

BENCHPRESS

Brexit – what Brexit?

By the time you are reading this edition of Benchpress it may have happened... but I doubt it. Unfortunately the ongoing uncertainty surrounding Brexit is starting to affect our business, and the wider construction industry, with some of our prospective orders being delayed or mothballed which is frustrating and makes planning our workload more challenging. Fortunately we do already have a very good pipeline secured and underway so once a decision is actually made by our government we can hopefully get back to business as usual.

In the Christmas edition Bill Wood and Peter Booth jointly penned the article; *it's ok to not be ok* which was about mental health problems and how they are particularly prevalent in our industry. Whilst calling the Construction Industry Helpline on 0345 605 1956 is a 24/7 option for expert help and advice we also now have people within our business who have volunteered and subsequently attended a 2 day training course in Mental Health First Aid. The idea is that you now also have the option to speak to someone that you may actually know, male or female, old or young, but people who all care about your Mental Health. Any of them would be happy to discuss, in confidence, any issues which may be causing you anxiety or stress, they are not experts but they are now all much more aware about the complex variety of mental health issues that are so common in these hectic times. If you would like to talk to anyone from the rogues' gallery below please feel free to contact them at the relevant office or via their mobile.



On other matters, we have managed to capture both of our new 6 legger Scania's in the same photograph at last and we have 2 more on order for summer delivery. When they arrive our entire London fleet will be new or nearly new and importantly all able to enter the newly enforced ULEZ (Ultra Low Emissions Zone) for London.

Following our achievement in making the finalist shortlist in the Construction News specialist awards recently we have now qualified as a finalist in the National Building Awards for 2019 (see bottom right corner) and we will know the winner in May.

Lastly for now, our website refresh is complete and so if you have a few minutes you could check it out for us and perhaps let us have some feedback so that we can continue to improve it going forward. The address is www.benchmarkscaffolding.com.

As always I would hope that you all continue to look out for each other's physical health and wellbeing but also please look for signs of poor mental health in your friends, family, and workmates. Remember poor mental health effects far more people than many of us realise with one in four people in the UK experiencing a mental health problem each year.

Regards,

Rob West - Managing Director



Ryan Vickers



Rob West



Maria West



Peter Booth



Bill Wood



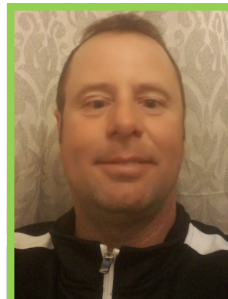
Barry Lane



Lee Jones



Georgina Bradbury



Karl Thorpe



Kevin French

BENCHMARK SCAFFOLDING



Setting the Standards



You'll never become a scaffolder!



It was March 1979; I was having a drink in my local (the Rising Sun, Upper Norwood, South East London) with another local drinker, a man called Billy Banks (a legend). This Billy Banks was a Depot Manager for SGB and while I was talking to him, the subject moved on to scaffolding, so I asked him for a job. Scaffolders were on about £50 plus a week then - I was earning half that at the time. He replied "you will never become a scaffolder while the Pope is a catholic, I will try you out for a couple of days but guarantee you won't last".

The following Monday 2nd April 1979 I turn up on a site called, Southwick Estate, a Bovis project, near the Elephant & Castle. I was greeted by a short man wearing scruffy jeans and his shirt untucked who kept calling me *son*. This man was Les Bellis (another legend). He did not resemble me at all and I already had a Dad. After giving me a podger and a bit of advice; work very hard, get on site early and leave site late, don't ask for subs and work even harder, he took me to the canteen to introduce me to the gang.

This was the rest of my life sitting at that table. One of the blokes was a Jim, I can't remember his surname but he was pretty insignificant. The second bloke was a Mr Keith Dunk, who incidentally has been a very good friend ever since, is my daughter's godfather and I am also godfather to his son, Scot. The third person there was a chap called Rob West, he was 19 years of age and the Chargehand on site. He took me under his wing and made me work with Mr insignificant for a while, who didn't teach me anything. Then a couple days later I was working with Rob. He said that he taught me everything he knew about scaffolding in the first week and I learnt a lot about him, this information will be revealed in my memoirs.

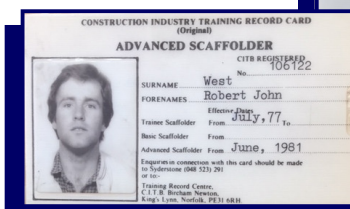
Then my journey in scaffolding began, I worked with Rob and Keith for a few years (Keith more than Rob). Keith and I had a good working relationship, we use to shout at each other and sometimes it came to blows. We then went our separate ways. I started chasing money and worked for firms such as Lindsey Scaffolding, Riley Scaffolding, Castle Scaffolding, a couple of times, only because my wife at the time was Granddaughter and Niece to the bosses there. The next step was Sutton Scaffolding where I started as a scaffolder, left the firm and then came back as a supervisor (they call them Contracts Managers nowadays). I worked for them for about 6 years in total. Then the boss of Sutton and me had a bit of a fallout and at the same time Keith Dunk had started his own firm, called Just Scaffolding, so I went to work for them.

However, because of my close relationship with Keith, he expected me to work harder than anybody else, work longer hours and use my car to drive hundreds of miles full up with scaffolders and anything that could be liberated from site. Then one day I was on the tube and bumped into a bloke who I worked with on SGB; Barry Murray, son of Docker (yet another legend). Barry was working for a new company called Benchmark Scaffolding and he told me that it was Rob West's company. Barry gave me Rob's number so I called and after reminiscing for about 30 seconds I asked him for a job. He gave me Gavin's number who in turn said that I needed a reference from someone who worked for the company. I had to go to Barry and ask him for one.

So here I am, 40 years down the line and none the wiser. 23 years with Benchmark and still working for Rob.

As for Billy Banks, he was right.

Peter Booth - Company Safety Manager



December Safety Award



Our mission is to not only "Set the Standards" but to progressively and continuously raise them across all aspects of our business.

The monthly safety award goes to Lenny Cheeseman, Bates site. Kevin Sheridan, Bates Manager wrote *"I would like to drop you a line in regards Lenny Cheeseman. Lenny is doing a great job at the 20/20 project. I have found him very positive and he has a good understanding of the scaffold standards Bates require. One of his key points is he involves his team, plus, he has the respect of his team"*.

January Safety Award



The monthly safety award goes to Alfie Mullings & Daniel Bull, Bates 20/20 Project. Dave Nott of Bates Construction, Project 20/20 Charterhouse Street wrote an email to Rob West, stating *"I thought you ought to know about the exemplary performance of 2 of your operatives on site this morning. There was a road traffic incident 100 yards from the site entrance, whereby a member of public got caught under the wheels of a compactor vehicle. Alfie Mullings and Daniel Bull immediately raced to the incident in an attempt to release the lady, and had the presence of mind to make the vehicle safe to avoid any further injuries and helped to give the injured person as much reassurance as they could. The lady escaped, miraculously, with only 2 broken legs and facial injuries, but could have been so much worse"*.

In these circumstances we felt that we should give both of these individuals a £100 Safety Award.

February Safety Award



The monthly safety awards goes to Grant Lawson, working on a Bates Living Space Project, Manchester. While unloading a lorry in the street, he ensured that there was a suitable exclusion zone in place, directing the public to the other side of the road safely. He was concentrating on the public and talking to them to ensure that everybody knew what to do.

Lee Jones and Alan Colyer were walking across a car park in Amesbury Wiltshire when an elderly lady slipped on a manhole cover falling to the ground injuring her face, hip, arm and head. They stayed with her and kept her comfortable, Lee Jones went to a local medical centre for help but they did not offer any. Alan Colyer called an ambulance and they stayed with her until she was safely in the ambulance.

March Safety Award



The monthly safety awards goes to Dave Barnett, Barnsley, Yard Foreman. Since taking over he has transformed the yard into a safer place to work, ensuring that it is kept tidy and run in a safe manner.

Tony Kerrigan received the monthly safety contractor award for February at Bulford Barracks, KBR Aspire Defence. He received the award from the Project Director and all the operatives will receive a breakfast.

Our vision is to be the scaffolding contractor of choice to our customers and employer of choice to our people.

If you've recently had a new addition to your family,
or have a birthday coming up
send us a photo to the Barnsley office
and we'll make sure we show them in the next edition.
Or you could email us:

barnsley@benchmarkscaffolding.com

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BENCHMARK SCAFFOLDERS

COME TO THE ASSISTANCE OF A WOMAN TRAPPED UNDER A LORRY.

On the 23rd of January this year two of Benchmark's scaffolders were thanked, and highly praised, by Wates Construction Director, Dave Nott, for their, in Dave's words, "exemplary performance" by coming to the assistance of a female cyclist who became trapped under the wheels of a compactor lorry. This happened during the morning rush hour just outside the site entrance of the Wates project in Charterhouse Street, in the City of London, that they were working on.

Danny Bull and Alfie Mullins raced to the incident, along with a member of the site logistics team, in an attempt to release the woman. They had to put timbers under the wheels of the lorry to prevent it from moving and in order to avoid any further injuries. They then stayed under the lorry giving as much reassurance as possible to the injured lady until the Ambulance Service and Fire Brigade arrived.

The woman suffered two broken legs and severe facial lacerations. We have been told she is now at home recovering.

The photograph shows Danny and Alfie receiving £100.00 worth of vouchers each by Benchmark Site Manager Lenny Cheeseman accompanied by Wates Project Manager Andrew Stocks.

Well done to both Danny and Alfie for their prompt actions that undoubtedly saved this lady from potential further serious injuries.

**Eamonn Golledge—Contracts Manager
London Region**



Arvydas Teteriukovas (known as TT) celebrated his 50th birthday on 23rd of last month.

TT was only a relatively young man of 37 when he joined us in 2006 but his Site Manager, Gary Pike, reckons he still does not look a day over 40 and said 'thanks for putting up with me for all these years'.



TT is Fifty

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BENCHMARK SCAFFOLDING

Setting the Standards

