

Mashova Plant loads up with Bell for Nacala coal terminal contract

When a plant hire company bids on a large contract, especially in a neighbouring country and it has the backing of an original equipment manufacturer whose machines it plans to use, there could be the feeling that the battle is halfway won.

This is what the experience has been for Mark Millar, Managing Director of Mashova Plant (Pty) Ltd in Nelspruit, Mpumalanga. “We’ve been in long discussions on a material handling and housekeeping project at the new Nacala coal export facility in Mozambique and all the uncertainty of whether we would land the contract and which equipment we would be required to have, has been a nerve-wracking experience,” Mark says. “But what has made the difference for us has been the backing we’ve enjoyed from Bell Equipment who has walked this path with us all the way.”



The company that is today Mashova Plant (Pty) Ltd was originally started by Millar’s father, Geoff, as Nelspruit Air and Plant back in 1983. “My father started out doing drilling and blasting and hiring out air compressors,” Mark continues. “I joined him in the business some 25 years ago after qualifying as a mechanical engineer, and in 2006 we rebranded the business as Mashova Plant (Pty) Ltd.”

According to Mark, with the rebranding came a shift in focus and the company went from offering construction and mining services machines like compressors to earthmoving equipment like tractor loader backhoes (TLBs), excavators and articulated dump trucks (ADTs).

“This was when we first bought ADTs from Bell Equipment as we were convinced that Bell had hit the mark with a machine designed and built in Africa for African conditions,” Mark says. “Our Bell ADT fleet

numbers 18 machines and we’ve owned Bell ADTs in the B20, B25, B30 and B40 ranges with some of our first B20Ds still running, boasting around 14 000 hours of excellent service.”

The company’s good experience with Bell ADTs led them to expand their yellow machine fleet, and in 2008 they bought their first Bell Grader, a 672D all-wheel drive machine. Since then, a Bell 770D and two Bell 670G machines have been added to their fleet. The company’s client focus has been mainly on the larger construction companies in both South Africa and Mozambique.

After many years’ experience with TLBs, Mashova Plant (Pty) Ltd bought its first Bell TLBs in 2015. We asked Mark why he switched to machines manufactured and maintained by Bell Equipment and his answer was straightforward: “It really is about service, something which sets Bell Equipment apart,” he says. “I can phone

up the chaps at Bell Equipment and talk to someone who knows what we do and who gives me the feeling that he cares about my business. That’s the type of relationship that builds lasting mutual loyalties.”

But bigger things were on the horizon for this company, which currently employs 300 full-time staff and is looking to grow that number to nearer 400 in the future. Forays into neighbouring Mozambique for nearly two decades, has seen Mashova Plant establish a client base and reputation for itself in that country.

“Working in another country with a different culture and language, has not been easy but it’s been a good learning curve and experience for us,” Mark says. “Our perseverance and attention to detail has paid off as we’re now about to enter our biggest contract there to date when we begin working in the new coal export facility at Nacala.”



Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Charles Inngs (centre) and Managing Director of Mashova Plant (Pty) Ltd, Mark Millar.

The Nacala coal export facility is massive and will hold 4,5 million tons of coal at any given time. Tasked with maintaining the coal stockpiles, doing industrial cleaning and housekeeping and even helping ships to dock, will present Mashova Plant with a whole new set of challenges. This contract has seen the company acquire dedicated new machines for the tasks and Mashova Plant recently took delivery of two new Bell L2606E Wheeled Loaders and a Bell 315SK 4x4 TLB to go with a Bell B20D ADT. There is a possibility that one of its Bell 670G Graders may also be needed on site in the near future.

“We’re especially proud of this achievement in being awarded this contract as we competed internationally to First World standards and fierce competition,” Mark says. “I believe what gave us the edge though was that we are seen as a local company with strong backing from a world renowned OEM, which is what we have in Bell Equipment, who has supported us all the way.”