

## No progress since 2008

*The following is an open letter to Kevin Minton of the UK's Construction Plant-Hire Association and follows the publication of a report we ran in which a crane operator asked to lift a pallet of breeze blocks, refused unless a proper fork attachment and net was used. Rather than take the time to get one over or fetch a telehandler, the crew lifted with blocks with an excavator and well-used web slings.*



Dear Editor,

I found a recent 19 August 2016, Cranes and Access news item particularly interesting, (see attached). Whilst the comment accompanying the photo is a little flippant it admirably highlights the totally unsafe incident in simple terms and begs the question, "Are we making any progress on our construction sites?"

The site and contractor are not named in the news item, but we can rest assured that the main contractor's site office will be furnished in risk assessment, method statements and the site notice boards showing the latest CSCS benefits of their mass registration scheme. Site operatives will be carrying the requisite CPCS or NPORS tickets endorsed with 'Excavators used for lifting' and 'Slings & Signalling,' probably supplemented by a one day EWPA NVQ. Employers will have carefully negotiated with a training centre reconciling any training cost/s and their grant income against the imposed levy charge ensuring that they are not in deficit and that any downtime is at the bare minimum. The actual quality of any training, if indeed any is available, will rarely be the main priority, only the acquisition of a 'ticket'.

The Site Manager/Supervisor will have delivered a half day induction for his site workers and despite all these safeguards BuildUK will be blissfully unaware that all these rules and regulations will be ignored by a site supervisor/plant operator who will use a 360 degree excavator for lifting duties in a totally unsafe and inappropriate manner, posing a huge foreseeability of risk. What of the site supervisor and the inappropriate selection of plant for the task and the test centre/s and their instructor/assessors who delivered the highly questionable competence for those operators involved in the unsafe use of the excavator and the slinging of the palletised load? Questions need to be asked.

Sadly these incidents are commonplace and my solution to the problems remains unaltered since 2008.

- Plant operators need formal foundation training for the acquisition of their ticketed competence, not half a day practising a test scenario after purchasing a set of model answers from an illegal USA/Romanian website for £20.
- Card scheme Instructors/Testers need regular checks on their practical competence by independent quality assurance staff who are themselves occupationally competent in the respective category of plant.
- All plant operator NVQ evidence should be naturally occurring and derived from the workplace, not simulated at an NVQ or test centre.
- The one day EWPA NVQ for plant operations should be axed, (regardless of what CITB Northern Ireland say).

- EVs must have professional qualifications or expertise in the same subject area for which they are responsible.
- Awarding Bodies EVs need to make unannounced visits to NVQ centres.
- NVQ assessors for plant operations must have verifiable industry experience and occupational competence and the selection of said assessors should be the gift of the awarding body, not the NVQ centre.
- BuildUK Managers/Supervisors who are deemed responsible for allowing malpractice such as illustrated on this London site should have their employment terminated.
- The HSE must increase the number of unannounced site visits.

After the disproportionately expensive, (£34.3K), Pye Tait report on Competence, the virtually defunct Construction Competence Council, much discussion on 'Routes to Competence' and the CITB's grandiose strategies on NVQs, we appear to have made little, or no progress 'on the tools'. Surely time for the construction sector to undertake a massive rethink on its NVQs and their assessment, site supervision and the competency of its ticketed plant operators?

The forthcoming Construction News Summit, 11 - 12 October 2016 is yet another gathering of well-intentioned academics and professionals from the construction sector. I have seen the speaker line-up and I'm sure they will provide the attendees with an insight into the sector's decision-making and the strategies to succeed, post-Brexit, but what of the incompetence of managers, supervisors and operatives which litter our construction sites and where we do not appear to be making any headway?

"However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results," - Winston Churchill

Regards,

Mick Norton BEM MInstRE

PS: At the time of writing, another C&A exposure of Telescopic Handlers being utilised for a lifting operation in a totally unsafe manner, in Boston Lincolnshire, this week.



## A history of Coles?

Dear Leigh,

First of all I was really sad to read in the latest issue of Cranes & Access of the death of your father. I had not realised that, like me, he spent his National Service in the Suez Canal Zone. We were the same age, but I gather that, unlike me, he had had poor health for some time. I fear that I may live too long! Yes, someone should record his life and times, which brings me to the point of this mail.

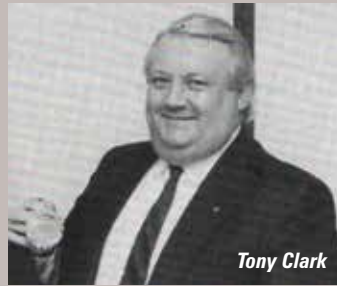
André Faes, the legendary man who founded and made such a success of Coles France will be celebrating his 90th birthday in August and I received a last minute invite to attend and give a short speech on his career. He is a remarkable man but it has given rise to a thought about writing a comprehensive History of Coles Cranes. At the end of the day Coles was a great company which lasted 105 years, and although some part of my '40 Years' book was devoted to my personal experience with the company, an in-depth history, trying to pinpoint why it went out of business only some 10 years after reaching the pinnacle of its success would be of interest. It is amazing that, whilst Coles as a marque has gone, there is still an enthusiastic band of old Coles export salesmen out there bonded together. The tributes and cards to André are flooding in. I often see an old Coles diesel electric mobile still working in a small boatyard in Plymouth, I must take my camera! I look forward to your comments and still much appreciation for your continuing to send me C&A.

Yours **Dick Lloyd**

*We agree that a comprehensive history of Coles Cranes and the companies that it acquired during its long history - R.H Neal & Co, F. Taylor & Sons. A book 'Coles 100 Years' was published in 1979, but while nicely illustrated with old photographs was a relatively light tome which did not go into any great depth. The same applies though to a number of other historic crane companies that no longer trade, such as P&H, Lorain and others.*

**Tony Clark 1940 - 2016**

Access industry veteran and ex-IPAF president Tony Clark, or Anthony John Coventry Clark to give him his full name, has died after a long illness. He passed away on Friday July 15th aged 76. Clark was sales director and then managing director of Gala Engineering in Thetford, Norfolk, UK, in the late 1970s, when he and owner John Barford met John Merrick of Ontario, Canada, who had designed and patented an articulated up & over boom lift that he called the



*Tony Clark*

Topper. Barford and Clark agreed to acquire the worldwide rights to manufacture the Topper with Clark establishing the product through marketing, demonstrations and



*An exhibition in Bahrain in 1978 (L-R) an unknown customer, with Commander Hastings of agents, Stewart & Hastings and Topper designer John Merrick. Tony Clark is in the platform demonstrating the Topper Super 10 to one of the show organisers.*

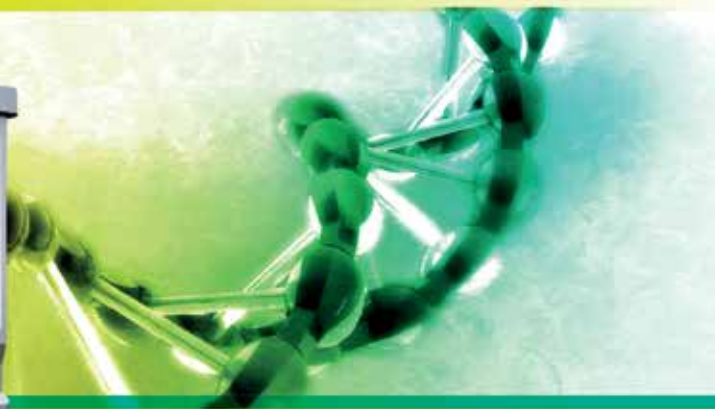
setting-up a distributor network, covering around 60 countries. Gala experienced a great deal of success over the years, building up a strong production team along the way. In the 1990s the company was acquired by Simon to create Simon-Gala. Clark stayed on with the company, initially as sales director and was elected president

of the International Powered Access Federation (IPAF) in 1990, serving the usual two year term. In his younger days he was a keen rugby player and enjoyed travelling, attending exhibitions and meeting people. He leaves behind wife Christine, sons Andrew and Paul and several grandchildren. His funeral was held on August 23rd.



*A Gala Topper sales conference 1984*

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