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READERS LETTERS

NO CRANE NO GAIN

Dear Leigh,

Can any of your readers offer any insight or explanation on the attached?

I have come up with nothing!

All the best,

Philip Bishop

We have had an initial response after posting online last week as below.

Satirical art

This poster is a piece of satirical artwork titled "Cranes: The Movie," created by the Northern Irish artist Rickydrewapiccy.



FURNITURE HOIST 'COMMENT' REMINDS ME

Good afternoon Mr Darwin,

I read with interest your 'Comment' about the use of a furniture hoist. It reminded me of a recurring incident many, many years ago when I was an assistant quantity surveyor on a Wimpey No Fines council housing estate.

Those were the days when a 15 by 5.5 metre (50 x 18ft) timber shed was used as a storage unit for timber products, OPC, builders' metalwork etc, with a corner 'office' for the site storekeeper and all his files and product documentation.

Needless to say, there was the obligatory site labourer, a good old gofer who toddled around the site delivering what he could and making copious quantities of tea and coffee from a huge tea urn, when the canteen ladies weren't there.

Every Friday, he used to push a brand new wheelbarrow off-site, he only lived around the corner on a previous phase of the development. It didn't click that he was flogging (selling) one a week to mates! I suppose the storekeeper must have been on a percentage for 'handling charges', but as the costs weren't exactly high, the item was written off as damaged.

Have a good weekend.

Regards, Paul Keld

PS When I joined another company, one of my sites was on the huge development area, Canford Heath, north of Poole in Dorset.

The site agent was an ex-bricklayer and was building his own house - using materials from his site! He got around it by ordering external joinery, lintels, bricks, blocks, etc and joists, trusses for one house type that wasn't planned for a particular plot and had the materials delivered to his plot, on the other side of Broadstone. It wasn't until his house was at the second fix stage/ kitchen units that the accounts department cottoned on to the misuse of company property!

TURNING 90

Dear Leigh,

Today Margaret Caton and I joined Paul Adorian, the founding director of the International Powered Access Federation - IPAF - to celebrate his 90th birthday. Attached is photo taken of the three of us during the party. I thought it might be nice to have this in your publications as everyone in the access industry knows Paul. He was in great form and it is hard to believe that he is 90!

Hope you are keeping well.

Jean Harrison



CLIVE EDWARD HURT 1951-2025

We have received the sad news that UK rental entrepreneur Clive Hurt has died suddenly. He passed away peacefully, having enjoyed life to the full up until then, he was 74. He leaves behind his wife Emma, daughters Caroline and Nicola and son Richard, along with six much-loved grandchildren.

Clive Hurt founded the general rental company Hurt Plant Hire in Leyland, Lancashire, in 1972, formally incorporating it in October 1984. In the years that followed, he built it into a four-location business in North West England and Wales, with revenues of almost £26 million and pretax profits that peaked at almost £4 million. The 400 unit rental fleet included telehandlers, crushers and screeners, wheeled loaders and large excavators. Along the way Clive was joined by his son Richard, with the two working together until the business was acquired by Fox Brothers in 2020 although both remained on board, helping ensure a good ownership transition.

The funeral service was held on January 7th in Preston. Donations if so desired to St. Catherine's Hospice or the 'Natalie Kate Moss Trust: Brain Haemorrhage Charity'.

A statement from the Fox group said: "Clive will be remembered not only for his lasting contributions to the plant hire industry, but for enjoying life to the full. Our thoughts are with his family and friends. Hurt Plant Hire became Fox group's first acquisition and marked an important milestone in our journey."



Clive Hurt

DOUGLAS GORDON ANDERSON

1955-2026

Douglas Anderson, joint managing director of UK general rental company GAP group has died. He passed away suddenly in the first few days of January at the age of 70.

The GAP group was established in Glasgow in 1969 by Gordon Anderson and is still a family owned company. Douglas Anderson joined the family business in 1978 as the first member of the second generation of the Anderson family to run the GAP group, along with his younger brother, Iain.

A statement posted by the company from Iain and Mark Anderson, a member of the third generation, said: "It is with profound sadness that we share the news of the sudden passing of Douglas Anderson. Douglas was a true visionary in the world of hire, and his life dedicated to the business has enabled GAP to be where it is today."

This is an incredibly tough time for our family. It goes without saying that along with the rest of the board, we will continue to build on Douglas' legacy."



Douglas Anderson

The following obituary was received by former Coles Crane Marketing guru and founder of advertising agency CSA - Martyn Wilson.

FRANK BACON, FORMER COLES CRANES MANAGER 1926-2025

Francis Alexander 'Frank' Bacon, the Midlands area manager for Coles Cranes from 1969 until 1984, passed away on Saturday, 29th of November having suffered from a brief chest infection, followed by Sepsis. He was 99 and just nine months away from his 100th birthday.

Frank's career with Coles was the result of a series of happy accidents. Like many men of his generation, Frank Bacon was called up for his National Service in August 1944, at the age of 18. The war in Europe ended shortly before he had completed his training, while the war in the Far East came to an end before he could be shipped out. Instead, he was diverted to India, where the last viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, was overseeing Indian independence and the partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan.

During his time in India, Frank was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, returning to the UK a few months later. He was demobbed in early 1948 after suffering a bout of appendicitis and went back to his previous career with a firm of Birmingham stockbrokers.

Speaking of it later, he said that with so many other men returning from the war, and looking for work, his chances of long term success in that field seemed remote. So, in August 1949, he handed in his notice and went to the 'Appointments Bureau' in Broad Street, Birmingham, one of a number which had been set up by the government to help those returning from the forces find jobs.

He was fortunate to be interviewed by a former colonel in the Royal Artillery, and, in Frank's words, "We had a chat about the war for about an hour and a half, after which he said 'I suppose you want a job'. He was not impressed with my capabilities, but found a firm in the Jewellery Quarter that needed an office manager. Right up my street!"

THE INTERVIEW

In the interview the following day, he met "a charming character, Robert Albon", the Midlands area manager for Coles Cranes. The job involved running a small office with two secretaries, four service engineers and four salesmen.

Albon had been a major in the Reconnaissance

Corps, serving throughout the war, and he got on well with this fellow officer. As a result, Frank was offered the office manager's job at £6.50p a week, starting the following Monday. At this point, Robert Albon told Frank that having only recently arrived in Birmingham and had never actually seen a crane. He had previously sold EUK catering equipment, a sister company of Coles based in Oldham. Accordingly, he would be out of the office most of the day, leaving Frank in charge.

Frank enjoyed the office work, got on well with his colleagues, and even learned a bit about cranes, particularly when a 12½ tonne Coles truck crane arrived outside the office to collect some parts - much to the delight of a crowd of children who swarmed around it. Ambitious by nature, after two years in the job, Frank suggested to Albon that he might be up for promotion. A couple of weeks later, in August 1949, Coles' managing director, James Steel, arrived at the office, interviewed Frank, and, to his surprise, promoted him to a sales representative, even though he had no engineering knowledge.

He attended a training course at the Coles plant in Sunderland, where he met UK sales director Reg Keates, who told him he would be fine. Back in Birmingham, equipped with Coles crane brochures and a three year old Ford Anglia car, Frank began his career in sales, covering part of the Midlands region. He enjoyed the job, despite telling everyone he met that he wasn't much of a salesman. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, he enjoyed a stellar career as a sales representative, the territory around his home town.



Frank is in this photo but do not have all the name. Perhaps some of older readers might be able to identify them?

KINDNESS AND GOLDEN YEARS

Those years were very much a golden age for Coles, especially in the Midlands, home to the UK car industry, major engineering companies and crane rental businesses. Those who had dealings with Frank, both customers and colleagues, remember his unfailing kindness and good manners, which helped make him extremely successful. In August 1969, he was promoted to Midlands area manager, responsible for five sales representatives, 16 service engineers, and support staff.

In 1984 when the Acrow group, which had acquired Coles in 1972, collapsed, the Coles UK sales operation was cut back, and all area offices closed, prior to its acquisition from the administrators by Grove. Frank Bacon was made redundant, along with most of his team, so he set up a crane consultancy to provide advice and support to some of his former customers. He also found work at a business selling conservatories before enjoying retirement to tend his beloved garden and play tennis, a passion of his since the 1950s.

Frank Bacon will be remembered fondly by everyone who knew him, including his two sons, five grandchildren, and three great grandchildren - with another three on the way! His funeral was held on Monday 5th of January 2026, in Solihull.

Best wishes
Martyn Wilson

NEIL WALLACE RIP

I have some rubbish news to share to start off the year about one of our much loved regional managers, Neil Wallace. While on a family Christmas break in Spain, Neil became ill and was admitted to the hospital, but things went downhill from there, and sadly, he passed away with his son and fiancée by his side.

We are all gutted to lose such an important member of our training team, and our thoughts are with his family at this awful time. Neil began his career at HSS Hire in 2017 as a branch manager in Southampton, where he gained a great reputation for his knowledge and integrity. We got lucky when he agreed to come over and join HSS Training in March 2019.

He was a brilliant trainer, his dry sense of humour, patience, industry knowledge and genuine care for his delegates getting the best from the course made him excel in his new role. He loved sharing his knowledge to help others, and it always came across in his training that it was more than just a job for him, and more of a passion.

He took on the role of training manager a couple of years ago and applied all of the same principles, mentoring and supporting his team.

I will miss him loads, our meetings and social events will never quite be the same again without Neil there.

Darren Verschuren



We have not yet managed to pull together a full and proper tribute, but Neil was a proud Scott and Glasgow Rangers supporter, and leaves behind his fiancée Sue, just six months prior to their wedding and son Craig. His funeral service will be held at Wessex Vale Crematorium on Monday 9th February 2026 at 16:00.

A couple of the many online comments include:

So sad to hear this news. This loss has personally hit me hard. I recruited Neil into HSS back in 2017, he worked under my leadership as a Branch Manager, where he did a fantastic job. Neil was an absolute honour to work with and consistently demonstrated the utmost professionalism throughout his career. When he made the move into HSS Training, it was the perfect step for him as teaching, leading, and developing others was truly his passion.

My thoughts and prayers are with Neil's family and friends at this incredibly difficult time. He will be deeply missed by everyone at HSS who knew him and had the privilege of working alongside him.

Patrick Kavanagh

Deeply saddened by the passing of Neil, a great character, witty yet wise, joyful yet authentic, driven yet relaxed, and a happy presence all round.

Greatly missed both professionally and socially, and our personal banter over the years with his beloved Glasgow Rangers will remain with me. No doubt he will be smiling with their recent form. My thoughts are with his family and loved ones at this difficult time. Rest in peace, young lad.

John McNeilly