

**DEREK GOW 1969-2022**

**Derek Gow, until recently the commercial director for the UK's largest crane rental company, Ainscough died suddenly on Friday, 18th November, he was just 53. He leaves behind wife Michelle and his young son Lewis.**

Born in Scotland, Derek Gow joined Ainscough just over eight years ago, having started out as a young salesman with Hilti Great Britain based in Scotland. In his 17 years with the company, he progressed steadily through the ranks to become director of sales. He then spent a year as group sales director with Vent-Axia before moving to asset management and maintenance company JLA as commercial sales director, where he possibly had his first contacts with the crane industry, leading to his move to Ainscough in 2014.

He made the decision to try something new and left Ainscough a couple of months ago having adapted well to an industry and made a big impression with all those he came into contact with. Shortly after his departure he said: "Hi everyone, after almost eight years I have moved on from

Ainscough. I want to wish colleagues all the best for what will be a successful future. It's a fantastic business with a great team of 'can do' people. I plan to take a short break before taking on my next challenge. Watch this space!"

Derek Gow was a true professional, a people person who encouraged others and who enjoyed life to the full. He was a real gentleman, always consistent and polite even when under pressure.

The crane and business world has lost one of the good ones.



Derek Gow

**A COLLEAGUES VIEW**

**Joanna Wilding was a colleague of Gow during most of his time at Ainscough, she sums up the man he was with a personal take:**

"It is with my deepest sorrow that I share with friends and colleagues across the industry and my personal network, that our dearest colleague Derek Gow has sadly passed away. A true gentleman, full of integrity and a genuine passion for his work, his colleagues and clients. Derek was kind-hearted, caring, truly inspirational, encouraging, funny,

and just truly the nicest person you could ever meet, he never stopped checking in on his team."

"Derek adored his family and loved being able to be a part of everyday life at home, with a passion for his beloved Scotland and rugby, memories his son and wife will no doubt cherish."

Another ex-colleague said: "Sad news indeed, he was a good man to work with easy to talk too and get on with. Had one or two good discussions at various times during my time at Ainscough."

**AMILCARE MERLO 1934-2022**

**Amilcare Merlo, founder and president of Italian telehandler manufacturer Merlo died in a Cuneo hospital on November 9th.**

Born in November 1934 he would have celebrated his 88th birthday on the 24th of the month. He began working in the family's metal working shop at an early age, along with his elder sister Natalina. His father - Giuseppe Amilcare Merlo - had established the ironwork/blacksmith's shop in the centre of Cuneo in 1911. While Natalina went on to take over the accounting and administration, Amilcare was employed in the workshop.

In 1964 the two siblings teamed up to establish a new Merlo company to manufacture building equipment at a facility in the nearby town of San Defendente di Cervasca. In February 1972, the roof of the factory building collapsed under the weight of snow, following a heavy storm. A number of employees, including Amilcare, fell from a height of around eight metres when the roof fell in, but miraculously, they all escaped serious injury. The small band of employees worked around the clock, and with the support of their bank completely rebuilt the building and resumed production.



Amilcare Merlo

The rest, as they say, is history. Today the company is one of the top four global manufacturers of telescopic handlers and is a significant player in the agricultural equipment market. The highly vertically integrated plant in Cervasca occupies an area of more than 300,000 square metres, with more than 1,400 employees. Merlo was also responsible for numerous telehandler innovations, such as the 360 degree concept with its Roto, as well as side mounted engines which has completely changed the layout of fixed frame models.

Overseas the company operates through half a dozen overseas sales and service subsidiaries and an extensive network of independent distributors, with revenues of more than €500 million. Natalina Merlo passed away in October last year at the age of 91.





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# THE LEGACY OF MR MERLO

*Features editor Nick Johnson knew Amilcare Merlo over a great many years and recalls his achievements.*

**With the passing of Amilcare Merlo at the age of 87, the telescopic handler business has lost a truly inspiring figure whose vision has made modern telehandlers safer and more versatile. As head of the family run Merlo group, he was responsible for both the first low boom, side engine telehandler and the rotating telehandler concept.**



*Amilcare Merlo*

Born in 1934 on the outskirts of Cuneo, Italy, Amilcare Merlo - or Mr Merlo as I and many others knew him - began working as a blacksmith in his father Giuseppe's workshop when just 14 years old. This hands-on experience inspired him to establish the first Merlo facility in 1964 and build it into one of the largest telehandler production centres in the world.

However, the first Merlo construction machine was not a telehandler but a small 4x4 articulated site dumper with a swivel skip, using chassis components from a US Army Jeep. This was followed in 1966 by a 4x4 mobile concrete mixer with hydrostatic drive. The concept, popular in Italy and Spain has remained in the Merlo range ever since, with the latest units featuring a front mounted cab, dual controls and a 180 degree rotating operator's seat.

In a move that proved fortuitous, Mr Merlo decided to enter the embryonic telehandler market in 1981 with the SM30, utilising a chassis, cab and axles all built in-house, establishing a policy that continues today. It featured four equal sized wheels, a rear mounted engine and a high rear boom pivot as did most telehandlers of the time.

But Merlo was keen to develop a telehandler that offered better all round visibility, which led to the launch of the SM25P in 1987 - the first telehandler with a side mounted engine and a low boom pivot point, creating the blueprint for the modern fixed frame telehandler.

Another great innovative achievement was in 1991 with his launch of the first 360 degree telehandler. He called it the Roto and this has become a generic name for slewing telehandlers. Another milestone in 1996 was the first agricultural telehandler with a 40kph road speed that could also tow trailers, followed by the first Merlo Multi-farmer telehandler with mechanical PTO and three point linkage in 2000.

Living up to the Green image



*1991 saw another great Merlo achievement - the first 360° telehandler*

portrayed by its corporate livery, Merlo has pioneered alternative power sources with its first hybrid telehandler appearing in 2013 and winning an Agritechnica Gold Medal. The first fully electric Merlo telehandler - the compact eWorker - arrived in 2021 - part of an expanding Generation 0 programme.

Since the first SM30 appeared 41 years ago Merlo has progressively expanded its production facilities in Cuneo which now covers an area of 330,000 square metres/82 acres. Merlo's engineering prowess and the contribution made by his family business to the Cuneo area were rightly recognised with an honorary master's degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Turin, and in 2014 he was made an honorary citizen of the city of Cuneo. Following his death, the mayor of Cuneo said: "He was a very precious figure for our province, along with his family. Everything about him was an example of intelligence, generosity and vision."

As a construction equipment journalist, I have visited Merlo in Cuneo on numerous occasions and always relish the chance to tour the factory. A 'screwdriver' assembly plant it most definitely is not - under the guidance of Mr Merlo this is a 'proper' engineering and manufacturing facility where the company makes some 90 percent of machine content on site.

Whether visiting the factory or Merlo's exhibition stands I always found Mr Merlo to be not only approachable, but keen to share his enthusiasm for his latest developments. In particular I remember an in-depth discussion with him about machine trends and his latest projects whilst waiting to catch flights at Maastricht Airport some years ago.

Today Merlo employs around 1,600 and the deeply paternal nature of the family-owned company was highlighted during the Covid 19 pandemic when, unlike some competitors, it did not shed a single employee. Mr Merlo's son Paolo is now chief executive and during my most recent visit in April he said: "We treat our employees as family in order to retain them along with the skills and experience they have."

The pandemic hit Italy hard, but the Merlo family moved quickly to organise a vaccination hub for employees and their families at the factory - in partnership with the local health authority - vaccinating 1,300 people in the first 30 days.



*Merlo's SM25P was the first low boom, side engine fixed frame telehandler.*

However, the Merlo factories had to close for two months in 2020 at the height of the pandemic, causing annual telehandler production to dip from 6,000 units to 5,100. Last year it bounced back to 6,100 with the trend continuing, in spite of supply chain problems with some small - mostly electrical - components.

By making so much in-house, Merlo is better insulated from external supply issues than most assembly orientated competitors. Major investments over the years have included a very high level of automation with more than 60 robots in operation alongside automatic machining centres. The latest project is to fully automate the cab welding area. Extra capacity is also being created as part of a goal to build 10,000 telehandlers and 25,000 attachments a year by 2025.

Electric telehandlers will also feature more strongly in the Merlo product line going forward. The first all electric eWorker compact telehandlers were launched with lead acid batteries at the end of 2021. Now Merlo is offering the option of alternative 41kWh, 850AH lithium-ion batteries. Merlo is also now promoting a new electric plug-in power option that can be fitted to all its Rotos.

At Bauma this year several new models were introduced, but one that stood out for me was a nine tonne swivel skip dumper based on the company's mobile concrete mixer chassis, with cab and reversible operator's seat. I had only discussed such an arrangement with Mr Merlo and son Paolo during my factory visit six months earlier, and this launch demonstrates their ability to react quickly to new ideas.

The legendary Mr Merlo retained a keen daily interest in the business until his final days. The business that he and his sister Natalina established in 1964 is now managed by three of his children - Paolo (CEO), Andrea (Production) and Sylvia (Finance) - a third generation well placed to drive the Merlo marque forward.

Rest in peace Mr Merlo.



*Mr Merlo and son Paolo with an eWorker in April*



# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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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, events and other activities a success.

We wish you all a very safe and happy holiday season and a healthy and prosperous year in 2023.

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