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Letters



Industry bullies

Dear Sir,

I was sorry to read the letter, Plea for Help, from the crane driver you carried in the latest Cranes & Access that arrived today. It is a sad day when hard working people are driven to make a cry for help in such a public way and should not be part of a modern mega million pound industry. I did think that it suggested that this was a problem we have in Scotland and not anywhere else in Britain. I have driven cranes for many Scottish crane hire companies and can honestly say that this has not ever happened to me. I have not heard of it happening to others that I have worked with either.

But I do know that there are one or two people in the industry that are quite capable of things like this and who have a reputation for this sort of thing. We all know who they are. But this is not a Scottish problem it happens in England too maybe even worse. It would be nice if someone like the CPA had a phone line to report this sort of thing because a driver in control of a big crane being blackmailed into taking risks of cutting corners or working beyond safe hour limits is bad for everyone and could kill an innocent person. It could also be good for reporting other unsafe things like doing a crane hire job for companies who have no knowledge of managing a lift. I think that this matter has connections with the letter in last month's magazine from Tim Proud and I am amazed that you did not get some letters from other crane hire owners about that. It's like the mafia - all silent!

Can you please not publish my name - as it could be difficult for me.
Name withheld as requested

I agree with the comment that the letter we published last month 'A plea for help' was dreadfully sad and suggests a practice that has no place in a progressive industry like ours. What we don't know is if this case is related to one bad depot manager or a bad company. We should not forget that fact that when reading both letters.

Bullies turn up all over the place and I do not think that the aerial lift and lifting industries are any worse or any better than others. However we do still have a tendency for secrecy in some areas - as do the construction and heavy engineering industries - when things go wrong, which tends to support and even breed such bullying habits. Compare this to the aviation industry where technical problems, accidents and the like are openly placed and debated in the public domain for all to see and learn from, while we attempt to both hide such information, then deny it and 'strong-arm' those who are brave or foolhardy enough to communicate or publish it.

I do think that industry associations such as IPAF, CPA, ERA, DLR, ARA, EWPA, NASC, HRIA, PASMA, ALLMI etc...etc... could have a confidential hot line number for the reporting of abuse and safety issues etc... Perhaps better still they could have a shared service with other similar associations in their regions? It is hard to see what objection a decent and open minded company/member could have against such a proposal, as long as the procedure of dealing with such calls was sound and aimed at resolving or mediating the situation without the fear of prosecution etc...

Ed.

Dear Sir,

In spite of the availability of new technology, the theft of plant and equipment continues to rise, with around £800 million of equipment taken annually. As a result a group of eight leading hire companies are now working together to beat plant theft.

A Plant, Brandon Hire, GAP Hire Solutions, HSS, Nationwide Platforms, Speedy Solutions and VP, recently collaborated to discuss ways in which the theft of plant machinery can be reduced. The majority of equipment theft occurs at construction sites, rather than at depots. Items such as mini-excavators regularly go missing from sites, which has considerable cost implications attached as well as the repair of any damage done to access the site.

The meeting followed the seventh annual Combined Industries Theft Solutions (CITS) conference held at JCB headquarters in Rochester, Staffordshire last November. The conference pinpointed key steps that the construction and associated industries should take to ensure a proactive stance in combating the issue, with around 92 percent of construction and hire companies experiencing plant theft from sites across the country. All eight companies attended the CITS conference and decided to expand upon the original meeting by joining forces to share information, ideas and best practice. The inaugural meeting was held at GAP Hire Solutions Headquarters in Glasgow in February.

The meeting was a great success and several options to reduce theft were discussed, including increasing depot and site security measures. It was also suggested that each of the companies should begin strengthening relationships with local police forces in order to gain better support. Whilst utilising resources such as trade bodies to promote and lobby the issue of plant theft is on the agenda going forward.

The next meeting will be held during Vertical Days at Speedy Services, headquarters in Haydock this May.

Mark Anderson,
GAP group

Readers Letters

Peter Allison 1925 - 2015

Peter Allison, who was a key part of the Coles Cranes export sales team in the 1960s and again in the 1980s, export sales director for Grove-Coles and Grove, died at the end of March. He was 90.

His funeral was held in Bournemouth on Monday April 20th and was attended by more than 25 members of Cobblers, the Coles' former employees association, of which he was the honorary secretary for the past eight years. A full obituary will be published in the next issue of Cranes & Access.



Stuart Smith 1948 -2015

Stuart Smith, the founder and past owner of Peterborough Crane Hire, has died, following a long battle with Cancer. He was 67.

Smith started the original Peterborough Crane Hire with the purchase of a 25 tonne crane, before building up a fleet of around 20 units over the years. The company ran into difficulties, and after the company ceased trading in the recent recession, he joined mini crane and crane service specialist JT Cranes. JT Cranes said: "Stuart was well known in the industry as being a true gentleman and will be greatly missed by all that knew him." The funeral was held on April 15th in Peterborough.



Dear Sir,

You asked for more information about the late Stuart Smith.

He served his apprenticeship as a plant electrician with Mitchell Construction Kinnear Moodie Group at Wharf Road, Peterborough. His elder brother Trevor also did an apprenticeship with Mitchells as a plant fitter.

As was usual at that time Stuart would have gone on electrical breakdowns on all manner of equipment, tower cranes, hoists and batching plants. When Mitchells went bust I am not sure if Stuart stayed on after Tarmac bought parts of the group, but I know that he later worked for Tarmac in Egypt on the Cairo Waste Water scheme.

He also worked for Dowmac Plant & Transport erecting Kroll and Pignon tower cranes all over the UK. Stuart worked in Saudi Arabia, later moving to Germany to run the German office, returning, I believe to buy a mobile crane and start Peterborough Crane Hire.

From when I first knew him he played electric guitar and was a member of local Peterborough rock bands with his son Nick, playing for many local charities and raising thousands of pounds. He was a member of the Peterborough Branch of the CMPE, becoming branch treasurer and branch chairman. He sponsored many youth football teams. He was generous with his time and interest. He will be sadly missed.

Many others in the industry also left tributes to a man who was clearly liked and widely respected. Here are a few of them:

A true gentleman in every sense of the word, taken too early and will be sadly missed by all who were privileged to know him. Stuart fought an illness for many years with little complaint, a brave man indeed.

Rest in peace Stu.

Bill Green

A lovely guy with a great sense of humour, and an original Mod!! It's been a pleasure knowing you Stuart.

Peter Burwell

A true gentleman and always a pleasure to be in his company. It was so good to see and spend time with him at Vertikal Days last year. His warmth made me feel like a long lost brother.

Terry Marnock

Stuart was a great man and will be sadly missed by all the crane industry, the first time we meet was at Kato in Sweden 1988 and Stuart was fantastic on the stage playing his guitar, Dream-Dream, he brought down the house with applause. Sad day! He will always be in my thoughts.

Alan Stowell

It was always a pleasure to meet and talk with Stuart. He would bring stories to life with anecdotes and some pretty good impersonations. One genuine good guy sadly missed.

Trevor Jepson

Stuart was a such a great man to deal with. The industry has lost one of the best!!

Darren Jackson

I knew Stuart for over 40 years and he will be greatly missed by so many people whose lives he touched by his kindness, generosity and friendship. He really was one of the good guys. A true gentleman.

Robert Nugent

So sad to here Stuart had passed away. Always the gentlemen, such a nice man.

Tim Ambridge

Sad news indeed. Stuart was a Gentleman in every sense of the word, a real loss to the Crane industry.

Andrew Foster

A fantastic man, always had a professional approach to our Industry. A pleasure to deal with. He will be sadly missed.

David Slack