

Finlay Screen further strengthens Tipperary's 20-year relationship with Bell

When Brad Potgieter asked his fellow alluvial diamond diggers in the Riverton area near Kimberley about what screen they thought would be best suited for local ground conditions, the answer was unanimous – the Finlay 883+ Heavy Duty Screen.

The fact that the Finlay Screen was distributed and maintained by Bell Equipment was another motivating factor as Brad has had a long relationship with the Richards Bay-based company.

“Our old screen had come to the end of its working life and, even after clocking up 30 000 hours, it still was not really the correct tool for the job,” Brad tells us when we meet on his farm Tipperary, on the banks of the Vaal River near Riverton. “It had a wider screen deck but the actual screening space was too short and could have caused us losses with the diamond-bearing gravel bouncing off the screen deck bars.”

“The Finlay 883+ is an incline screen and far better suited to the material we mine next to the river. While the material is screened over a longer distance, it can handle wetter material too as opposed to the old machine where 5mm of rain stopped the entire process,” he says. “We generally immediately screen out material that is bigger than 80mm and minus 40mm and the rest is then the usable gravel mixed with some sand and often slightly wet.”

“The biggest bonus though with the speed and the efficiency of the Finlay 883+ Screen, starting with the pan feeder on its screen deck, is that we can build up a stockpile at the pans. Sometimes we have as much as two weeks’ worth of material to put through the pans. This means that the earthmoving machines we use for mining and loading the screen are freed up and can be used for, amongst other things, rehabilitation which is vitally important to us.”

The efficiency of the Finlay 883+ Screen also translates into frugal fuel usage. Fuel consumption figures hover around 12 litres an hour, which means that Brad has to fill the 400-litre tank only once every 10 days.

According to Brad much care and meticulous attention is applied to their rehabilitation, not only because of the stipulations issued by the Department of Mineral Resources or their Environmental Management Plan, but because the land that they mine is cultivated afterwards for agricultural purposes. Tipperary is a commercial farm producing wheat, lucerne and maize, mostly under centre-pivot irrigation, and beef cattle on pasture land.

“I had first bought earthmoving equipment from Bell Equipment back in 1997 when I bought two Bell B30B Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs). I had seen other alluvial diamond miners buying the old Bell A-model ADTs from construction companies and even though they were pre-owned they still gave very good, long and sustained



Brad Potgieter, owner of Tipperary, with Pieter Seekoei, Joseph Miershoop, Ruben Koopman, David Mabinda and Eric van der Merwe, one of Bell Equipment's Sales Representatives, at the company's Kimberley Customer Service Centre.

service in our harsh conditions. This was enough to make up my mind and I haven't had regrets choosing the marque.”

Brad has owned Bell ADTs through the B, C and D-series as well as a range of Bell Excavators spanning HD1430, HD1880 and HD2045 models.

“The excavators in particular were very good and I never spent a cent on them for repairs,” he smiles. “If you had an electrical problem, you merely had to switch off one master switch and you could attend to the problem in no time.”

Brad is especially proud of his motto of ‘keeping it local’. All his employees are local people and while originally

employed as farm labourers, they've undergone training to now operate and maintain earthmoving and mine processing equipment.

“My staff is by far my most valuable asset and we take their educational, medical and social upliftment very seriously,” he says. “We assist their children with schooling and see to each family's medical needs while training the breadwinners to further themselves.”

“The value we see in supporting local business extends to our OEM of choice, Bell Equipment, too and what makes this company unique is that should I feel a problem is not sufficiently addressed at branch level, I can pick up the phone and speak to senior management at Bell Equipment's head office. No other OEM gives me that option and that is why we keep supporting Bell Equipment.”

