

EC Blaauw upgrades its Bell fleet to meet demand

When the late Christo (Boet) Blaauw started mining sand back in 1979 with only three machines, one of them being a tipper truck, little could he know that just short of four decades later, his once fledgling company would have grown in the best way possible, benefitting a local community in the process.

In 2004, Christo Blaauw established EC Blaauw Transport CC and became a preferred supplier to platinum mining companies hauling their ore, doing material handling, managing waste and building haul roads as the platinum boom saw unrivalled expansion. Sadly Mr Blaauw passed away in 2011 but his legacy lives on in the good name that he established.

When mining got underway at the Kroondal mine just east of Rustenburg in the late 1990s, EC Blaauw Transport responded to its needs by investing in two Bell Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs), a Bell B20B and Bell B30B model. Christo Blaauw's daughter, Nerine Aucamp, is now a shareholder of the company and says: "My dad had grown up amongst yellow machinery and with his experience and knowing that Bell Equipment was a South African company that designed its equipment with local conditions in mind, this would have seemed an easy decision for him to make in buying these ADTs. These two trucks have given us thousands of hours of service and helped to establish the company as a reliable service supplier in the platinum mining industry."



(From left): Anton Snyman (Bell Rustenburg Sales Representative), Lloyd Matchett (General Manager, EC Blaauw Transport), Richard Aucamp (Managing Director, EC Blaauw Transport), Nerine Aucamp (Shareholder, EC Blaauw Transport) and Papi Rangtwaga (Shareholder, EC Blaauw Transport).

Managing Director of EC Blaauw Transport, Richard Aucamp, takes up the story: "Because of the great service we've enjoyed with these Bell ADTs, we've happily retained our links with Bell Equipment. Some six years ago, we bought two Bell L1706D Wheeled Loaders and two Bell 315 Tractor Loader Backhoes (TLBs). These machines have proved invaluable, especially with material handling and the loading of trucks, and the TLBs fulfill many varied roles in housekeeping duties in the mining plants."

"Bell Equipment has proved to us over the years that they understand our business and their commitment is evident in the new facilities they've built in Rustenburg, which we believe is proof that, like us, they're here for the long haul."

In 2013, EC Blaauw Transport traded in their two Bell L1706D Wheeled Loaders on two new Bell L1706E models. By now the company had extended its services to include work on platinum mines in the Steelpoort and Lydenburg areas as well.

"Working in an industry that is constantly under pressure due to fluctuating commodity prices, a high emphasis is placed on efficiency through sustained high mechanical availability and minimising downtime of especially material handling equipment such as ours," says Lloyd Matchett, EC Blaauw Transport's General Manager. "This is why we've eagerly taken up Bell Equipment's extended warranty to 9 000 hours on the wet drive train of our Bell Loaders coupled with a maintenance plan. This we feel confirms the advantages of preventative maintenance, which in turn gives us sustained uptime."

EC Blaauw's material handling equipment is used extensively in continuous operations and high monthly hours are the norm, rather than the exception. That is why in the second half of 2017, when the company's Bell L1706E Wheeled Loaders had clocked up some 14 000 hours in just over four years, a decision was made to trade them in on new and bigger models.

"Despite the gloom of low growth in the local economy, we're experiencing an increase in demand for our services. With this in mind we took delivery of new Bell L2206E and L1806E Wheeled Loaders in October 2017," Richard adds. "But we didn't stop there as we also bought two new Bell B30E ADTs, and this combination of loading and haulage tools has drastically upped our rate of production while at the same time lowered our cost per tonnes of material handled."

"Strange though it may seem, we consider ourselves fortunate to be in a competitive market as that forces one to rise to the challenges by being innovative and thinking out of the box," Lloyd says. "We're watching our overheads but having the correct and new material handling equipment for the challenges that lie ahead, we can tell you unequivocally that Bell Equipment will be part of our future plans when we further expand our fleet to meet the increasing demand from our loyal clients."

As a progressive and modern company, EC Blaauw Transport (Pty) Ltd has moved with the times in South Africa and involved the local community near Kroondal in their company ownership, leading to direct long-term financial and employment benefits for their employees.

