

Wenhaus moves the earth with an expanding Bell fleet

Wenhaus Construction has as its catch line “We’ll move the earth for you” and that’s exactly what they do, be it earth that needs to be moved for new infrastructure development, civil work, township development or mining infrastructure.

And assisting them to move said earth are some bright new and yellow machines from Bell Equipment.

Wenhaus was founded in Rustenburg in 1995 by Johann Holtzhausen when he broke away from a former business relationship to concentrate on bulk earthworks and civil engineering work. This modern South African company changed ownership from a single entity to a company in 2003 and has a strong BBBEE component. It is now jointly owned by Gloumaze (the BBBEE partner), Johann, Francois Kemp and Meyer Moolman’s WM3 Family Trust. Meyer, a civil engineer, also serves as the company’s Operations Manager and his wife Marnica, a graduate mechanical engineer, is the company’s Fleet Manager.

From its headquarters in Rustenburg, Wenhaus has undertaken several successful projects as far away as Malelane and Piet Retief in Mpumalanga and Kuruman in the Northern Cape. The company has 130 full-time employees and at any given stage employs 300 people with project labour drawn from areas where it works.

Specialising in bulk earthworks does necessarily mean that a company such as Wenhaus will own a fleet of yellow machines for this purpose. Meyer Moolman explains what equipment they favour: “When we landed the bulk earthworks contract at the Impala Platinum (Implats) 16 Shaft project as far back as 2001, Johann Holtzhausen, who was running the company then, needed reliable haulage equipment to satisfy his clients who demanded round the clock operations for seven days a week,” he says. “He chose three Bell B20C Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) as his haulage machines.”



From left: Piet Vos (Wenhaus Site Foreman) with Devon Cort (Bell Equipment Sales Representative), Meyer Moolman (Wenhaus Operations Manager) and Jonas Megalanyane (Grader Operator).

According to Meyer, Johann had previously used Bell B30C ADTs on a lime mine near Northam in Limpopo and had been so impressed with the work rate and reliability that he refers to any ADT as simply a ‘Bell’.

“Those three original Bell B20C ADTs are all still running and even though they’ve all clocked more than 21 000 hours, we have daily use for them because they’ve been converted to water tankers,” Meyer says. “On the strength of these reliable Bell ADTs, we owned many Bell Tractor Loader Backhoes and generally get valuable service out of them before trading them in at between 8 000 and 10 000 hours.”

Wenhaus owns a fleet of three Bell Graders. Two Bell 770D models were bought in 2006 and 2008 respectively and a third, the powerful all-wheel drive model 772G, was acquired in 2009. These machines have proved themselves invaluable when creating platforms for civil work, which forms the bulk of the projects Wenhaus undertakes. According to Meyer, their company policy on replacing graders had always been to do this at 10 000 to 12 000 but with the assured longevity and high mechanical availability of their Bell Grader fleet, this number has now been pushed out to 15 000 hours.

Wenhaus ensures longevity of its fleet by ensuring that despite the daily checklist books that are required by amongst others, its mining clients, the operators take good care of the equipment. There is a monetary incentive in this for the operators and two qualified diesel mechanics, working with three assistants do regular preventative maintenance.

For Wenhaus Construction the value of the Bell ADTs lies in the high mechanical availability and low fuel consumption that they deliver, as well as the technical support from Bell Equipment in terms of on-demand parts availability and prompt response times.

Late in 2014, Wenhaus was given a contract to do the bulk earthworks for a new school Implats was building for one of its mining communities. To this end, Wenhaus invested in new Bell ADTs namely two Bell B18E machines and one Bell B20E ADT. They were all fitted with Bell Equipment’s Fleetm@tic performance tracking system.

“Fleetm@tic is an awesome tool and gives us total control of our equipment from a remote site,” Meyer says. “We’ve given potential diesel theft a big blow and we can monitor production far more accurately.” He further reports that with the new equipment working at high mechanical availabilities, they finished the Implats project way ahead of schedule.

“We’ve set our own benchmark for mechanical availabilities, driven by Marnica, and if we drop below 90% on any piece of equipment hard questions are asked, which also applies to fuel consumption figures,” Meyer says. “We obviously rely heavily on the technical support of major OEMs like Bell Equipment who support us totally with on-demand parts availability and prompt response times.”

Meyer is adamant that the longevity that their equipment from Bell Equipment has created has necessitated a change in their long-term planning. Short-term goals have now happily changed to long-term goals and as a company they are looking ahead to add to their fleet of yellow machines with the likes of an additional grader, a recycler and possibly even a mobile crusher. He hints that Bell Equipment Sales Representative Devon Cort should keep his phone charged.

