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# READERS LETTERS

## ANTHONY (ANT) EATON 1963-2023

We have received the sad news that UK powered access industry veteran Anthony Eaton - better known as Ant - died suddenly on Monday 28th August, he was only 59.

Ant Eaton got his start in the access industry when he went to work for Kimberly Access in 1995, just after it had been set up by Gary Smith. Smith sold Kimberly in 2007 and Eaton remained on board, but when Smith started Bella Access a few years later, Eaton joined him. Sometime later he moved to Premier Platforms, leaving in July 2020 for Star Platforms, where he was initially appointed as a mobile service engineer, and before long was promoted to North West service manager.

Star Platform's Richard Miller said: "It is with profound sadness, that we announce the loss of Ant Eaton, our North West location service manager. He was a hardworking and conscientious powered access professional who will be sadly missed by all his friends and colleagues. I was personally very upset to learn of the passing of not only a colleague but a friend. Ant was a man of integrity who was always willing to help others."

"He did a great job, initially overseeing our Coalville depot. I met Ant in Warrington when we were looking for a site for our forthcoming depot, and it gave me great comfort to hear he was prepared to head up our North West depot as location service manager, as I knew the project would be in safe hands. The depot has subsequently gone from strength to strength. Star Platforms is now fully established in the area, in no small part thanks to Ant's hard work and dedication."

"He will not be forgotten. We are planning an award to honour his name and recognise engineering excellence at Star Platforms. Our thoughts at this time are with Ant's partner, Jane, and his family."



Anthony Eaton



Ray Balach

## MILAN 'RAY' BALACH 1939-2023

UK tower crane entrepreneur Ray Balach has died. He would have been 84 this month.

Ray Balach or Milan to give his real name arrived in the UK in the 1950s from the former Yugoslavia. He was 15 or 16 at the time but soon found employment in the tower crane industry, joining Climbing Cranes Ltd, the UK agents for Linden Alimak tower cranes (now Comansa). The name Ray was a nickname he was given after the film star Ray Milland and it stuck.

When Linden Alimak decided to set up its own distribution business in the UK, Ray played a role and left Climbing Cranes for the newly established company. In his years with the business, he was involved with the Alimak hoists as well as the Linden tower cranes, all of which were manufactured in Sweden.

In 1980 he teamed up with Tommy Newell to start Vertical Transportation Limited in partnership with three Swedish crane company executives - Ingmar Pada, Nils Soderlof and Christer Klemets. They began importing a range of cranes from Sweden, including Linden Alimak, Tornborgs and Krøll, all of which were added to their rental fleet which ran very successfully for many years.

The company did particularly well with the articulated jib tower cranes manufactured by Tornborg as well as the unusual Krøll pipe cranes.

The Swedish directors left the business in 2000, while Ray and Tommy carried on until 2016 when they sold the business to City Lifting and finally retired. Long after he retired Ray would drop into the City Lifting yard from time to time for a coffee and to see how things were going. Everyone was always please to see him.

Ray met and married his wife Rose in 1961 and together they had four children, Stevo, Julian, Jan & Elaine. One of his friends and ex-work colleagues said: "Ray was a larger than life character with strong opinions. He was also very strong physically and was still preparing and loading cranes in the yard well into his seventies. He had a sharp wit and would help people out if he could. His love of family was his greatest joy."



## J. KEITH ANDERSON 1953-2023

We have received the sad news today that Keith Anderson - a widely recognised lifting and rigging engineer and former chief rigging engineer for Bechtel - has died. He passed away peacefully on Thursday August 24th after a long battle with cancer, his wife Kathryn was at his side. He was 70.

Anderson was born in Newcastle, UK and graduated in 1975 with a BSc in Mechanical Engineering from Lanchester Polytechnic Coventry - now Coventry University. He began his heavy lifting career in 1979 when he was appointed as an engineer at Kramo Montage, following a couple of years designing high pressure hydraulic braking system components. At Kramo he was involved with engineering and overseeing custom lifting and skidding applications using its hydraulic gripper type climbing jacks. Over the next 12 years with the company, he was promoted to increasingly senior roles, becoming chief engineer.

In 1991 he was appointed chief engineer for Van Seumeren UK - now Mammoet UK - leaving in 1996 to join Sarens in order to manage its heavy haulage operations in the UK. He rejoined Van Seumeren in 1998 as contracts manager, based in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and then in 2000 he was recruited by global engineering and construction company Bechtel, initially as senior rigging engineer based in London. The following year he moved to Bechtel's operation in Louisville, Kentucky as rigging manager and then chief rigging engineer. He retired from the company in September 2020.

Over the years he has made a massive contribution to the rigging and heavy lifting industry, and in 2013 he published a book 'Rigging Engineering Basics' followed by 'Rigging Engineering Calculations'. He said at the time: "Training resources for engineers and others who plan to engage in lifting and moving operations have not kept pace with the evolution of cranes and sophisticated, heavy transport equipment. When you are lifting and moving things, you are dealing with considerable risk. Training for people who plan and execute this type of work is critical."

During his time with Bechtel, he was adopted into the Bechtel Distinguished Engineers & Scientists Programme which "recognises employees who have made significant technical contributions to Bechtel's success and reputation. They promote technical excellence throughout the company and take a leadership role in coaching and mentoring other specialists". At the time he was one of only 51 Bechtel employees to receive the accolade out of more than 50,000 employees. He was also named a 'Top 25 Newsmaker for 2015 by Engineering News-Record (ENR) magazine.

Keith Anderson was not only a brilliant lifting engineer, but he also authored numerous papers and helped train and mentor dozens, if not hundreds of budding heavy lift riggers and planners, while advising more senior engineers tackling challenging lifts. In the words of one of them: "Ever the practical engineer, his final decisions led to his exit in a manner that satisfied him. He was a kind and generous mentor to me and hundreds of others over the years. The world is a poorer place today."

Another said: "The construction and heavy lift industries, and the world at large, are a whole lot poorer today... It's been said that when an older person dies, "a library burns to the ground"... In Keith's case, and for those of us in the heavy lift business, this is like having the US Library of Congress burn down... he will most certainly be missed."

He leaves behind his beloved wife Kathryn and children Rory, Aidan and Ollie.



Keith Anderson





# JOIN US FOR THE UK & IRELAND'S LIFTING EQUIPMENT & WORK AT HEIGHT EVENT

For 2024, we are heading to our new venue, Newark Showground in Nottinghamshire where professionals from the industry will see the very latest that the Crane, Aerial work platform and Telehandler market has to offer.

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A COFFEE IN THE  
MARKETPLACE



HOLD A LUNCH  
MEETING AT  
THE CATERING  
PAVILION

**WOLFGANG DAHMS 1947-2023**

German aerial lift and spider crane veteran Wolfgang Dahms has died at the age of 75. He passed away on August 18th at his holiday home in Hunnebostrand, Sweden, after a short illness.

Born in 1947 in the town of Friedrichshafen on the edge of Lake Constance in southern Germany, Dahms entered the access business in 1989 when Joachim Metzner, then managing director of aerial lift sales and rental company Bertram Arbeitsbühnen in Hanover, recruited him as sales manager.

In 1991 the two of them set up a rental association Ringlift, the first aerial lift rental franchise in Germany, which brought together independently owned regional rental companies to create national coverage for each of them. Between 2002 and 2003 the organisation began to suffer from internal disputes over its future direction and other issues, with Systemlift set up by a 'breakaway group'.

Dahms and Metzner carried on and converted Ringlift into Partnerlift, which has grown into a substantial organisation currently managed by Kai Schliephake.

In 2002 Dahms established a new business Conmac International in partnership Metzner and Reinhard Willenbrock in the Hanover area. The company was appointed as the German agent for Kranlyft and the Maeda spider crane range, introducing the spider crane concept to the German market.

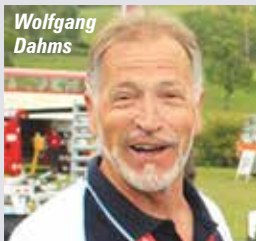
In 1999 Dahms, along with his son Oliwer and Reinhard Willenbrock had the idea for the Platformers' Days event, which became the main exhibition for aerial work platforms in Germany and was the example on which Vertikal Days in the UK is based. Dahms was still active in business until the end, selling and renting spider and mini crawler cranes from Maeda in partnership with his son Oliwer.

Wolfgang Dahms had great foresight and was a true innovator within the aerial work platform and spider crane markets. He contributed substantially to the development of the market for these products in Germany, with numerous ideas and initiatives. He was a highly valued and respected partner, mentor and advisor for many industry individuals and companies.

He would always greet you with an incredibly warm and genuine smile and be ready for a chat and a catch up. He genuinely loved the industry and the people that worked within it, whether colleagues, suppliers or competitors. He had integrity, honesty, a great sense of humour and of fair play. He will be widely missed and fondly remembered.

His longtime business partner Joachim Metzner said: "I am so incredibly saddened by the loss. Wolfgang and I have worked together in the industry for more than 30 years. He has always been a fair and competent business partner, a gifted salesperson, a good friend and an eternal optimist. We will all miss him sorely."

He leaves behind his wife Inger, three adult sons and four grandchildren.



Wolfgang Dahms

**SAM JAMIE SANDERSON 1975-2023**

We have received the tragic news that Sam Sanderson joint managing director and minority shareholder of Northamptonshire, UK regional Manitou dealer Mawsley Machinery has died. He passed away suddenly on Friday, August 4th, he was just 48.

Sanderson joined the company in 2012 after more than four years with Case and Kobelco dealer CNH Industrial. He was promoted to sales director in 2017 and joint managing director in 2019 when Manitou UK took a majority stake in the business.

Those who knew Sam well all say the same, that he was a true gentleman, friendly, helpful, with a great sense of humour. He was also a fantastic salesman and business manager.

His son Joe, who works with the new UK XCMG aerial lift distributor Genesis, perfectly sums up what many others have said: "It pains me to write this that yesterday my dad, Sam Sanderson, sadly passed away. My dad was a great man with a unique personality who made an impact on everyone he met. He was a brilliant business minded man who lived and breathed sales. He was loved by so many and will forever be missed. Rest in peace Dad."



Sam Sanderson

**SEAN LYNOTT 1966-2023**

We have received the sad news that Sean Lynott of Hawks Crane Hire in the UK, and previously Select, has died. We understand that he passed away in his sleep on July 29th, he was 57. He joined Hawks four months ago as business development manager and joined the team on the UpRate stand at this year's Vertikal Days.

Sean Lynott began his crane career in 1993, starting out as a freelance crawler crane operator, joining the equipment division of UK contractor Kier in 1997, moving into its tower crane division before leaving for Select Plant Hire where he was appointed senior product manager - crawler cranes - leaving the business as the Pandemic drew towards an end. As an interim measure



Sean Lynott

he went to work as a much needed yard manager for the Gweek Classic Boat Yard near his home in Helston, Cornwall, joining Hawks Crane Hire just four months ago.

Around 14 years ago he contracted Type 1 diabetes - following in his father's footsteps - and in 2019 volunteered to take part in the 100 mile Prudential 100 Diabetes UK bike ride from London to Surrey to raise money for the charity. At the time he said: "I am riding the Prudential 100 for Diabetes UK because this disease needs beating." He added: "If you don't know anyone with diabetes just send some money to see a fat bloke on a bike struggling in the Mall, must be worth a tenner hasn't it?"

**DEREK PAUL WARREN 1939-2023**

We have received the sad news that Derek Warren of UK based rental company Warren Access has died. He passed away following a short illness, he was 83.



Derek Warren

Derek Warren founded the company that bears his name in May 1993 after he was laid off from his 28 year career at rental company Marshall Branson, where he was general manager of its plant and access division. He was 53 at the time and wondering what to do next.

He decided to utilise his severance pay to acquire two used Acklift van mounted platforms and go into business for himself, using the knowledge and experience he had gained. He set the business up and soon found work for the two platforms, renting them to the local council and marking the beginning of a successful new career as an entrepreneur.

In the years that followed the company expanded its fleet with additional truck mounted lifts and ventured into the spider lift rental market. The growth obliged a relocation to larger premises and included the addition of a training centre, which soon gained IPAF and PASMA training centre accreditation. In 2012 the company acquired the Huntingdon based Height for Hire rental business and APS Training operation from APS, establishing a second location and southern presence, moving to larger premises in the area in 2018.

In 2018, as he approached his 80th birthday, Derek decided to retire from the business, handing over to the second generation in the form of his son Graeme and daughter in law Michelle who had joined the company in 2005. He did though remain a director of the business and retained a keen interest in its activities.

The family commented: "Our hearts are filled with sadness and grief over the sudden passing of Derek, he touched the hearts of everyone he met. It is quite unthinkable that only three months ago, we were celebrating the 30th anniversary of Warren Access. The world has lost a wonderful person and it will never be the same again. Anyone that knew Derek will agree that he was a selfless, true gentleman."



**HARRY WITTENDORFF LORENTSEN 1953-2023**

We just received the sad news that Harry Lorentsen of Danish aerial lift manufacturer Ommelift has died, he was 69. He passed away after a short illness.

Harry Lorentsen was born on 4th of November 1953 in the southern Danish town of Sønder Omme. He was the eldest son of Frode and Mariane Wittendorf Lorentsen, who at the time ran the company, then called Sønder Omme Maskinfabrik.

From a young age he spent a great deal of time at the factory and was later apprenticed as a machinist. He subsequently studied mechanical engineering and in 1979 he settled down in Sønder Omme with his wife Birgit.

The Lorentsens - Harry, Torben and Frederik - took over from their father's Frode and Kristian in 1983 shortly after the company had started manufacturing aerial work platforms. Under Harry's leadership the company became a pioneer and leading player in the spider and trailer lift market. In 2018 the brothers appointed a new managing director - the first non Lorentsen in 112 years - in 2018 as part of a succession strategy.

He leaves behind his wife Birgit along with their four sons Henrik, Thomas Jacob and Kasper along with nine grandchildren.

Harry Lorentsen was certainly a character, if you bumped into him at a trade show for example he could seem like a very disagreeable old grump as you approached, but by the time you reached him he would smile with a glint in his eye and be so aimable and funny - initial impressions were useless. He had a lot of depth and a wicked, and often subtle sense of humour. He appeared to love life and all the things it offered. He was a man with great depths, who could be difficult to read at times - one of his many assets. He will be missed by many.

**A message from his colleagues**

*"Harry had insight into the technical aspects of the business and was solution oriented in everything he worked with. For many years, he travelled the world cultivating export markets, and participated in countless trade fairs to help raise the profile of Ommelift. Being a social soul, Harry was often the focal point for dealers, customers and colleagues in the industry, when he was out and about."*

*"Under Harry's leadership the company became a pioneer and leading player in the spider and trailer lift market. In 2018 the brothers appointed a new managing director, but Harry continued his involvement as a member of the Ommelift board. Harry was an owner manager, who showed a high degree of strength and courage in his work, just as he had a strong value base, where words such as credibility, responsibility and commitment were of great importance to him. Part of the value base of Ommelift is to be a socially responsible company, also in the local community, which Harry has also helped to make his mark."*



Harry Lorentsen

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