

Lowry Building's decade with Merlo telehandlers

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Lowry Building & Civil Engineering Ltd relies on its [Merlo](#) telehandlers to support projects across Northern Ireland. From confined city-centre builds to major education developments, versatility, reliability and strong dealer support underpins a successful long-term partnership.

Based in Castlederg, County Tyrone, Lowry Building is one of Northern Ireland's most established construction firms, with a history that stretches back more than 60 years. Founded in 1961 by Ian Lowry's father, the business began as a small, family-run operation rooted in joinery and local construction work, before steadily expanding into larger residential and public-sector projects across the region.

"Like many companies of its time, it started very small," explains Ian Lowry, director of Lowry Building. "My father came from a farming background but trained as a joiner. He and his brother grew the business gradually, taking on private housing, farm work and community projects before moving into larger housing schemes in the early 1970s."

Leading NI contractor

Today, Lowry Building employs more than 140 people and operates across Northern Ireland, delivering housing, commercial, industrial and civil engineering projects. Its client base includes the Education Authority, Northern Ireland Water and Health Estates along with other public bodies and recent highlights include participation in a £375 million project to deliver a new Shared Education campus in Omagh – the largest of its kind in Europe, and 2026 marking 50 years of continuous service to NI Water.

Supporting this breadth of work is a substantial fleet of more than 80 units of mobile machinery. While excavators form a core part of the fleet, Lowry Building is clear about where Merlo fits in.

“The sweet spot for telehandlers is Merlo,” says Lowry. “We were introduced to the machines by our local dealer, DA Forgie, back in 2013. They suggested we try one, and it proved to be a very good decision.”

The company’s first Merlo was a compact 25.6 model with a six-metre boom, chosen specifically for confined work during the construction of the Silverbirch Hotel in Omagh. “We needed something with a low profile that could work inside a basement,” Lowry recalls. “The operators and site managers were very happy with it, and that’s really where it started.”

Since then, Lowry Building has operated more than 10 Merlo telehandlers across multiple generations, gradually expanding the fleet to include larger fixed and rotary models. Today, the company runs several Merlo Roto machines, including 26-metre units and a recently added 35-metre model with high lift capacity at full extension.

Master of all trades

“The versatility is their big advantage,” says Lowry. “They can act as a wheel loader, a forklift and a small on-site crane – all in one machine. The rotaries, in particular, are a great addition – they’re quick to reposition and very flexible compared to self-erector cranes.”

Merlo telehandlers are often found on site from the start of a project through to its completion. On a recent school build, one 26-metre Roto remained on site throughout, handling everything from blockwork and material distribution to lifting roof trusses and tiles. Operators value the machines’ compact feel, visibility and the option to use remote control operation for added precision and safety.

Reliability has also played a key role in the long-term relationship. “Touch wood, they’ve been very good for us,” Lowry says. “We maintain them well and use DA Forgie for servicing. Call-outs are minimal, and you can really see how the machines have improved over the years – the controls, the smoothness, everything gets better with each new model.”

A partnership built on trust

That progress, combined with strong dealer support, has made the decision to stay with Merlo an easy one. “Forgie has been a very honourable and supportive dealer over the years,” Lowry adds. “We’re more than happy to recommend both the machines and the dealer to other contractors – we’ve even lent out our Merlos for them to try.”

As Lowry Building looks ahead, the focus is on consolidating recent growth while continuing to deliver dependable, high-quality construction across Northern Ireland – with the third generation of the family now becoming involved in the business. With Merlo telehandlers firmly embedded in its fleet, the company remains well equipped for the next chapter of its long-established story.

Lowry Building’s Merlo fleet:

3 Compact P27.6 (75hp, 2.7tonne lift capacity, 6m lift height)

4 Stabilised P40.17PLUS (115hp, 4 tonne lift capacity, 16.6m lift height)

2 Rotating ROTO50.26 SPLUS (170hp, 4.95 tonne lift capacity, 25.9m lift height)

1 Rotating ROTO50.35 SPLUS-CVT (170hp, 4.95 tonne lift capacity, 34m lift height)