

Dry Harts Diamonds impressed with the brilliance of the Bell B40D



When Lambro Athanasiou was involved in the construction industry between 2007 and 2014, all he could think about was getting back to the sometimes harsh Northern Cape climate and soils, to mine diamonds.

Lambro, his father Leon and their business partner, Kevin Harris, had successfully mined alluvial diamonds in the Christiana and Warrenton areas before 2007, until lowering grades had made this uneconomical.

A partnership has once again been formed to mine with Lambro, his brother Dino, their father Leon and long-standing business partner Kevin Harris, making up the group. Harris has more than 40 years' experience in the mining industry and had established Dry Harts Diamonds CC in 1992.

It was this vast knowledge base that Lambro and his family were able to tap into when they first mined alluvial diamonds pre-2007. "It was Kevin who knew that the

best haulage machine for these harsh conditions would be a locally designed and built Articulated Dump Truck (ADT) from Bell Equipment as we had success with eight Bell ADTs ranging from 20 to 40 tonnes and across the A, B and C ranges," Lambro says.

"This time, however, we're doing things a little differently," he continues. "We're making sure we're stripping overburden quicker and moving the diamond bearing gravels in bigger loads with bigger Bell B40D ADTs as well as screening our smaller minus 4mm material, prior to it getting into our two 14-foot pans."

Using their previous company name, the partners in Dry Harts Diamonds CC first bought a used Bell B40D ADT from another miner. This machine had around 17 000 hours on its clock. A second Bell B40D ADT was sourced through Bell Equipment in Kimberley and with 10 000 hours of service, had been imported from the United Kingdom.

"Although they are not new, we're amazed at the high mechanical availabilities we find with our Bell B40Ds and to follow through on our current mining plan, we're looking to buy two more," Lambro says. "We're also keen on enlarging our washing plant and adding more pans but to do that effectively, we'd like to install something like a Finlay Screen in our mining pit to create a primary screening out of unsuitable and oversized material that can be used for immediate rehabilitation."

Dry Harts Diamonds CC treats the rehabilitation of its mined-out areas as a priority and adheres strictly to its environmental and mining plans. In terms of its mining licence, personnel are drawn from the local community and Dry Harts Diamonds has, through the training that it gives its operators, ensured that it leaves a legacy of people with skills. Dry Harts Diamonds currently employs fifteen local people who have all received job-specific training.

"This Vaalbos area was mined back in the early 1900s but with improved equipment and knowledge, we're confident of our yields here," Lambro adds. "Using a 50-tonne excavator, we at times have to remove 5-metre thick layers of overburden before reaching gravel of about one metre in thickness but with the superior tonnage our Bell B40D ADTs give us, this is child's play."

Haulage routes never exceed 1,5km which makes for quicker cycle times and continuous daytime production, six days a week.

"Our immediate aim is to source those two additional Bell B40D ADTs and we're confident that that will give us the impetus to mine successfully and to further take advantage of the excellent Rand-Dollar exchange rate," Lambro says with a smile.



Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe with two of the partners of Dry Harts Diamonds CC, Kevin Harris and Lambro Athanasiou, as well as Bell Equipment's Team Leader at its Kimberley Customer Service Centre, Shaun Malan.