



Contractors Mechanical Plant Engineers

NATIONAL NEWSLETTER

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Now that we are all recovering from the Christmas and New Year celebrations and festivities, I wish you all 12 months of success, 52 weeks of laughter, 365 days of fun, 8,760 hours of joy, 525,600 minutes of good luck, and 31,536,000 seconds of happiness.

The Editor.

INDUSTRY NEWS

Fox Group acquires B&W.

Lancashire's Fox Group has acquired B&W Plant Hire & Sales, extending its reach into the south of England.



B&W is the latest in a series of acquisitions that have helped grow Fox Brothers' turnover from £16m to nearly £100m in just two years and turn it into Fox Group.

Bill Whitwell started in 1963 with a JCB 3C. He set up B&W Plant Hire & Sales Limited in 2001 with his wife Mary. Today the business runs a hire fleet of more than 2,500 machines out of depots in Blackburn, Keighley and Northwich in the north as well as Southampton on the south coast.

In the year to 31st March 2022, B&W Plant Hire & Sales turned over £15.9m and made a pre-tax profit of £2.0m. Fox Group's projected turnover for the year to 31st August 2022 was £81.2m.

B&W owner Will Whitwell, son of the founder, said: "After a lifetime in the industry, and 25 years building B&W, I feel that the time is right for the next chapter in the company's journey. Fox Group are a fantastic fit to hand B&W over to – Paul and his team are very dynamic and the future will be exciting for the company. Fox Group, like B&W, are a business based on true and honest values so this acquisition will also give the B&W team the security they deserve, and enable B&W to offer further services and products to our customers."

Fox Group chief executive Paul Fox said: "B&W has a strong reputation with solid family values and a fantastic team who are passionate about their customers, which is aligned with the Fox Group culture. The acquisition of B&W adds a large amount of plant items to our already significant fleet of plant, tippers, specialist compact equipment and bulk haulage. The geographical spread of B&W's depots also extends the reach of Fox Group, increasing our already extensive footprint across the UK."

B&W managing director Andrew Partington added: "I am very excited by the acquisition and the future growth it will bring to our team... Paul has shared the vision for the future, and myself and the B&W team look forward to the next stage of the B&W journey, together with the Fox Group."

Fox Group chief operating officer John Flood has been instrumental in the growth strategy. In a previous job he helped grow Enterprise from around £30m annual turnover to £1.1bn before its sale to Ferrovial for £385m in 2013.

Since buying Clive Hurt Plant Hire and sister company CMP Plant Hire in September 2020, Fox has acquired Celplas, JJ O'Grady, Blackledge Plant Hire, CRH Plant Hire, Woods Waste, Midland Site Services and now B&W Plant Hire Sales Limited,. It has grown to 30 locations, 700 employees, 300 wagons and 4,500 items of plant and machinery.

Fox Brothers was founded in 1932 by Jack Fox, who handed the reigns to his son Harold Fox (HF), known as Barney, in the 1970s. When Barney Fox died in 2007, his grandson Paul Fox, aged just 23, took over the business.



Preston gets UK's first battery-powered skip truck.

A Preston-based waste management contractor has taken delivery of the UK's first 100% electric skip transporter truck.



Recycling Lives has put the first Renault Trucks E-Tech D18 Wides to work, operating out of its 15-acre recycling park in Preston. A second unit is on order.

The Renault Trucks E-Tech D Wides have capacity to complete a full day's work on a single charge with zero tailpipe emissions and low traffic noise. Powered by 265kWh batteries, each truck is equipped with a 22kW on-board AC charger and is compatible with DC fast charging up to 150kW, allowing fast charging of the vehicle to extend range.

Renault Trucks has guaranteed the battery performance for seven years.

"This transition to electric skip trucks is just another example of our commitment to environmental innovation," said Recycling Lives chief executive Gerry Marshall. "As part of our decarbonisation strategy, we are looking to further reduce our carbon footprint by using more sustainable fuel solutions, this could include for example green hydrogen which is part of our energy from waste project."

Renault Trucks head of electric mobility Andrew Scott added: "It has been great to find a proactive partner in Recycling Lives willing to bring electric vehicles into service in such a familiar but demanding environment."



EULOGY TO NEV ROWELL

Funeral Ceremony

For

Neville Rowell

19th August 1937

-

27th September 2022

Monday 24th October 2022

12.00pm

Stafford Crematorium

Neville Rowell was born on 19th August 1937, the Queen Victoria women's hospital, to Horace and Lily Rowell, who lived in Willenhall. He was their much loved only child and they adored their son. From a very young age, however, it was evident that Nev had a deep love for tractors and caterpillars and this was something that would serve him well as his passion grew into a very successful business, many years later.

Neville attended Willenhall Boys school and would walk to school, kicking his football. He was an avid, lifelong supporter of Wolverhampton Wanderers and his love of his team stems back to his very early years. His grandad would take him to the wolves, when he was small enough to sit on his shoulder and peep through the fence. In these tender years, Neville collected the autographs of all the team players, including Stanely Matthews and he continued to do so, for the rest of his life!

Neville had a very happy childhood and from the get go loved all types of sports, but mainly football, table tennis and cricket. He played football and table tennis for Walsall and Wolverhampton, before going on to represent the county.

He spent a lot of time with his grandparents; Lizzie and Garnet, who both worked at Pamies Bakers boot factory, in Wolverhampton, where they lived and Neville stayed regularly.

As a young boy, the family would enjoy camping holidays in Bridgnorth, by the river, which is where Neville's love of fishing was born. He also loved wildlife and getting to know birds.

Neville was a bright boy and so it perhaps wasn't surprising that he passed the exam for grammar school. He was incredibly well organised and from an early age, he showed a real gift of the English language, grammar and of writing an exceptionally good letter. He had an energy and enthusiasm for anything he tried his hand at and he loved to socialise and talk to people, which was another skill that would ensure he was hugely successful in running his own business many years later.

In 1952, at the age of 15, Nev left school and there began his career working with Caterpillar, the leading manufacturer of construction and mining equipment, and here his passion began at Bowmaker, Noose Lane, Willenhall. The next year on 19th January, however, at the tender age of 19, he was called up to complete his national service, and was based in Devizes training camp, Wiltshire. He was in the Royal Army Pay Corps and he loved his time there.

He thrived on that period serving his country and fondly told stories of his time in the army throughout his years, where he still played his beloved football and table tennis whilst serving.

He and his comrades also clubbed together to buy a car, thus enabling them to go on days (and nights!) out locally. This also meant that Nev could represent his Corp playing Table tennis at The Royal Albert Hall.

In 1957, Nev also played in the UK National Army Corp football team against the Artillery at Aldershot, which included team members who formerly played for Everton, Charlton, Westham, Sunderland and Tottenham.

In 1958, Neville completed his National Service and went back to work for Bowmakers, initially working back in the parts department. He passed his driving test and obtained a job as a Sales Rep in Devon. So, during the week he was working in the West Country and he'd travel up at weekends to see his family and friends.

It was one weekend, when he was socialising with his mates at Willenhall baths dance hall that he met Betty. This meeting was a game changer and Nev would tell Adele and Nathan years later that he knew that Betty Sophie was his one and only, the light of his life and he thought.... 'I'll have a bit of that!'

They complimented one another perfectly, playing to each other's strengths and chasing the same dreams. They were married at Essington Church on 23rd June 1962, honeymooning at Sandbanks and moving to Melksham, Wiltshire shortly after their wedding.

Nev continued to work for Bowmakers, the main Caterpillar dealer and Sophie was a hairdresser. They both shared the same love of socialising and they made many lifelong friends through Nev's business connections. He also played cricket for Warwickshire 1sts around this time and their life together was good.

They moved to Devizes, where Adele was born whilst they still lived in Wiltshire, in June 1967. It was when Adele was 4, that Nev was offered a position still within Bowmakers at Cannock, which made sense, being closer to family once more. They moved to a little cottage at Wedges Mills, which was a stone's throw to the Bowmaker branch on Watling Street.

Nev always thought outside the box. He had an energy for planning, new ideas and making things happen, helped by Sophie who was always behind him supporting him in every way. Throughout these years, Nev's knowledge and experience in Caterpillar was growing and he fast became the go to man, building up an excellent reputation in business.

In October 1974, Nathan was welcomed and their family was complete. Both Adele and Nathan remember a very happy childhood and they were loved dearly by their parents and grandparents.

Nev worked a lot to provide for them and shortly after Nathan was born, Nev made the bold decision to go out on his own and form Neville Rowell Plant Sales Ltd.

Around this time, the family moved to New Penkridge Road and the kids recall it was a heavenly place to live! It was a very happy home for the next 47 years!

Nev built an office in the grounds and the house offered them a plentiful family home, which was usually filled with friends and family.

Nev and Sophie loved to party and they threw many over the years, inviting business acquaintances and friends, in the days when deals were often agreed with a handshake, in a social environment.

It was the golden era for the children, who always felt very involved in the business, I guess as they were growing up in the house where the business was run, where customers would pop in. It wasn't surprising that they both went on to work in the family business, years later, because it was a lifestyle as much to earn money.

Nev was a wonderful example of someone who thrived on what he did. It wasn't really a job as such for him, given his love of Caterpillar.

He was very good at spotting the next deal and it was in on the back of a deal that Adele got her first pony! She had a deep love of horses and rode as a girl, but her dad shook hands on payment one day by way of Adele's first pony and she was ecstatic!

Neville supported his children in their hobbies and interests and would ferry Adele round to gymkhanas and shows.

Nathan displayed an aptitude for snooker, having been introduced to it by Nev. He played with his dad regularly.

Adele and Nathan remember the amazing holidays they went on with their parents, in the days when holidays abroad weren't so common. Even as a tiny baby, Nathan was taken on his first holiday to Ibiza.

They loved Portugal, Spain, Barbados, Cyprus and often for a month at a time.

There was usually a business deal forming at the same time, make no mistake and Adele and Nathan remember their dad always spotting a Caterpillar, wherever they were in the world and he'd usually just check whether the owner was interested in selling it!!

Wherever Nev went, he'd chat to people and make friends and for sure, Nev was never one to miss out on a business opportunity!

There never needed to be much excuse to throw a party, however and Nev was the king of BBQ's, Dinner parties, Bonfire parties, Christmas parties at The Butcher's Arms and the Rowell legendary New Year's Eve parties, when the family dog, William, even was a bit worse for wear!!

Sophie usually did all the catering and there were regularly over 100 guests at their big parties. They both loved the planning, organising and welcoming of people into their home.

Neville was well known locally and very well respected but as the years progressed, he stuck to his word and delivered on what he said he would, so customers could trust him. He was hard but fair and he was an exceptionally good businessman, being tough when he needed to be.

Although Nev grew a very successful business, it wasn't without its challenging times and difficult decisions often had to be made.

But Nev was an upbeat, positive person, who would never be down for long, steadily seeking to improve and develop into new areas.

He never stood still and was constantly looking at the changing market.

His equipment had been on the motorways when the M5 and other motorways were being built but then as time progressed, Nev took his business outside of the UK too and looked at the global sales market. He would make sure it was him representing his business and this involved travelling abroad initially before foreign customers would travel to the midlands and visit Nev there.

When Adele was 16, she left school and went to work for the family business too. Mike, Nev's brother in law, also worked for the business and then after 6th form Nathan left school and worked for his dad.

By this time, Nev had observed that his business should develop more so into the refurbishing and repainting of the machinery and so Nathan concentrated on that.

Nev still loved the wheeling and dealing, buying and selling but he acknowledged the need for the refurbing side of the business too.

He was a committee man and being so sociable, was often sought out to make decisions and represent in meetings and committees.

He became very involved with CMPE and was bold enough to effect change and introduce new ways of working, delivering over many years as Social Secretary. Planning dinner dances and other events.

He continually supported his beloved Wolves and more latterly would love nothing more than business meetings and gatherings in the corporate boxes, socialising whilst watching the game, often being able to share his own experiences of the glory years when he'd chat to the old players as they sat on the same table.

He was both interesting and easy to chat to, which meant his company was always in demand.

Adele and Nathan both recall that their dad was knowledgeable and intelligent, yet he didn't brag in any way and all people would enjoy his company.

He remained a keen follower of cricket and other sports over the years and any down time, he could be found on the side of a river, rod in hand.

As the years passed, Nev and Sophie welcomed their precious grandsons; Thomas and Jamie and time spent with them as they were growing up was precious.

Both Nev and Sophie were very supportive and loved time with their family and they would help wherever Adele needed them to, when the boys were growing up.

Holidays in Exmouth, visiting family and sampling the local ice creams were still a joy.

Nev continued to work well beyond the usual retirement age, perhaps he never classed his love of Caterpillars as actual work!

He enjoyed the local wildlife and living in the midlands, he was fiercely proud of being a Midlander!

They would still welcome the family for big Sunday roasts and thrived on time together. Adele and Nathan remember the joy on their dad's face, at his surprise 75th birthday Garden party celebration, when the sun was shining and all those who meant so much to Nev were present to share his special day. There was even dancing on the patio in the sun!

He still loved to watch the wildlife in the garden that Sophie so lovingly tended and he'd feed the birds, becoming obsessed with deterring the squirrels from stealing the bird food! It became quite an obsession that the family ribbed Nev about... 'The squirrels are on your nuts again, dad!'

An event never to be forgotten that holds so many happy memories for Adele, Nathan and the rest of the family was the day they celebrated their parents milestone 50 Golden years of marriage, when the celebrated at the barns with Sunday lunch, amongst all those closest to them, a picture you can see on your orders of service.

Nev and Sophie created the incredible home that nurtured you and in turn, your children. For well over 50 years, they shared everything life can offer together.

They were a great team supporting each other in every way, it was never about individual accomplishment but their life together.

They were soul mates complimenting one another in the best possible way, through the highs and lows of life.

And so, when Nev lost his beloved Sophie in 2017, he was devastated, as you all were. He had lost the light of his life, his one and only and he was bereft. Life was never quite the same again for him and some of his zest for living had gone.

But he wasn't a grumbler or one to feel sorry for himself. He found comfort in calling in to the office and sitting with workers or family, enjoying a coffee and sharing his knowledge of his lifelong love of Caterpillars.

Nev didn't retire until he was 83!

He made the sensible decision to move from the much-loved family home to a smaller bungalow in Penkridge. It was an area that Sophie was familiar with and so it perhaps gave Nev some comfort making the brave decision to move there, after her passing, remaining living on the same road, just four miles along!

Nev, in his true upbeat way, settled there well, making friends and putting to good use his organisational skills by introducing a luncheon club for locals.

He bought a bureau, so that he could still have a small office area.. old habits die hard!
And he was able to still use his natural skills in letter writing and using the English language.

He still drove and could see the family, drive to the yard and socialise with lifelong friends and workers. He liked to be around people rather than his own company, he always had preferred that.

He sensibly traded down his choice of car and would joke that he started driving with a van and he ended his driving years driving a van!!

He loved music and some of his favourites are being played today. He liked the idea of playing an instrument and had a guitar but never actually got to play it.

He filled his time after the devastating loss of his beloved Sophie, but not a day went by without him missing her presence. They were the perfect combination and they shared the same fun and banter. She was glamorous and well turned out... always and Nev was also well groomed and took pride in his appearance. He never went to bed without combing his hair!

He never failed at finding the positives in any situation and so it was perhaps a blessing that the last few months, having been diagnosed with lung cancer, he just got on with it, each time he had a hospital appointment. He remained at home for most of the time and forged forward, still planning things and living life.

He wasn't a grumbler, he was happy to be in his own home, surrounded by those he loved most in life, despite his failing health and up until very recently, Nev had led a healthy, energetic life full of purpose, for the majority of his 85 valuable years.

He wouldn't have wanted to be a burden on anyone, or suffering a long drawn-out illness, so it was a blessing for Nev when he slipped away on 27th September, surrounded by those who loved him so much.

The loss of this great man is so very sad for all of you who loved him dearly, but you can take comfort from the fact that he left this world that day, in no doubt whatsoever, knowing just how profoundly loved, valued, and cherished he truly was.

His life had been lived to the full of purpose and vigour. A lively, dignified, gentle soul.
A soul that brought joy and fulfilment to so many and who's legacy will live on forever.



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