

Eggers Boerdery expands its fleet with a Kobelco SK220XD

Two brothers of German descent, who along with their sister make up the fourth generation of mainly forestry growers on plantations near Piet Retief, have found that Bell 1766 Haulage Tractors are machines that never fail and with some tender loving care, just run and run and run.

Some of Ernst and Hermann Eggers farmland was originally occupied by their great-grandfather, also named Ernst. The senior Ernst emigrated from Northern Germany in 1903 and arrived in South Africa to pursue better opportunities. He was a master craftsman and pursued opportunities in the building industry during his first years in Natal. Later he ventured into farming to cultivate cotton along with some mixed crops. After spending time at Bishopstowe near Pietermaritzburg, he moved to the Piet Retief area and started planting timber in the 1930s. He also farmed with pigs and had a Holstein dairy stud.

“Our great-grandfather was followed by our grandfather, Johannes, and he in turn, by our dad, Berthold or Bertie as he is known in this area,” says Hermann Eggers, the younger of the brothers. “Our sister Inge, who is the middle child, lives in KwaZulu-Natal.”

Johannes Eggers had in the mid-1970s bought some of the first Bell Loggers which were constructed with round tubing. Some Bell 1206 Haulage Tractors followed in the 1980s.

“When I returned to the farm after studying forestry at Stellenbosch University, we resumed actively growing and harvesting timber and I recall us buying our first Bell 225A Logger in 2003,” says Ernst. “That machine is still being used daily despite its chassis having seen some 26 000 hours of service along with three refurbished engines and some work on its boom.”

Eggers Boerdery grows gum, wattle and to a lesser extent pine. The two Eggers brothers have divided the work with Ernst taking care of planning and silviculture and Hermann, with a tertiary qualification from Saasveld College, handles the harvesting and timber haulage.

Timber destined for pulp is transported to Richards Bay and that for wooden pallets, to nearby sawmills around Piet Retief. Pine for sawtimber goes to a sawmill in Eswatini and mills around Piet Retief’s surroundings. Eggers Boerdery also produces wattle bark for the tanning and related industries, where bark is sent to NTE at Iswepe.



From left: Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Daniel van Huyssteen, with brothers Hermann and Ernst Eggers.



“We run five Bell 1766 Haulage Tractors, some of which we bought on the pre-owned market, and they are very hard to find, for good reason,” Ernst says. “Bell Equipment has perfected this machine as a haul tractor configuration especially when it comes to fuel consumption which is low at between 7 and 8 litres of diesel an hour, even when hauling 20 tons of timber.”

“You can’t find these Bell 1766 Haul Tractors on the pre-owned market as people simply don’t want to part with them,” Hermann adds. “We had refurbished one and as a test, advertised it on a popular sales platform where we had enquiries from as far as Zimbabwe.”

The brothers agree that despite the Bell 1766 Haulage Tractors’ age, the fact that Bell Equipment still supplies spare parts stands them in good stead and adds greatly to the machines’ longevity and reputation.

“Without these Bell 1766 Haul Tractors, we couldn’t move our harvested timber to where it needs to be to get loaded onto long-haul transport and we have the reliability of the Mercedes Benz 366 motor to thank along with that Allison transmission which just doesn’t break,” Hermann says.

In addition Eggers Boerdery runs four Bell 225A Loggers and these perform a variety of tasks from loading felled timber infield to stacking and loading at roadside depots. Their fuel burn of between 6 and 7 litres an hour is also not frowned upon. Further machines manufactured by Bell Equipment include two Backhoe Loaders (TLBs), one a 315SK and the other a 315SL machine.

“There is always work for a TLB on our farm and we use them to repair roads, maintain drainage ditches and furrows and a host of other tasks,” Hermann adds. “Their versatility is their greatest advantage and with two big tools at hand, they are indeed very handy, even hauling our

agricultural tractors out of the mud when they get stuck.”

Despite the handy versatility that their Bell TLBs offer, the Eggers brothers recently saw the need to invest in a larger machine, also supplied by Bell Equipment. “We felt we needed a bigger multi-purpose tool that could be used first of all to remove big rocks when fixing haul roads in and around our timber compartments and then later on, be fitted with a timber harvesting head to speed up timber harvesting,” Ernst explains. “After consulting our Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Daniel van Huyssteen, we decided on the Kobelco SK220XD-10 Excavator and we’re very excited to see how it can add value to our general maintenance and timber harvesting.”

This 22-ton excavator with its 1 cubic metre bucket is known to have superior hydraulic performance which bodes well for a timber harvesting

application as well. At the time we met the Eggers brothers, their new Kobelco SK220XD-10 had just been delivered but one could sense their excitement at seeing it in action.

“We should add that we’ve done some minor modifications on our Bell 1766 Haul Tractors, like replacing the rigid axle with an independent one. We’re pleased to see that Bell Equipment has followed suit and is now fitting this to their new haul tractors as well,” Ernst says.

Hermann has the last word when he says: “No machine can run forever without replacement parts and we have a bin system in our workshop where we buy a new part from Bell Equipment’s handily placed branch in nearby Piet Retief whenever we use such a part from our stock. Bell Equipment’s Mechanic, Stephan Coetzer, responds quickly when we call, and he handles all our servicing under warranty which gives us peace of mind.”