



Former JCB dealer pleased to be back in the fold

When Johnny Scholtz and his company, JBJ Machinery, couldn't sell any more of his favourite JCB machines due to local distribution rights changing hands to Bell Equipment, he so missed the experience that he actually wrote a letter to Lord Anthony Bamford, the Chairman of JCB, to plead his case.

JBJ Machinery was founded in 2008 in the vibrant North West Province farming town of Schweizer-Reneke. Of the three founding partners, only Johnny has remained, and one would be hard pressed to find a more passionate ambassador for the JCB brand.

"When we first started the business our main target market was the 2 000 or so alluvial diamond miners scattered across the veld between Schweizer-Reneke and neighbouring Wolmaransstad and Bloemhof," Johnny says. "For many years, this area was at the epicentre of the alluvial diamond

mining industry and many, many people made and lost their fortunes here."

Johnny recalls that the unofficial capital of this diamond mining area was a settlement called London, close to Schweizer-Reneke. "Our local alluvial diamond miners were mostly gentle people with an abhorrent distrust of those who hailed from the big cities like Johannesburg. We had a captive market for those wanting to buy especially JCB Backhoe Loaders as they were seen as the most versatile earthmoving tools on the smaller diggings. Virtually every miner had one."

Having been a diamond digger himself for around 15 years, Johnny knew his target market and their thinking, and he then expanded his horizons further when he started farming beef, maize, and soya.

"When the government changed the regulations for mining, and treated everyone as if they were large mining houses, even the smallest of alluvial diamond miners were saddled with licensing fees, environmental permits and having to make collateral investments equaling the cost of what the rehabilitation of their mining sites was thought to be. The alluvial diamond mining industry just collapsed and of the original 2 000 miners we are now left with possibly 30, a very sad state of affairs as thousands of jobs were forever lost in the process," Johnny says. "That is when we, as the only local JCB dealer, had a paradigm shift and turned our focus to the agricultural market, which fortunately is quite strong in the whole of the North West Province as this is maize country!"

As JBJ Machinery sells many agricultural tractors and associated implements, the company's six mechanics travel far and wide to offer field service, which also benefits the owners of JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls in their area. Servicing is done right up to the border with Botswana

and into many areas of the Northern Cape and the most part of the North West Province.

"We can proudly say that what brings new customers to us, and regular returns of existing customers, is that we're known to be experts on all manner of JCB equipment, especially on Backhoe Loaders," says Johnny. "We're a passionate family business as my wife Elma, son Hendrik and son-in-law Danie Schönfeldt all work here."

"When we lost the dealership due to the distribution rights changing hands we were heartbroken to say the least, but then about a year later we were approached by Bell Equipment's Forestry and Agriculture Business Development Manager, Charles Inggs, to find out whether we'd be interested in acting as a dealer for Bell Equipment and it was like being given a second chance at life. We were overjoyed and we're still so excited at the prospect," Johnny says. "If you consider that in 15 years we sold 165 JCB machines it should tell you how we feel about this brand."

He adds that many of their customers on large commercial farms, like those growing pecan nuts in the Hartswater irrigation area where JBJ Machinery also has a small branch, have multiples of JCB Backhoe Loaders and Loadalls. They fit innovative tools onto these machines like rotary saws that are used to prune the pecan nut trees to

heights of seven metres so that all the trees in a row can get enough sunlight. Farmers and owners of cattle feedlots favour the Loadalls for the ease with which they move bales of lucerne and handle bulk bags of fertiliser, tanks of pesticides, and big bags of seed in the planting season as the modern trend seems to be in bulk packaging of late.

"We're also proactive in showing off our products. Apart from the JCB machines standing outside our premises in Schweizer-Reneke, we will also exhibit at the nearby Migdol Agricultural Show when we'll take along a JCB 3DX Pro Backhoe Loader and a JCB 530-70JR Loadall. We're positive

that the latter machine is going to be a winner with local farmers because it is priced just right."

We quietly asked Johnny whether the letter to Lord Bamford had the desired effect but it seems that they had the wrong e-mail address and were never sure whether the letter reached him. But, as a fellow countryman of the JCB Chairman had said some four centuries earlier, "All's well that ends well....". We are here today with JBJ Machinery firmly ensconced to once again become the leading dealer in JCB equipment in the North West Province and its passionate owners really believe that all will be well with them and this fine yellow brand.



From left: Elma and Johnny Scholtz with Danie Schönfeldt and Hendrik Scholtz.

