

Growing demand for Mini Loaders' new 13,5t Kobelco

Looking back on recent history in the South African plant hire industry it seems that in the mid-1990s every Tom, Dick and Harry had a skid-steer loader.

This is the opinion of Johannesburg-based entrepreneur David Shelley and he should know as he ran a whole fleet of these machines. David hails from a family well versed in commercial construction activities and he first bought a skid-steer loader in 1996. His fleet of machines soon grew and when not in use in the family business, the machines were hired out to other contractors.

"Our machines were hired out to home builders and also for the Schoemansdal Dam in Mpumalanga and later to other contractors doing the development of Dowerglen, a suburb on the eastern side of Johannesburg," David says. "Our skid-steer loaders came with detachable tools which included backhoes for trenching."

As demand for equipment hire grew for heavier work, David found that the backhoe attachments

on his machines could not cope and a client suggested he look at acquiring a small excavator. "This is how I got started with mini excavators, buying a 3-ton machine fitted with a hydraulic hammer that we used to break down parapet walls on on- and off-ramps of the double-decker section of the M1 highway in the centre of Johannesburg," he explains. "The machine was narrow enough to occupy only one lane and had no tail swing, which made it ideal for this type of work."

Mini Loaders Plant Hire soon grew its fleet of smaller excavators to include machines in the 3-, 5-, 7,5-, 12,5- and 15-ton classes until these numbered 24. "When I recently heard that Bell Equipment had become the agents for Kobelco in Southern Africa I was really happy," David continues. "The Kobelco is a well designed and market leading machine,

especially in the smaller tonnages which is where our market lies. With Kobelco previously not really having solid representation here, I was happy to hear that this was now changing. It's great news that Kobelco can rely on Bell Equipment's established and extensive footprint for both sales and service."

Mini Loaders Plant Hire recently took delivery of a Kobelco SK135SR Excavator, which has been in high demand from the get-go. Fitted with a hydraulic hammer, the machine delivers enough inline power to effectively cap driven concrete piles on a large transport infrastructure project for the Johannesburg Roads Agency.

"Smaller excavators such as the Kobelco SK135SR machine are big news in Europe where they are used extensively on urban infrastructure projects," David says. "Here too, the demand for our machine is mounting as with no tail swing, it is compact enough to work in tight spaces especially in urban areas and powerful enough to take on the most demanding of tasks."

"Our operator on this machine, Malcolm Ncube, has adapted easily and being an experienced excavator operator, he speaks highly of the ergonomics of the cab that offers good visibility and has responsive controls."

David has been encouraged by Bell Equipment's willingness to trade older machines for new Kobelco Excavators. "We have no fixed policy on swapping out older machines for new ones, but machine longevity is important for us as is a decent return on investment. Knowing what we do about the Kobelco brand, we're confident that its smaller machines are exactly what we need in terms of our market and with potential longevity in the mix, brought on by proven reliable backup from an OEM/distributor such as Bell Equipment, we're excited at the prospect of owning more of their products," he says. "We are already looking at possibly buying three more Kobelco Excavators in 2019."



Owner of Mini Loaders Plant Hire, David Shelley (left) with his Kobelco Operator, Malcolm Ncube and Bell Used Equipment Manager and Product Manager: Kobelco Excavators, Corné Coetzer.

