.

The funeral will be held at 11:00 on Tuesday September 3rd at St John's church Keynsham, BS31 2BL. Donations to Dorothy House Hospice www.dorothyhouse.org.uk



Lee Sadler



At Vertical Days in discussions with Peter Issitt of Crowland Cranes (R)

**Online comments**

"Tragic really, worked with him on and off for many years, very competent and this, coupled with him being a thoroughly nice person makes his passing a real blow. Will pay my respects to him on the 3rd of September. Also, a blow for the Sparrow family, with his wife, Emma being the daughter of Sheila Sparrow and the late Gordon Sparrow, both being part of the Sparrow dynasty along with the late Alf and George. RIP Lee." Jim Hagen

"Totally gutted. Always had a good chat with Lee at various crane events, nice guy RIP." Timno

"RIP Lee, your dedication and commitment to the business was second to none. You will be greatly missed by all who knew you." Steve Stennett

"I have passed this sad news onto 17 Port & Maritime Regt, the passing of 'Shuggy' has been met with shock & sadness by those that knew him." Dap.

"So very sorry to hear this, my thoughts go out to Lee's family."

"Lee was a very nice person to have known. It's really sad that another has been taken to early. He did a great job and so unassuming."

I heard the sad news about Lee recently. A terrible blow for his family and I send my deepest sympathy to all. He was far too young, pleasant, and was dealt a bum hand of cards in the game of life. Yes! I can remember interviewing Lee when he was applying for a crane driving job with the newly created company Gordon Sparrow Crane Hire Ltd. He told me that he had been driving cranes in the army. "What are you doing now" I asked. "I am a motorcycle despatch rider in London" he replied. Being a life long biker I asked Lee what bike he was riding. "A Honda CBR 900" he replied. "If you can ride a CBR 900 around London despatch riding, you can certainly drive a 15 Ton Jones around Bristol" I replied. I am proud that I had a small part in Lee's successful career in the Crane Hire Industry. No more pain now Lee, ride with the wind!

RIP

Barry Mildren

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TREVOR CHURCHILL 1939 - 2024

Veteran UK based crane operator Trevor Churchill passed away in mid-July at the age of 84, he would have celebrated his 85th birthday in September.

Churchill started off as a stone mason and entered the crane and lifting industry in 1967 when a friend of his persuaded join him the recently established crane rental business of Richards & Wallington plant hire as a crane driver at its depot in Wharf Road Tysley, on the south east side of Birmingham.



Trevor Churchill

In those early days operators had to be prepared to drive any crane in the fleet, and he would have started off with something like a Hydrocon or small Coles lattice truck crane. He soon progressed to one of the flagship cranes, including the 100 tonne Coles Centurion lattice truck crane, one of the world's largest mobile cranes when was launched in 1963. He also operated one of the first P&H 125 lattice truck cranes to arrive in the UK.

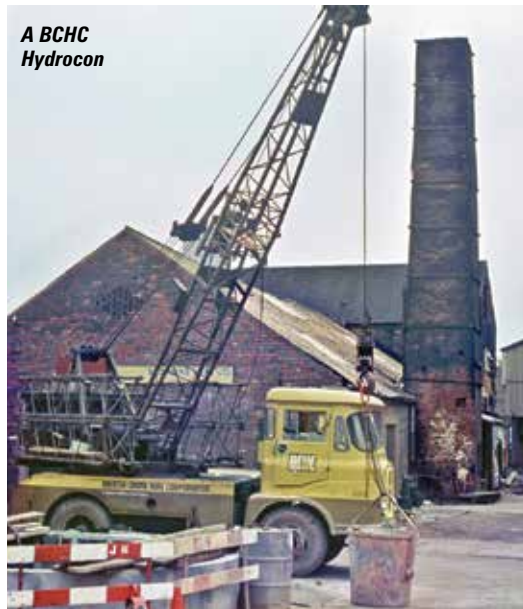
He stayed with the company through a period of acquisitions and its rebranding as BCHC - British Crane Hire Corporation. He also had the 'opportunity' to drive one of the very few Clark Cosmos 755 telescopic truck cranes ever built. The Cosmos cranes featured a low slung, racing car inspired chassis cab and joystick crane controls in the superstructure. Sadly, many of the 755's were apparently built incorrectly, with the slew ring welded off centre and as a result were prone to overturning. It happened to Trevor while lifting a boat out of the river Mersey, he ended up in the river, sustaining some very serious injuries, not to mention the intestinal challenges of taking in large amounts of filthy river water.

After some time in hospital, he 'got back on the horse' and went back to work. His son Glenn followed in his footsteps, joining him in 1975 as an apprentice mechanic at BCHC. And in fact, the two worked together for a while on a 140 tonne Demag, with Glenn helping his father out with the heavy rigging as he struggled on account of his injuries.

When BCHC closed down in the early 1980s Trevor Churchill became a truck/ heavy haulage driver before joining Baldwins for a short while and then Sparrows, followed by a couple of years as crane operator on the offshore oil rigs.

Back on dry land he was persuaded to join Interlift, part of the Al Jaber group. When it pulled out of the UK he moved to Ainscough Crane Hire and along the way operated a 300 tonne Liebherr and a 500 tonne Demag - most of his life was spent as a heavy crane operator. Somewhere along the way he was badly injured a second time while changing a tyre on a big Gottwald. Eventually his injuries got the better of him and he was obliged to retire early, going on to nurse his second wife through six years of dementia until she passed away. He dedicated his final decade to improving his property and enjoying the odd game of golf.

In the words of his son Glenn: "My dad was a member of the old guard of experienced operators that worked by the seat of their pants in machines, that by today's standards were prehistoric, to say the least but, which pioneered today's technology. I was only a child when he started out in the lifting industry, but I remember fondly my summer holidays travelling around the country with him in the 'suicide cab' of old Coles strut jib cranes to work on motorway construction



A BCHC Hydrocon



A couple of Coles Centurions at work



A P&H 125



A Cosmos 755

projects countrywide. My father was a proud man and 'did not suffer fools lightly' he was dignified to his end and will be missed by many of us."

He leaves behind his first wife Brenda and sons Glenn and Mark.

One of the comments added online:

"Sad news. It was a hard industry then. Most were lattice cranes. I started for Sparrows in 73. Just retired from the industry last year at 71 years old."