

# Bell fleet moves the earth for Môreson Grondverskuiwers

**The Breede River Valley near Robertson is the largest wine and fruit producing area in the Western Cape. Its soils, though perfectly suited to grow these essentially soft fruits, stem from the Precambrian Malmesbury Group (metamorphic rock), which points to them being more than 540 million years old.**

That, in layman's terms, is a bit hard to comprehend but what does come through clearly is how difficult it is to prepare these soils for orchards and vineyards that need to give decent returns on investment for decades to come.

"We first need to rip through this Malmesbury Shale using 67-tonne bulldozers to free up the large boulders that are inevitably found below the surface," says Johan du Preez. Johan, along with his business partner, Alwyn Visser, who is also his brother-in-law, are the joint

owners of Môreson Grondverskuiwers. "We then use excavators to load the boulders and larger solid material onto our Bell B20D and newer Bell B18E Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) for normally short hauls to predetermined dumping sites. When this is completed, we can mix in the necessary topsoil."

Môreson Grondverskuiwers has been around for a while, in fact in 2015 the company celebrates 91 years since its founding in 1924. The original founder, Gawie Viljoen, and son, Christo Viljoen, focused on engineering and earthworks services to the surrounding farmers. Since Alwyn Visser and Johan du Preez took over the business in 1985, the company has concentrated on expanding its fleet of earthmoving equipment to satisfy a growing client base in the earthworks, land preparation and plant hire markets. Local municipalities are also serviced in a 100km radius from the company's head office in Robertson.



*The Directors of Môreson Grondverskuiwers, Alwyn Visser (left) and Johan du Preez (second from right) with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Fiona Johnson and Area Manager of Môreson Grondverskuiwers, Stefan Nesenberend.*

Two satellite branches have been established in Kirkwood in the Eastern Cape and at Tzaneen in Limpopo, where both are run in conjunction with WP Chipper Hire and Sales, an affiliated company that chips extracted timber and old fruit trees for downstream use.

"We first acquired a used Bell B18A ADT back in 1990, just when Bell ADTs were making their mark, performing well with good loads over treacherous underfoot conditions, just as we experience in our wet Western Cape winters," Du Preez says. "Bell Equipment's innovative thinking, local content and high mechanical availabilities with this workhorse, saw us in time buying another used model, this time a Bell B20C ADT."

According to Du Preez, any earthmoving equipment in their fleet, which now numbers more than 60 pieces, is assessed and analyzed thoroughly before it is replaced and there is no fixed policy regarding the total number of hours a machine should have worked. Môreson Grondverskuiwers bought their first new Bell B20D ADT in 2005 and has since followed that up with another new model, this time a Bell B18E ADT, which arrived in March 2015.

"We work our Bell ADTs hard in the land preparation application as the Malmesbury Shale has a relatively high specific gravity and the material can be abrasive, depending on how it has broken up," Du Preez adds. "Then occasionally we get to load our Bell ADTs with wood chips, which gives us big loads and with their good traction, even in wet underfoot conditions, we get the job done efficiently."

Môreson Grondverskuiwers are also tasked with removing alien trees from river banks and use their Bell

ADTs to move the timber out. With the timber twisted and not of uniform length as one would find with cultivated timber, the Bell B20D and B18E bins offer more than enough load capacity to transport the timber that can be tipped onto a stockpile.

We asked Alwyn Visser what he thought gave Môreson Grondverskuiwers a competitive edge and he said the following: "We've built long-term relationships with most of our clients through strict record-keeping and our clients appreciate the mutual trust we all enjoy. We've also experienced so much repeat business by deploying the best machine for the job with the best operator working under close supervision and having solid technical back-up, especially like that we get from Bell Equipment."

Visser further believes that out of their total workforce of over 100 people, many are the sons of fathers and grandfathers who have worked for the company and staff turnover is very low. Artisans also undergo apprenticeships and continual training is offered.

"Working mainly as a plant hire contractor works for us and with most of our client base being farmers who get diesel rebates, we work on dry rates," he says.

The company also uses two Bell 1866F all-wheel drive rigid tractors, which they bought on the pre-owned market. They are used to haul trailers in various applications. Although Môreson would like to have more of these stalwart tractors in their fleet, they're finding them difficult to source as they have built a reputation for longevity and are not often sold, it seems.

