

Longevity and reliability of Bell machines is key for Rheebok Bricks

If you ever thought it absurd that someone would describe an industrial plant as the brickyard with the best view in an area, you'd better believe it as high above the mouth of the Great Brak River in the Western Cape, Rheebok Bricks certainly has that – a 180 degree view across the Indian Ocean!

But Rheebok Bricks is more famous for their bricks than the view their premises have. Founded in 1977, Rheebok Bricks is owned by Peter Roche “Tossie” Steyn and manufactures around 4 million bricks a month. The company markets non-face plaster bricks, non-face engineering bricks and Rheebok Clinker, which is a semi-facebrick.

Rheebok Bricks distributes its products using a fleet of seven trucks that deliver in a 100km radius from the plant at Groot Brak River.

Although quite labour intensive, brick plants the size of Rheebok Bricks demand a certain mechanical component without which sustained production would be very slow or nearly impossible. Once mined and stockpiled at the plant, the clay needs to be fed into crushers and extruders using wheeled loaders.

The green bricks exit the extruder and, after being packed onto pallets, are moved to open areas to be dried in the sun and wind and thereafter are packed into the clamps where they will be fired and baked hard. Both the stacking as well as the breaking down of the clamps is done mechanically using rough terrain three-wheeled forklifts, some with interchangeable tools.

Nicky van Wyk is the General Manager of Rheebok Bricks and further explains the necessity of reliable mechanical equipment for a brick-making plant such as

theirs. “We had previously owned a Bell L1506D Wheeled Loader, which gave us just less than 16 000 hours of great service over a mere four years before we sold the machine out of hand.”

“It is so important for us to have a reliable tool such as this because apart from the mining component, loading the clay into the plant’s feed hoppers is really the front-end of the process and needs to be kept consistent.”

In 2014, Rheebok Bricks replaced their Bell L1506D with a slightly smaller machine, in this case the Bell L1204E Wheeled Loader. “Our new Bell L1204E Wheeled Loader compares very well with the previous bigger model we had and even with a slightly smaller bucket, its performance matches the bigger machine very well,” Nicky says. “We use this machine to break out the stockpiled clay before loading the feed hoppers on the crusher and the extruder and it is also used for general housekeeping around the clamps.”

Fuel consumption of only 9 litres of diesel an hour has been a pleasant surprise to the Rheebok Bricks team.

“We also run a fleet of four Bell 220A Versalifts with their interchangeable buckets and forks and given the rough terrain that they cover, mostly with green and fired bricks on pallets, they are irreplaceable in our production cycles,” he explains. “These machines are easy to maintain and we service them diligently every 500 hours, which translates into the high hours of between 30 000 and 50 000 we’ve enjoyed from them.”



Rheebok Bricks bought two Bell 220A Versalifts in 2004 and one each in 2005 and 2006 respectively. Since then, they’ve done some modifications such as swapping out the hydraulic pumps and overhauling the engines but firmly believe that these workhorses still have many hours in them. They are also used to load the brick delivery trucks and with fuel consumption of between 4 and 6 litres of diesel an hour, keep Rheebok Bricks’ production running smoothly.

“Even though our market has changed slightly from a higher demand in housing construction to a more evenly split market between housing and industrial use, we need to keep producing bricks,” Nicky says. “We’re confident though that our fleet of yellow machines from Bell Equipment will keep our production running with clay in at one end and quality bricks out at the other end.”



Nicky van Wyk (left) General Manager Rheebok Bricks with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Fiona Johnson.

