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READERS LETTERS

SIMON D40 CLASSIC

Dear Sir,

I am writing from the Czech Republic. We are selling a historic aerial work platform made by Simon Engineering in Dudley - a Simon D40 hydraulic platform with an insulated cage, mounted in 1966 on a Czechoslovak Praga S5T-3 truck.

The basic details are as follows: - Platform: Simon Engineering, Dudley - model D40. - Truck: Praga S5T-3, built 1966, 6-cylinder air-cooled diesel engine, 110 hp - Dimensions: length 8.15 m, width 2.40 m, height 3.35 m - Original Czechoslovak vehicle registration document available - Condition: the engine and the hydraulic platform are fully working - Price: negotiable Because the platform was built in Dudley, we believe it could be of interest to a museum. Photos are attached.

Please let us know if this is of interest. We are happy to send more photos or a video of the platform in operation.

Kind regards, František Karda



GEORGE DAVIS 1948 - 2026

UK crane industry veteran George Davis passed away in hospital on Friday 25th September, at the age of 77. He leaves behind three children, Gareth, Gavin and Deborah along with several grandchildren.

George Davis began his crane career in or around 1973 with BCHC - British Crane Hire Corporation/ previously Richards & Wallington - one of the UK's leading crane companies of the time. His first job with the company saw him on the hire desk, taking calls and bookings and helping with the daily schedule for the local fleet.

Over the next decade or two, he worked with Baldwins Crane Hire where he was appointed regional heavy cranes director. He also had a couple of spells with Ainscough Crane hire, the first time round he was national heavy crane sales manager.

Then in mid-2002 he set up his own business, Crane Advisory Services, which he described as "a one stop advisory service to contractors and crane hirers covering all aspects of lift operations, including site surveys, method statements, risk assessment, lifting tackle arrangements, CAD drawings and the supply of crane supervisors and slingers."

The following year Cranes & Access magazine interviewed him about his new venture. The article is still online and can be viewed by https://vertical.net/en/pdf/740/62c1cc52/ca_2003_3_p34.pdf

Towards the end of 2010, he returned to Ainscough as sales & technical manager for several of its divisions. In late 2015, as his 67th birthday approached, he retired.

A few years later, he came back to the industry he loved, working part-time in a sales role with DM Cranes and in 2023 he started working with crane mats supplier GJ Bogmats, also part time.

Funeral arrangements

His funeral will be held on Friday the 23rd of October at 13:15 at Dewsbury Crematorium, Heckmondwike Road Dewsbury, WF133PL, and afterwards at Batley Nash WF17 5DL.

George Davis at the wheel of one of his Jags, one of which had the registration J18B UP



George Davis



Notes from Vertical readers

Fond Memories

I was very sad to hear this news regarding George, I have fond memories of spending time with George at various crane shows in the 1980s.

RIP George, I'm drinking a toast to you this evening
Paul Richards

George gave me my start

George gave me my first ever job in the crane hire game back in 1976 on a 6t Iron Fairy Onyx at the ripe old age of 17 for a company called P&H crane hire, of which Peter Ellis was a partner. Then we moved onto Cumbria Crane Hire, a spin-off of Martin Ainscough, Martin probably being one of Georges closest friends outside of his family.

We once again joined each other at Griffiths Crane Hire (Barrow Depot), Griffiths were part of Hewden Stuart when they all kept their own name. George was depot manager answering to Joe Murray and Bob Clues. Then finally we were together again at Ainscough Crane Hire, in the good days when the brothers ran things. Right up to George leaving and going his own way.

We had a fantastic 50 year friendship, sharing many mutual friends in the industry, probably mainly Andrew Winter, These guys were true Crane Brains !!! I used to call in to see George at his lovely apartment in Dewsbury we would get a takeaway and a few bottles and, most of the time, stay up half the night reminiscing. On one occasion I had to be in Hull for 07:00am and were still sat there chatting at 05:15am (no sleep that night).

I have been truly saddened since receiving the sad news on Friday evening, and although the funeral of George will be a sad day for many, I am sure he will be watching over us all on the day and making sure we will give him a great send off, I think Hard Hats should be compulsory for the wake, coz by gum there will be some bloody hook blocks swinging.

RIP my mate all my love from Gary Charnley.

A well-known character

George, a well-known character in the crane hire industry, had a wealth of knowledge, knew his cranes inside out and was a natural salesman. A great colleague, a good friend and a character who will be sadly missed and fondly remembered by many.
RIP George



5th year running

Christmas Gift Appeal 2026

Give a child near Ukraine's front line a gift this **Christmas**

For the fifth year running, we're sending Christmas gifts to displaced Ukrainian children living close to the front line. **Rotary International** collects every gift from eastern Slovakia and delivers it directly to communities, schools, hospices and homes living in the shadow of the war - and we're inviting your organisation to help fill the trucks.

How you can help

Option 1

Donate a gift

Buy a Christmas gift, wrap it, and attach a label stating:

- What the gift is
- Whether it's for a boy or girl
- The appropriate age range

Option 2

Make a donation

Prefer to give financially? We'll use it to buy gifts - and it helps cover the cost of getting our trucks to Ukraine.

- Funds gifts for children we can't reach otherwise
- Supports transport costs to the border

Send gifts to:



Plant and Hire Aid Alliance, 289-297 Felixstowe Road, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP3 9BS - or we can arrange collection.

Nov 30

gifts must arrive by



Every gift is handed directly to a child - and at the end of the campaign, we'll share a full report and photos so you can see **exactly** what your generosity made possible.

Get your organisation involved today

hello@aid-alliance.com | www.aid-alliance.com

ALAIN HENRI FRECHE 1937 - 2026

Alain Freche, co-founder of French equipment rental company FLS passed away on September 20th just a few weeks shy of his 89th birthday.

Alain Freche started the company that he has dedicated his life to in 1966 in partnership with his father, Alexis. The business started out as Freche Père & Fils renting forklifts to local industrial users in the town of Vitrolles, next to Marseille airport north west of the city.

Alexis and Alain had previously worked in Algeria where they ran a construction equipment rental business, largely outside of the urban areas. After independence in 1962 they returned to France and considered their options. They initially traded in new and used equipment, mostly American and distributed Mills Scaffold products.

The company entered the aerial lift rental market in 1980, starting out with truck mounts, before expanding into self-propelled booms and scissor lifts. At around the same time it began building its depot network, and in 2015 acquired FBL with locations in Fos-sur-mer and Martigues which focused on the petrochemical industry.

The FLS brand came in 2023 by which time the company operated from 25 locations in France. Last year it acquired a number of locations from Locomod, taking its network 33 locations, while extending its area of operation. Revenues now exceed €50 million, with a 6,000 unit fleet, which includes all types of aerial lifts and telehandlers, with more than 300 employees. Today the company is managed by Laurence and Eric Freche, with two members of the fourth generation, Thomas Ichai and Justine Freche, now working in the company.

The company posted the following tribute:

"It is with deep sadness that we announce the death of Mr. Alain Freche. Deeply attached to the company he developed, he was just as attached to the men and women who accompanied him and helped it grow over the years. A committed entrepreneur, he was guided by strong human values and has profoundly marked the history and identity of the group."

"We will remember him as a passionate man, close to his teams and deeply invested in this human and entrepreneurial adventure."



Alain Freche



The original business Freche Père & Fils - 1966



Employees celebrate 60 years of FLS earlier this year



Stephanie Lacombe

STEPHANIE RAE LACOMBE 1972 - 2026

Stephanie Lacombe, co-founder and 'matriarch' of Lacombe Crane & Rigging in Houston,

Texas, passed away on Sunday, August 23rd, at the age of 54, in the company of her family, having battled breast cancer for more than 15 years. She leaves behind her husband Justin and children Carter, Emma, Noah and Jules.

Stephanie was born and bred in Butler, Pennsylvania, with the family moving to League City, Texas - southeast of Houston - in the mid-1980s and then attending The University of Texas in Austin. She married Justin Lacombe around 20 years ago, having helped establish the crane company that bears their name in south Houston.

In the words of her family: "Being a mother was one of the greatest joys of her life. She never hesitated to open her heart and home to her children's friends or to mother any young person who needed a little extra love. She also had a special place in her heart for every furry friend who came into her life."

"There was very little Stephanie wouldn't take on. No project was too big, no job too difficult, and no challenge too daunting, she was endlessly talented and creative, cared deeply about people and was passionate about the causes she believed in. When someone was in need, she didn't simply offer help - she went the extra mile. Her generosity, compassion, and willingness to serve others touched countless lives."

The family has said that it would like to extend their heartfelt gratitude to everyone who surrounded them

with love, prayers, kindness, generosity, and care over the past few weeks. Stating: "every act of support has meant more than words can express."



A Lacombe crane on a tricky rigging job

LESLIE JAMES BROWN 1946 - 2026

We have received the sad news that crane and heavy lift veteran Les Brown has died. He passed away a couple of months ago in Perth, Western Australia, following his 80th birthday. Sadly, we do have any details or were able to find an obituary, although several of his former colleagues have provided comments regarding their memories and appreciation of a man who made such a significant contribution to the industry he loved.

Having trained as a mechanical engineer he began his crane career in 1977 as a project engineer with PSC Heavy Lift in London, when it developed the strand jack and tower systems that are now quite common place. In 1986 he was appointed as commercial manager at Fagioli PSC. He moved up through the Fagioli business based in the UK, as operations director, and in 1998 group managing director.

In 2006, at the age of 65 he decided to go part time and took on the role of chairman, still based in London, but advising the company globally.

Around that time, he moved to Australia and in 2009 he was appointed vice president of Fagioli for Korea and Western Australia, with the aim of establishing two joint ventures, one with Chum Jo in South Korea and the other with Tutt Bryant in Australia.

In 2012 he joined Enerpac on a consulting basis to assist and advise it on the sales of its strand jacking systems in the Oceania region, with a particular focus on South Korea. As his 70th birthday loomed in late 2014 he sort of retired, but as a consultant with Business Niche in the greater Perth area.

We received the following letter which prompted us to start looking:

Dear Leigh,

I lost a dear friend a few months ago. His name was Les Brown. I first met Les in 1997. I was 34 or 35, bubbling with energy, eager to try new things and bring new technologies to India. Les was extremely sharp, experienced, willing to take risks and willing to place his faith in people. He placed his faith in me at a stage when I was still finding my way.

We worked together for many years and eventually formed a JV, which in its last form and style was known as Fagioli India Private Limited. Through those years, I watched the way Les dealt with people. He expected you to deliver, gave you room to make mistakes, told you clearly when you had gone wrong and gave you the confidence to move ahead. He had a wonderful ability to see what someone could become and give them the opportunity to get there.

I learnt a great deal from him about taking chances on people. You can carry experience and judgement with you and still remain open to someone younger, hungry and asking for an opportunity. I was one of those people once.

As the years went by, our relationship became deeply personal. Even after Les retired and moved to Australia to be with his children, we remained



Leslie Brown

in regular touch, and I even visited him once in Perth. I enjoyed our conversations, valued his advice and simply enjoyed what I used to call the comfort of being in the halo of Les Brown.

When someone influences you for close to three decades, some of their qualities become part of how you approach your own life. I see Les in the chances I have taken on people and in my instinct to give them room to prove themselves.

I feel fortunate that Les came into my life when he did.

I will miss him dearly.

Rajiv

Another comment we received on Les added:

Les was a mentor in Enerpac Heavy Lifting Technology in my HLT leadership role for APAC. He was the godfather of the strand jack and was godsend when discussing applications in customer meetings.

A true legend in the industry. Les worked with for three years in Korea among other APAC countries. He was always willing to teach and mentor me during his time as a consultant to our team. I will miss you my friend.

To all who knew them both, you know our loss and to those that did not, remember our angels that looked after us during our careers. I am truly thankful.

BELATED COMMENT

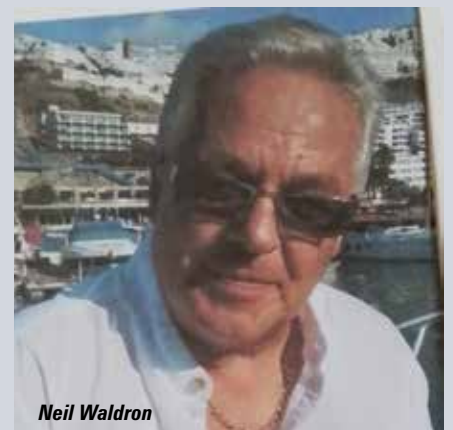
I have only just seen the news of the passing of Neil Waldron last May - C&A 27.3 June 2025 page 69.

I have very fond memories of Neil when we both worked for Access Equipment. He was the depot manager at their Loughborough depot and I at Stoke-on-Trent. Due to my lack of selling experience, he mentored me and helped in so many ways.

My lasting memory of him was playing drums in a band we had formed for our firm's Christmas Party. He was a lovely man who readily put a smile on people's faces, and I was so sorry to hear of his passing.

Thanks for the memories Neil.

Geoff Avison



Neil Waldron