



Merry Christmas
and a happy new year

FROM ALL OF
US AT THE
Vertikal
Press

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We would like to thank our readers, sponsors and contributors for the fantastic support that you have given us throughout this year, all of which helps to make our publications and activities a success.

Wishing you all a very safe and happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous year in 2022.



Ronald George Downie R.I.P

Australian crane veteran Ron Downie has died. He passed away on Thursday November 18th. Downie played a significant role at Linmac in the 1980s and 1990s when the company built tractor and articulated cranes, initially in partnership with BHP/Chamberlain.

He founded the crane manufacturer Ronco in 1994 and began building his own cranes including the five tonne R5000 articulated crane for Alcoa, followed by the six tonne R6000 which won an Australian design award. He also ran a crane service business in Maddington and worked with David Potter to get the first XCMG cranes AS 1418 certified and was appointed as the service agent for Western Australia.

He sold the Ronco business to his colleague and general manager Rob Smith in 2011. Today the company is still going strong and distributes a wide range of cranes and excavators. It was appointed as the Sany crane distributor in 2019 and also handles Tidd and HYVA cranes as well as Scheuerle trailers.

In the words of his friend and colleague, Greg Mitchell: "Ron was a good friend of mine since the early 1990s, when we worked together at Linmac. I was the senior designer and found Ron to be a genuinely honest, open source of knowledge on cranes and someone willing to share his experiences and work with others. Ron had an absolute love of cranes and mechanical engineering in general, with a great work ethic and hands on approach to solving problems and business in general."

"Ron was always interested in knowing more about the crane industry and was not afraid to develop new solutions or products. At Linmac in the early 1990s he travelled to Indonesia, and India to help develop manufacturing for a mobile tractor crane. At his business Ronco in the early 2000's we developed the R5000 and R6000 mobile cranes, that latter winning an Australian design award for Ronco of which he was immensely proud."

"Ron sought out advice and knowledge from people in industry and genuinely listened. When he started his business he had a business coach for example, and sought out professional accountants, and professional engineers for advice. He never pretended to be something he wasn't and had little time for those who did pretend. I have contracted to Ron over the years on many projects and had the greatest respect for him."

Another friend added: "Ron was a very good man and a true blue Aussie crane man through and through."



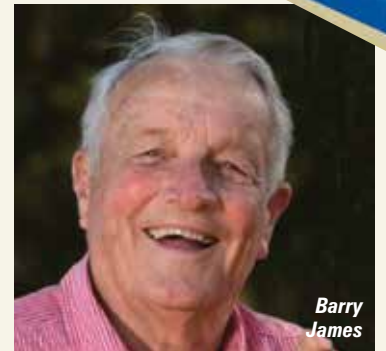
Ron Downie



A Ronco 6000 crane



Ron Downie accepts the design award, with him were Kevin Depiazzi (left) and Rhys Thomas



Barry James

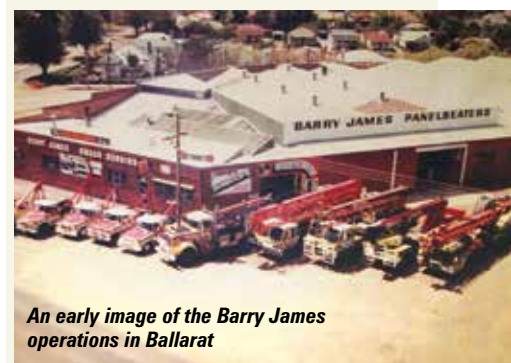
Vale 'Barry' James 1932-2021

We have received the sad news that Australian crane company owner Barry James has died. He passed away on Thursday 18th November after an 11 year battle with prostate cancer. He was 89 in September.

Barry James Mobile Cranes was based in Ballarat, on the edge of Melbourne, Victoria, but he was probably better known locally as a successful horse breeder and trainer - having obtained his trainer's licence in 1955 - following in his father's footsteps, something his son Glen has continued.

He also owned Barry James Smash Repairs - his first business - which he established in 1953 as Barry James Panel Beaters when he was just 20. He added the mobile crane rental business a little later as it grew out of the vehicle recovery operation. He ran the two operations alongside each other for many years.

He leaves behind his wife Lois and six children - Glen, Anita, Kelly, Brendan, Gavin and Lisa.



An early image of the Barry James operations in Ballarat

David Martin Dunhill Mort 1929 - 2021

David Mort, one of the very early pioneers of the European powered access rental industry, has died aged 92. He passed away peacefully in Hospital on Tuesday the 7th of December.



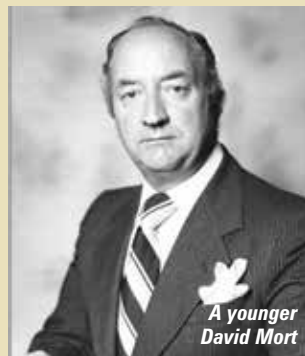
David Mort

David Mort has been out of the access industry for almost 35 year, and yet his legacy lives on. Many senior members of the UK powered access industry began their access careers with PTP, and a good number of its alumni went on to set up their own companies which are still active.

Born in Port Talbot in 1929, Mort's first taste of work was on his father's small holding rearing poultry and pigs. It was during this time that he met his wife Dorothy whilst delivering meat to the local butchers shop Jock Martin - she was the butcher's daughter.

His first 'proper job' was working on the docks at Port Talbot, where he became a stevedore. He married Dorothy in 1952 and four years later the two agreed that he should give up his job at the docks - where a day's work was never guaranteed - to set up their own business making concrete building blocks in a yard at the back of their home. They soon discovered that there was significant demand from local tradesmen to borrow their two second hand concrete mixers - for a fee of course - and that this 'rental' activity was more lucrative than making blocks.

Their business grew as they added more mixers and other equipment to meet the needs of their growing customer base. This soon included The Steel Company of Wales, BP Llandarcy, BP Chemicals and the National Coal Board, along with many others. One of their most lucrative products at the time were portable air compressors although their place would soon be taken by truck mounted aerial work platforms.



A younger David Mort

In 1972, the Morts moved the business from their original Newbridge Road yard in Port Talbot to a new purpose-built depot in nearby Baglan. By this time, they were renting portable compressors all over the country, setting the scene for later geographic expansion. But 1973 was a key year for them, as they purchased an ex-army Simon IG40 truck mounted lift and hired a young Mike Evans, who would become a driving force behind their powered access business and eventually managing director.



Port Talbot Plant's new premises in 1972

In 1976, a Transport a General Workers Union strike threatened to kill the business off, but the Morts and their growing team managed to weather the storm although it was apparently 'touch and go at times'. In the late 1970s the company purchased some of the first JLG 40F and 60S self-propelled boom lifts in the UK along with UpRight Flying Carpet scissor lifts and persuaded the contractors working on the Ford engine plant being built in Bridgend, Wales to use self-propelled lifts, both in the construction, ongoing updating and maintenance work. The Bridgend contract gave the fledgling part of the business a strong start-up boost from which it never looked back.



John Mather of JLG hands over the first 4x4 JLG Model 60 in the UK to Mike Evans and Denis Waters of PTP

As new locations were added across the UK - Milford Haven, Bristol, Southampton, West London, East London, Sheffield, Teesside, Glasgow, not to forget Port Talbot - it became clear that a less parochial name was required and PTP came into being.

By the early 1980s PTP had a powered access fleet of some 400 units including booms, scissor lifts, truck mounts and underbridge inspection platforms from Grove, JLG, UpRight and Simon, and had become preferred suppliers to the Devonport Dockyard and the Royal Navy, as well as the Esso refinery in Fawley and Portsmouth Docks.

In 1987 the couple decided to accept a takeover bid from BET Plant Services which was acquiring crane and access rental companies across the UK and the USA under the leadership of Bill Boulton, in what was one of the first rental industry 'consolidation' waves. Working with Boulton was Ray Ledger who brought PTP and Scott Greenham together. The PTP business was acquired from BET/Rentokil by Loxam in 2000, which added Nationwide Platforms to it in 2017.

David Mort's son Tony went on to set up AJ Access Platforms in 1990 selling used equipment and then getting back into rental, eventually selling the business to AFI. But that is another story.

When he retired David Mort was only 58 and so he set out to pursue his other great interest and hobby, horse racing, where he had a second taste of success. At Royal Ascot 1979 his horse Varingo won the Coventry Stakes, while Le Soleil finished second in the Bessborough Handicap.

PTP-head & shoulders above the rest.

When it comes to powered access, one company stands head and shoulders above the rest -- PTP Aerial Platforms.

It's not just because we have the largest UK Hire Fleet, or the world's tallest platforms. It's because we give you more for your money.

More height, equipment, service, back up, safety and reliability. And that's a promise we can keep!

It's this commitment that has made us the UK Market Leader in powered access hire today.

Put our Height Technology to work on your site and get more for your money. Contact PTP nationwide today.

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PTP Aerial Platforms
 Height Technology at work!

By the 1980s PTP was a national company and the powered access market leader

Cont...

Further success would come with Highclere Racing from horses such as Petrushca and Motivator which won the Epsom Derby in 2005. As son Tony puts it: "He loved horse racing more for the intrigue and the characters within it. It was always conspiracy theory with Dad."

Sadly, David's wife Dorothy passed away in 2014. He stayed on in the family home, but four years later decided to move into a retirement home. "He was a hard, but very fair businessman and was very generous particularly when success came along and was prepared to share it with others. This applied both to his business and horse racing life," said Tony.



Dorothy and David
Mort at Ascot 2004

David Mort leaves behind son Tony and daughter Catherine, along with grandchildren and great grandchildren. His funeral service will be held at the Forest of Dean Crematorium on Saturday, December 18th at 10:30. All friends and colleagues are welcome to join the family to pay their last respects. In lieu of flowers please send donations to the British Heart Foundation.



The Morts - Tony,
Catherine and David in
2019 - on his 90th birthday

The following contributions have been received:

David Mort, what can you say about this remarkable man?

He along with his wife, Dorothy, created an amazing business where quality was always at the forefront. He was brave in his decision making and in his investment strategy. He believed in delivering a premium service for a premium price and had the foresight to embrace new products to achieve that.

The customer base from the early days was in manufacturing, automotive, energy, petrochemicals and media and all expected a safe and reliable product but recognised that quality and safety had a price tag.

David expected (and demanded) all his depots were organised, clean and tidy and he set high standards. His depot visits were often met with trepidation but there was always a smile when he knew you were trying your best.

There were obviously bumps in the road but those were thought through and overcome. He could put his arm around your shoulders, pat you on the back and kick you up the backside and most of us experienced that from time to time

He was a hard bargainer but left (just) enough money on the table to be at the head of the queue to ensure the best service and warranty support was offered from equipment manufacturers.

He always knew the right time to buy, remembering manufacturers year ends (way ahead of Black Friday when it came to big purchases). He behaved with honesty and integrity at the forefront of all his dealings and his word was his bond.

His charisma was boundless and PTP was a great place to be, so many people thrived in that environment and have gone on to create great careers in the industry. His was so proud of the businesses that Tony created. David and Dorothy Mort are true legends of the powered access industry.

Sincerest condolences and very best wishes to Tony, Jane, Cath and all the family

Mike and Val Evans

Everyone who knew David will be deeply saddened by his passing, but grateful to have known him and spent time in his company.

The influence of David and the PTP team on the evolution of the European powered access industry in its formative years cannot be overestimated, and many will feel a deep sense of gratitude. Purchasing decisions taken at the time benefitted not just PTP as an innovative rental company, but also manufacturers desperately needing market penetration and real-world feedback to facilitate product development. These decisions were not simply brave on the part of PTP but also astute in PTP's recognition (likely never admitted to the few manufacturers at that time!) that for continuing success it needed to be 'two-way traffic'.

A sad day... but a life to be celebrated, and I am raising a glass to David as I write this.

Iechyd Dda David

Paul Richards

David was a remarkable man and with his wife Dorothy they were a formidable duo.

They were pioneers of aerial work platforms within the UK. Having known him for forty years plus and selling to PTP a number of Grove Manlift machines there are a number of tales to tell. The one never to be forgotten, at least not by me, was the sale of a Grove Manlift MZ90 to PTP for use by the Navy at Devonport dockyard. The MZ90 was a monster of a machine not really suited for the European market. Having non-retractable axles and being 3m wide it needed special transport and permits to travel between sites. Following an enquiry via Mike Evans, it was arranged to demonstrate this machine onsite at Devonport. The demonstration went well, reaching all the parts needed to be covered. Then a deal was to be done with David and Dorothy. A price and terms were agreed and then came David's stock closing comment. "We like the machine and you, but you are not the cheapest." "What do you think Dorothy?" "There was a nod of approval, hands were shaken, and the deal done. On returning to Oxford, I explained the detail of the deal to the MD of Grove, who said "It's not what I quite expected, but am happy to see the back of it given it's been in stock for over a year" That machine remained on site for many years and I like to think earned PTP a lot of money.

Rest in peace David.

Bill Green

It is with sadness that I have learnt of David's passing.

I had the privilege of getting to know David and his late wife Dorothy when in 1987 BET acquired PTP. The acquisition process stands out in my memory because of David's approach to getting a deal completed. Having completed the due diligence, we met David and Dorothy at our lawyers in London and as usual both sets of lawyers were adopting the macho style, by refusing to agree on fundamental contractual points including deminimus and warranty limits and time expiry.

This went on until 3am and it was clear that David was extremely frustrated so out of the blue he suggested to me that we should both get some fresh air and have a walk round the streets of the City. With the blessing of Bill Boulton, my boss, off we went and by the time we came back to the meeting 30 minutes later we had both agreed all of the points.

Needless to say both lawyers were not impressed but the deal was completed by 6am allowing David and Dorothy to go off and enjoy a well-deserved champagne breakfast.

I did reflect that our walk had taught me so much about completing acquisitions and life in general by David demonstrating integrity, compromise and above all total common sense. I am glad to reaffirm that such was the quality of PTP as a business that the safeguards in the contract were not needed anyway and David astutely knew that.

I send my sincere condolences to Tony and the family.

RIP David.

Ray Ledger

Keith Smith RIP

UK-based crane and access veteran Keith Smith has died. He passed away on Sunday 7th November after a long battle with cancer.

After starting in the crane industry at Scott Greenham, Smith spent the last 30 years of his career in the access rental industry as technical director with PTP - and then Loxam Access UK as it became known - following its acquisition by Loxam. He was also an active member of the IPAF Council for many years and the very first recipient of the IPAF President's Award which was presented to him by outgoing president Steve Shaughnessy in 2001 for his long standing years of service to the IPAF Council and his work in the truck-mounted sector.

Keith Smith was a true gentleman, always calm, professional, consistent and always helpful. He always found time for you and was ready to encourage others. He would listen and only speak up at meetings when he had something different to contribute or to say something that needed saying.

Shortly before he died, he asked that the following statement be posted:

"Hi All,

I wish to say "Bye" to all the male and female colleagues that I have met and worked with during my many years in the mobile crane and access industries. You are all very genuine and caring for the whole industry. I hope you all and the companies you work for do well and go from strength to strength, it has been a pleasure.

All the best, Keith (KS)"

In the words of some of those who worked with him over the years:

"One of the most genuine people I ever worked with."

"A true gent and good council when things got tough. A real professional who really understood the industry and also understood people."

"A great source of knowledge. A pleasure to have known and worked with Keith."

"Working close to Keith has been a pleasure, he was a great professional and a good man."

"Keith worked with me at Scott Greenham in the 80's and at PTP where I had the pleasure of promoting Keith to the board. Two weeks before he died, I was most sincere when I told him that he was one of the most capable and loyal people that I had ever worked with and both he and his family should be very proud. It is yet another example of the world losing one of the best."

RIP 'old lad' and sincere condolences to Eileen and family. "

Ray Ledger

"A very knowledgeable man on both cranes and access and always had time for a chat, even with machine issues he was never one to raise his voice just wanted to help get to a solution. Keith will be sadly missed."

"Keith was a gentleman. Fair, honest, kind and fun. Keith was a skilled professional who knew his industry inside out."

"Keith was one of the most genuinely nice people I've met over my time in the industry. He always made time to talk and offer advice, will be greatly missed by all who knew and worked with him."

"Keith was one of the most genuine and giving people I have had the pleasure to work for. A true gentlemen who cares for all his colleagues and one that I have the utmost respect for, a true individual that will be missed throughout the crane and access industry."



Keith Smith



**Philip 'Snowy' Allen
1965 - 2021**

Australian crane entrepreneur Philip 'Snowy' Allen, founder and managing director of Wingfield, Adelaide-based crane rental company Fleurieu Cranes, has died. He passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family on Tuesday 2nd of November.



Snowy Allen

Allen started out in cranes with Samaras Structural Engineers. He served as a crane supervisor for seven years before leaving in 2005 to start Fleurieu Cranes, along with two colleagues. Over the past 16 years he has built the business into one of the leading crane companies in South Australia with a substantial fleet ranging from Franna pick & carry cranes to a 400 tonne All Terrain along with a few crawler and tower cranes thrown in to provide an essential service to his customers.

In the words of Marcus Rigney of the South Australia branch of CICA: "It is with great sadness that we notify members of the passing of Philip 'Snowy' Allen. Snowy passed away peacefully yesterday surrounded by his family. Snowy's passion of the crane industry is well known in his success of building Fleurieu Cranes to be one of the biggest and best crane companies in South Australia."

"Our industry owes much to Snowy's passion and leadership. He was a beacon of unselfishness and care. He was a person of the finest integrity who set an outstanding example for us all and he will be greatly missed. The Crane Industry wishes to pass on its sincerest condolences to his wife Trudi and his extended family, they are in our thoughts and prayers."



Snowy Allen at the controls

Ib Grønborg Steffensen 1966 - 2021

Ib Steffensen, until recently the truck mounted lift director of Denmark-based crane and aerial lift rental company BMS, has died aged 55.

He passed away on Tuesday November

30th after a long and extended battle with several forms of terminal cancer, which eventually obliged him to retire earlier this year. He joined BMS in 2009 as a key account manager for its self-propelled aerial lift division having worked in the aerial lift rental business for many years, initially with Nordjysk Lift and then as a sales director with VMC Pitzner. He began his working life selling videos, a tough market in which there was plenty of competition. It taught him not to take no for an answer and gave him a deep understanding of quickly learning what a customer wanted.

In 2011 when BMS sold its non-operated aerial lift fleet to Riwal, Steffensen took over the management of the company's truck mounted business, which at the time had a small fleet of around eight or nine units serving the Danish market. His strategy was to build the business in a more stable and substantial operation, serving more project-based industries such as the wind energy, high voltage power lines and telecoms industries, both in Denmark and overseas.

As part of this strategy the fleet transitioned towards larger and more specialised truck mounted lifts. By the time he was obliged to step down the division had a fleet of around 40 large units with working height from 45 to 103 metres, which were kept busy all over Europe. He also launched a fleet of underbridge inspection platforms and units for drilling and installing safety nets on cliff faces sides, dubbing them 'mountain protection platforms'.

He had been struggling with cancer for many years but survived three to four years longer than any of his doctors predicted, due say his friends, to his indomitable will and spirit. He had a reputation for decency, fair play and good working practice, as well as being a direct and thorough negotiator. He was always happy to listen and help mentor those who worked with him. He loved cars, going to watch the local ice hockey team and getting a sale - work was a pleasure, not a chore.

He leaves behind his wife Pia, two sons from a previous first marriage and Pia's two sons.



Ib Steffensen

In the words of just a very few of the many people who knew him:

"His network within the business is very unusual - he knew everyone, and everyone knew him."

"Now the day has finally come that I have been thinking about for long time. In the nine years that I worked for Palfinger, Ib was first a customer, soon a partner and finally a friend and mentor. He was a fighter, stubborn and rough, but also humorous, sensitive and a caring father. I will miss him as a person, as a business partner and his visionary, respectful attitude. Always win, never lose. Until the end."
Henning Deichmann

"A man with a real presence, I was fortunate and grateful to have worked with Ib, he taught me a lot in the two years I was with BMS." Eddie George.

"He was truly one of a kind - an original, I will miss our chats and laughs so deeply. The heaven is now one star richer and will be far more fun too, I am sure."

"I think BMS was his 'hobby' and he never worked a day while he was there!!"

Tom Wilson of BMS UK sums up the feelings of many of Ib Steffensen's friends and colleagues when he writes: *"Yesterday was a sad day for me. I lost the greatest person I've ever met. He was the best listener, advisor, mentor, manager and friend and I will be eternally grateful for having known and worked with him. Ib Steffensen was a genius, a gentleman, a comedian and a teacher, an amazing father and husband and treated everyone with the upmost respect. He was the instigator of a laugh and a smile in the office, he cared about everyone, and he always had a steady stream of people at his door who he was helping or advising even when he was terminally ill. I wish I had one more chance to thank him for everything he has done for me and my family. Rest in peace Ib."*



Ib Steffensen with one of the five 103 metre Palfingers in the BMS fleet