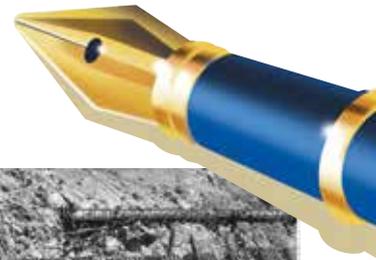


Readers Letters



Access and carnage in tree care

I was interested to see the article in this month's magazine - 'Warning Tree Sector at Work' and would have appreciated more coverage than you gave it. In case anyone was not already aware the tree industry is one of the most dangerous from many aspects, of which working at height and lifting tree segments down in restricted spaces are merely two. Looking at the accident reports you write up on Vertikal.net, you could be forgiven for thinking that tree workers pay less attention than other industries when working at height. The thing is though, that tree workers are constantly working at height - it is the nature of the business, while others might do so only occasionally. And while cherry pickers are more widely used than they were - as you point out - most work is still carried out by climbing as your interview with Fletcher highlights. Tree workers are for the most part very skilled at climbing trees, with or without harness and climbing aids, and very sure footed. For many of the younger entrants and a good many middle aged tree men, the climbing is quietly seen as a side benefit of the job! There are falls for sure, but when you take into consideration the number of hours the average tree worker spends at height, they are comparatively safe.

Conversely when cherry pickers are used it all changes, the bravado that can make a good climber does not convert well to the safe operation of a platform, where a bit more forward planning and care of outside factors is needed. For example, accidentally contacting power lines is probably more likely to happen when a tree worker is using a platform, when and he pushes the basket though the branches and touches an unseen line. When climbing your senses are more alive and focused, even if you do not see the wires, you can virtually feel them and certainly hear them, well before you touch them. The other cause of near misses and damage, if not accidents, is the inadvertent dropping of a limb onto the platform or boom tip, either breaking it or bouncing the occupant out of the cage, if he is not tethered in, or in some cases the impact causes a chain saw injury.

You will also see men standing with one foot on the guardrail of the basket and the other on the tree. A falling limb hits the boom and your man is almost sure to fall. All these considerations along with the added costs and you can see why take up is not greater than it is. The biggest benefit I can see from cherry pickers is that older tree men can keep doing the work they love, long after they have lost the passion and legs for climbing. And these older guys are usually - but not always - the more careful and more experienced, and therefore better arborists all round.

If the access platform industry wants to increase the use of these machines in tree work, a different approach is needed, I am not sure what that is in your mind but a first step might be to understand better how the work is done, and to work more closely with local tree care companies. One thing I would like to see from Cranes & Access is an article where one of your reporters spends a couple of full days with a tree crew and really see how it is all done and what goes on?

Keep up the good work

Nathan Rodgers

We appreciate the feedback and yes we would like to do something like this, we just need to find a tree company that will agree and then draw straws to see who gets to do it from our side!



Marion crane and shovel - historic footage

The US-based Historical Construction Equipment Association (HCEA) has written to say that it has compiled a new DVD from 11 original 16mm films featuring Marion cranes and shovels along with products from Osgood Company, which Marion acquired in 1955 and Quick-Way, which Marion acquired in 1964. The films include Marion cranes at work on the Boulder Dam in the 1930s, and approximately playing time is 110 minutes.

The DVD can be ordered from the association's web site for \$25, you will also find other merchandise including the annual calendar. All proceeds go to the charity which aims to preserve old construction equipment and association material.

<http://store.hceastore.com/index.html>

So what crane is this?

Hi Leigh,

While visiting the British Motor Museum at Gaydon today, a friend showed me a 1960's photo of German made Kaebler 6x4 truck in Sparrows Crane Hire livery pulling what looked like a Self-Erecting Tower Crane. I have never seen this Sparrows truck nor the self-erector before, with corners of the long bonnet on the Kaebler cut away so that driver had good view down to near side front and offside front corners etc... Any ideas on what this Kaebler might be?

Also looks like both front windows were broken by unknown vandals. Would you be able to date this by year please?

Kind Regards
Mike Ponsonby

We responded that this looks like the Liebherr AUK 120 dating from 1965.



Tribute to a young crane enthusiast

A crane enthusiast in the UK, who suffered from autism and epilepsy but has watched cranes in and out of the ABA Crane Hire depot in Walsall for the past 20 years, passed away suddenly in October, age 35. At his funeral this month he was given a big send off, with four ABA cranes joining the cortege.

Ben Lawton has greeted crane operators every morning and evening as they passed through the gates of ABA Crane Hire in Walsall since he was 14, and only stopped when he suddenly stopped breathing, although the cause of death is unknown. Lawton's coffin was transported in one of ABA's vans, and was joined in the convoy by three Grove All Terrain cranes and a Kato city type All Terrain crane, from the ABA fleet, following a request from his father. Finally at the crematorium members of the ABA team carried his coffin on the final part of his last journey. ABA Crane Hire owner Anne Baggott said: "It was such a sad story. Ben would be there day after day. He knew every crane, knew all the drivers and engine noises. He even had his bike painted in our green colours. The cortege went according to plan and I think his father was really overwhelmed - it just blew him away. Ben would have been absolutely thrilled, it was a good send off - he would have been pleased."

ABA's John Rowley added: "He would be there when the first crane came out in the morning, and he'd still be there when the last crane came in at night. I would stand on the gate with him and we'd hear a crane coming and he'd say 'here comes Big Jim'. He knew the sound of every crane and the driver's name."

His father, Steve said: "When he was little his bedroom overlooked the

crane yard. He could see the cranes gathering and used to stand at the window looking through the glass. My wife ran a business opposite ABA and Ben got to know them that way. Once he was a teenager he would get up at five or six in the morning, go to ABA and stay there all day. He knew everything about them. When Ben got to know somebody, it tended to be quite a deep relationship that developed. I think because of his autism, if something was in his head he became very driven towards it. He was a lovely young man, he was very happy.

He found it difficult in social situations, but if he did get to know someone, he had deep feelings for them. I knew he used to go up to ABA but wasn't aware how strong the relationship was. I didn't know how fond they were of Ben, it blew me away really, it's incredible. My neighbour told them Ben had passed away and they came over."

Simon Ward crane operator at the company, said: 'Ben would stand outside the gates, waiting for cranes to come back in. He was always there, and now all of a sudden he's not there. It is really strange and quite sad. He was the crane oracle. That's why all of us want to do something to pay our respects. He was very special and will be missed by everyone in the local community.'



Ben Lawton



Malcolm Lawton 1935-2017

Crane and access industry veteran Malcolm Lawton passed away on Saturday October 4th, he was 82.

Lawton spent most of his working life working in the crane and access rental industry, having joined Greenham Plant Hire after a fairly short football career as a left back with Leeds United which he joined as a junior in 1953 and then Bradford Park Avenue, where he made 113 appearances with the club, but suffered a complicated ankle injury during a match with Crystal Palace in March 1963 which put paid to his football career. He then joined Greenham Plant Hire, which became Scott Greenham, following its acquisition by the Scott brothers, who appointed him as sales director. He later became sales director of PTP Aerial Platforms after it was acquired by BET around the same time as it acquired Scott Greenham. He is survived by his wife of nearly 60 years, Doreen.

Ex-colleague Ray Ledger wrote: "Malcolm worked with me for many years and was the most genuine person you could meet. He was a brilliant sales director in cranes and access and was loved and respected by so many customers. He adored his family and football second. We spent many happy hours together at Leeds United matches. I send my deepest sympathy to Doreen and his family."



Malcolm Lawton pictured second from the left

RIP Boss

June 1st 1989, my first day in powered access as the new rep at PTP Manchester the boss said to me 'listen son, you'll never get a rollicking for putting a machine out on hire' and promptly gave me an A4 spec book thicker than the bible followed by 'away you go son'. I guess that was training over with so off I went strutting across the yard like Cantona, jumped in my C reg Orion and with my new 6k salary I'd made it! My first hire was a Pegasus dumper mount at Strangeways prison. I hired it out too cheap and yes got a right rollicking!! I'll never forget that day and the many many customer outings that followed with the boss. He was my second dad, my mentor and leader and despite the endless football stories and many a row over the Leeds & Man United rivalry as I progressed through the ranks the boss never wavered in his support he was genuinely proud of my continued career achievements and his part in it.

RIP boss thanks for everything and my loving thoughts go to his beloved Doreen, family and the grand kids he absolutely adored.

Darren Kesterton