

## Bringing 40 years of lifting excellence to the rail industry

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*Since its launch in 1953, Dudley-based Totalkare has cornered the market in heavy-duty vehicle lifts. Originally known as Walter Somers Materials Handling, the company introduced its first mobile column lift in 1980. Numerous models (both fixed and mobile) followed, and today Totalkare supplies market-leading lifting equipment and non-lifting products to the commercial vehicle and rail industries.*

*Speaking to Rail Business Daily, national account manager Brian Young outlined his work with rail customers, reflected on his career to date, and discussed the aftercare service that sets Totalkare apart from its competitors.*

Transport industry veteran Brian began his career as a sales engineer, before joining Totalkare in 1998; at that time, its two subsidiary companies were still known as Somers Handling Rail and Somers Vehicle Lifts respectively.

Over the years, the business introduced new products and underwent a series of management buyouts, with the UK divisions of Somers Vehicle Lifts and its aftersales department, Totalkare, coming together in 2004.

Brian served as UK sales manager between 2004 and 2006, before being promoted to national account manager.

### **Supporting the rail industry**

"Then, five or six years ago, we started to get a lot more enquiries from the rail industry," Brian said. "It was decided that one division of the business would focus on roadside, while the other would focus on rail."

For the last three years, Brian has supported Totalkare's growing rail customer base, helping businesses to source the right lifting equipment for their manufacturing or maintenance projects. Today, the company counts leading manufacturers and train operating companies among its clients.

The transition from commercial vehicles to rail has been a smooth one for lifting specialist Brian, who is comfortable with the scope and pace of project work.

"Most of my customers are dealing with next year's budgets, so it's not a case of somebody phoning up and saying, 'I want this tomorrow'," he said. "It's all carefully pre-planned, which is how I like to do things."

"It gives you a chance to work alongside the engineering teams and gain an understanding of their requirements, ultimately ensuring the solution you're providing is the best for them."

### **Bespoke lifting solutions**

Brian explained that this understanding is key – particularly in the rail industry, where clients' needs can vary dramatically from project to project.

He commented: "I have a level of technical understanding, but that comes from listening to what customers want. Every application – especially in the rail industry – is completely different."

"Every company services vehicles differently; some people prefer the lifting jacks and some people prefer pits, so we can supply either."

Reflecting its customer base's needs, Totalkare now offers a range of rail depot equipment, including Bogie lifting platforms, rail inspection pits, and lifting jacks. These jacks can lift between 5,500kg – 50,000kg, and either a single carriage or multiple train cars.

Brian works closely with clients from the enquiry stage onwards, helping them to establish what kind of lifting equipment is required – and, in some cases, guiding them towards a more effective solution.

"Sometimes a customer might think they know what they need, and what we supply will be completely different from their original request," he explained. "Once we gain an understanding of the project, we're able to see if there are better ways of doing things."

Working with members of Totalkare's specialist departments, Brian advises customers on everything from

power supplies to legislation.

“Clients may want to lift a vehicle into the air, but not have the roof height,” he commented. “I’ve got into the habit of looking up in the air whenever I enter a building!”

### **Strong relationships**

This collaborative approach – with Brian helping customers to achieve their desired outcome “as painlessly as possible” – is underpinned by understanding and mutual respect.

“I’m a relationship builder,” Brian explained. “I know people in the industry who started off as customers – I don’t even like to use that word – and have become friends along the way.

“One of the things I tell anybody who joins Totalkare is, ‘make sure you look after your customers because they’ll never go away if you do’.”

Indeed, Totalkare seeks to form strong partnerships with its clients, providing national breakdown and servicing support long after equipment has been installed. A team of 28 engineers (based across the UK) is on hand to deliver aftercare services, which Brian describes as “the most important side of the business.”

In his capacity as a manager and mentor, Brian ensures that these values are passed on to the wider team – adding that Totalkare’s supportive culture has led to high staff retention rates. Indeed, the company was recently ranked in the top 100 in several categories by Best Companies, which benchmarks businesses on staff engagement across a wide range of criteria.

### **Looking to the future**

Reflecting on the team’s past achievements, Brian recalled a major project undertaken for a rolling stock manufacturer.

“It had a requirement for 16 jacks to lift multiple carriages at the same time,” he said. “It still uses that facility today. We made it adaptable, so it can lift either single or multiple carriages.”

Brian is optimistic about Totalkare’s future in the rail sector, explaining that its dedicated team, unrivalled aftercare service and inclusive culture all provide a strong foundation for growth.

“You only have to look at the figures, and where we’re aiming to be as well, to see that there’s massive confidence in Totalkare,” he concluded.