

Long-standing JCB owner happy with new Bell arrangement

Adrian Knickelbein believes the easiest machine to sell out of hand to an eager pre-owned market is a used JCB Backhoe Loader as such machines, particularly those he has owned, sell themselves.

As someone who has owned various JCB 3CX and 3DX Backhoe Loader models since 2009, Adrian should know. But let us take you back to where Adrian's working life first started.

"I came into construction and plant hire almost by accident as my late father, Gerald, who had started the business here in Fort Beaufort, passed away in 1992, the year I was in matric," Adrian says. "I had learnt a lot from him while I was still at school and worked with him most afternoons and during school holidays."

Knickelbein Construction has built a reputation as a company that delivers construction projects of high quality whether it be in the domestic housing market or commercial buildings. Adrian and his team also do civil construction and have assisted many of the farmers in the greater Amatole District with the construction of dams, culverts, drainage canals, pipelines and roads.

"When I started out in the early 1990s there were no plant hire companies in this area and when I came across a used backhoe loader in 1996 I bought it even though it had no cab and was not nearly as sophisticated as the current machines are," Adrian recalls. "A year or two later I found another used machine at an auction in Bathurst, close to Port Alfred, and having bought it I promptly drove it back to Fort Beaufort, a distance of some 140km and arrived home at 2am!"

Adrian's enthusiasm for his business is infectious and it is clear why he and his business have become an institution in this community. "This community has supported us over many years, and you cannot turn away even the smallest of building assignments, no matter how much other work you have," he says.

By 2009 Adrian's older backhoe loaders had run their respective courses and he urgently needed to replace them. He found a used JCB 3CX Backhoe Loader with low hours and subsequently bought it. "I had heard a lot about JCB Backhoe Loaders by that stage and, with only 2 000 hours on its clock, this machine seemed worthwhile, and it proved to be exactly that," he says. "When we weren't using the machine levelling sites, demolishing old buildings, loading trucks or digging trenches for services and foundations, we hired it



out to local farmers on a plant hire basis and this has proved profitable for us, creating a market that would keep on paying dividends."

Work on farms, especially on the many citrus farms in the area, saw the JCB 3CX used for digging trenches for irrigation pipelines and doing bush clearing for new orchards.

A visit to the Bathurst Agricultural Show in 2013 turned out to be advantageous to both the JCB stand and Adrian as he bought two new JCB 3DXs at a 'show special' discounted rate on the day and a similar third machine a while later.

"We were by then well-established as a plant hire company too and there was constant demand, especially from the citrus farmers, which meant that having the three new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loaders made sense," he explains. "A customer expects that equipment he rents will provide maximum uptime while on his site and that's the confidence that new machines constantly provide."

Knickelbein Construction's JCB 3DXs are hired out on wet rates as Adrian is concerned about diesel quality, but farmers generally prefer supplying their own fuel as they receive a rebate on diesel. A recent request from a citrus farmer saw Adrian attach a long ripper tooth to the backhoe of a JCB 3DX to create a furrow of approximately

700mm deep next to the tree stem into which fertilizer would be poured to aid diseased trees.

"I've never bought a JCB Backhoe Loader with an extended warranty as they don't need it, such is the quality of the machine's design and build," he adds. "When the machine is out of warranty, I maintain it myself over the weekend as we don't employ a mechanic, but when any bit of plant reaches 8 000 hours or more it should be sold, and this is where I've found that the JCB Backhoe Loaders that I've owned have been really easy to sell."

When Adrian needed a new JCB 3DX in mid-2021 he turned to Anthony Enslin, whom he has known and dealt with for many years. "I was happy to hear that Anthony, who has so much experience with JCB equipment, was now working with Bell Equipment and even more so that an established South African company such as Bell Equipment, with a proven wide footprint, was the agent for JCB equipment," he says. "We took delivery of a brand new JCB 3DX in mid-July and it has been put to work straight away, working on a farm where it was cleaning out a dam."

Knickelbein Construction employs 25 full time staff and also owns two excavators, two graders, some tipper trucks, a bulldozer and a skid-steer loader.



Adrian Knickelbein (left) with Anthony Enslin, Bell Sales Representative.

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