

Sand mine gets real value from Bell pre-owned machines

Singer and songwriter Ralph McTell once wrote: "This little patch of earth and this little pile of stones, I can wash the dust from off my face and skin, but this earth is in my bones...."

The same can probably be said for Strauss Landmann in Bethlehem. The son of farming parents, Strauss Landmann has always been close to the soil, in one way or the other. Whether it was actively working on the farm or transporting the farm's produce, he felt close to the soil.

"We started doing serious long-haul transport back in 1994," he tells us. "We hauled all types of farming produce but we also transported sand."

Among his clients was a company called Maree Sand, a company operating two sandmines, one close to Bethlehem and the other near Fouriesburg in the Free State. Landmann transported sand for Maree Sand and in 1998 he bought the business. He subsequently rebranded it as Bethlehem Sand & Klip.

"We deliver sand and stone from our sand mines and quarries across the whole Eastern Free State," he adds. "We supply plaster and building sand, river sand, stone aggregate for concrete, crusher dust and fill material."

When Landmann first took over the business, mining and loading the product was done with very old equipment. He bought his first new plant in 2006 and decided on a Bell L1506D Front End Loader. "I chose the Bell machine as it offered the best value in its mass and price-class," he says. "The fact that I could get warranties on its wet drive-train extended to 6 000 hours, was another factor that swung my decision to buy Bell."

The Bell L1506D Front End Loader is used extensively for loading products onto Bethlehem Sand & Klip's interlinked and rigid tipper fleet. In 2007, he came across a Bell L1706C Front End Loader on the pre-owned market. "We use this machine in our yard at our Bethlehem head office and in spite of its 13 000 hours, it still does the job for us," he says.



Strauss Landmann with his son Jake in his office in Bethlehem.

Landmann was by now confident in his choice of Bell branded earthmoving equipment and having seen an opportunity to hire out his machines in the rainy season, when some of his mining sites are inaccessible, he bought a Bell 770C Grader in 2008. "This Bell Grader had 9 000 hours on the clock when we bought it but our farming clients love this machine for the maintenance of their roads and contours," he smiles. "And to prove the point on our faith in Bell Graders, we have just bought a Bell 670D pre-owned machine on an auction which we believe is going to pay dividends for us in especially the plant hire market."

Bethlehem Sand & Klip mines sand in the Caledon River, on the border with Lesotho. This operation demanded newer equipment and in 2009, Landmann bought another pre-owned Bell L1506D Front End Loader, this one having done around 2 000 hours. An older Bell B25B Articulated Dump Truck was added and now all this sand mine needed was a new excavator to dig the sand out of the riverbed. The new excavator came in January 2011 in



A Bell L1506D Front End Loader was the first new piece of equipment bought by Bethlehem Sand & Klip back in 2006. Today the machine is still a strong and reliable part of the fleet and is used extensively for loading products onto the company's interlinked and rigid tipper fleet.

the form of a Bell HD820E machine with a standard GP bucket.

"Having a new machine means increased production to us," Landmann says. "Not that our older Bell machines can't keep up, but this Bell HD820E Excavator sits at the heart of our sand-mining operation and it shows in the stockpiles we are able to build at ease, so as to never be out of stock of river-sand at least."

Completing Bethlehem Sand & Klip's Bell earthmoving fleet is a pre-owned Bell 850C Dozer, acquired in May 2011, which sees duty at a quarry, midway between Bethlehem and Kestell.

"We've been very pleased with our fleet of Bell-built machines and they offer us a double-edge advantage," Landmann adds. "In winter, when the rivers are low, we mine sand but when the rivers are in spate, we are able to utilise our Bell equipment on a plant hire basis and there is never a shortage of takers."



Bethlehem Sand & Klip took delivery of a new Bell HD820E Excavator just over a year ago and the machine sits at the heart of the company's sand-mining operation, able to build stockpiles with ease.