



## Wildes Plant Hire Ltd: Three generations of legacy

*From humble beginnings in a Shropshire workshop in 1937, Wildes Plant Hire Ltd has grown into a trusted name across the UK's construction, agriculture and civil engineering sectors. Built on three generations of expertise, the company's legacy is powered by a strong partnership with Yanmar Compact Equipment EMEA.*

Since 1937, when Ian Wilde's grandfather founded AT Wilde & Son Ltd as a small Shropshire workshop for tractor and generator repairs, the Wilde family has been at the heart of the region's construction industry. Building on this legacy, Wildes Plant Hire Ltd was established in 1964 to meet growing demand during the infrastructure boom of the era. From its roots in machinery repairs to adopting Yanmar's cutting-edge compact equipment, the company has consistently evolved to serve the changing needs of its customers across multiple generations.

### **A lifelong commitment to plant hire**

Ian Wilde took over the family business at just 22 years old, supported by his family, and dedicated the next 46 years to expanding Wildes Plant Hire Ltd into a regional powerhouse. Now enjoying retirement after passing the company to Peter Venn, Managing Director of Zofre Investments Limited, Ian reflects on the business's evolution.

"We tested our first Yanmar compact excavator in 1985, a pivotal moment as the market for smaller machines was just beginning to emerge," Ian recalls. "Until then, we had only worked with larger excavators, so the decision to try a compact model was a big step. The machine – the 3.5-tonne Yanmar YB35DXL Mini Excavator with steel tracks – immediately exceeded our expectations. We were amazed by its power for such a compact model." Straight after the initial demonstration, Ian wasted no time investing in more Yanmar machines – 275, to be exact. Plus, many more sold to local construction companies via AT Wilde & Son Ltd.

Over the years, the company has owned more than 300 units from Yanmar's compact equipment range, reflecting Ian's unwavering trust in their reliability and performance. "That first demonstration of the YB35DXL remains the best we've ever had, and even now, Yanmar machines continue to impress," Ian shares. Today, Wildes Plant Hire Ltd continues to serve a diverse range of projects, including housebuilding, landscaping, utilities, and local authority works. Among customer favourites is Yanmar's ViO50-6A mini excavator, renowned for its zero-tail swing design and outstanding performance on challenging jobsites, such as in urban environments or restricted spaces.

### **Partnerships and community focus**

Ian attributes much of the company's success to strong partnerships, particularly with Richard Johnston of Johnston Plant Sales, the official Yanmar Compact Equipment EMEA dealer for the West Midlands. "For 24 years, Richard has been an invaluable partner," Ian says. "If a customer needs a machine, Richard can have it ready within hours. That speed and reliability really helps to give us a competitive edge in a busy landscape."

Wildes Plant Hire's commitment to personalised service and community engagement has been instrumental in its growth. Customers appreciate the team's hands-on approach to equipment servicing, parts sourcing, and flexible rental options. Notably, nearly all long-term rentals culminate in customers purchasing the Yanmar machines, Ian shares. This high conversion rate underscores the enduring value and reliability of Yanmar equipment, even as pre-owned units.

### **Unforgettable memories with Yanmar**



In 2006, Ian was invited to Yanmar's factory in Osaka, Japan. "Meeting Yanmar's leadership team and engineers, and touring their factory, was an unforgettable experience," Ian recalls. "The precision and innovation that was demonstrated – from laser cutting to robot welding – was extraordinary. Yanmar's commitment to quality and craftsmanship is unmatched." Beyond the factory tour, he gained a deeper appreciation of Yanmar's heritage and Japanese culture. "They personally took us on a journey across Japan, showcasing the country's culture, cuisine, and natural beauty. It's experiences like these that make you feel genuinely valued and part of the Yanmar family."

### **Shaping the industry's future**

Reflecting on the evolving rental market, Ian highlights the increasing demand for compact machines, driven by a booming construction sector. "Every farm from here into Wales now seems to have a mini digger," he remarks. But despite rising competition, Wildes Plant Hire Ltd continues to lead the market, leveraging three generations of trusted customer relationships and a strong partnership with Johnston Plant Sales. This collaboration not only ensures fair pricing but also guarantees reliable access to high-quality equipment, reinforcing the company's position as a leader in the thriving rental sector.

As Ian steps back from day-to-day operations and passes the baton onto Peter Venn, he remains proud of Wildes Plant Hire Ltd's enduring legacy; and its continued role in supporting infrastructure and development across the West Midlands, and beyond.