

Local contractor grows his fleet with a new JCB 3CX Global



The platinum deposits in southern Africa are said to be in the shape of a giant three-leaf clover. The mines that dot parts of its eastern limb around Steelpoort and Burgersfort contribute valuable foreign currency and provide jobs for many people who live in communities around the mines.

When the members of these communities have their own reliable earthmoving machines, chances are so much better that they will reap the benefits of contract work. One such local operator is Johannes Mankge who named his construction business with his ancestral family name of Galaka Construction & Projects.

Johannes left school at the end of Grade 10 and became a bricklayer. This enabled him to build his own home after which he spent some time at one of the nearby ferrochrome smelters working as a backhoe loader (TLB) operator. This experience would later stand him in good stead.

“When I left the ferrochrome smelter, I started my own construction business, Galaka Construction & Projects and built houses, schools and clinics in this area,” Johannes says. “This gave me a good income, but I was always looking to expand my business interests and have branched out into poultry farms as well.”

In 2014 Johannes started producing tombstones for the local market and provides a valuable and sensitive service. He buys granite from the Rustenburg area and cuts and polishes the stone before sandblasting the engraving onto the surface. His tombstone business has a branch in Burgersfort and Jane Furse, and he has plans to expand it further north to Marble Hall and Polokwane.

“Having worked with a TLB at the ferrochrome smelter, I always dreamed of owning such a machine as I had firsthand experience of how versatile a machine it is,” Johannes explains. “The year 2019 saw me make that commitment when I approached the Bell Equipment branch in Middelburg and bought a Bell 315SL TLB that we still work with, and which has done close to 2 700 hours.”

Word quickly spread that there was a member of a community close to a major platinum mine with



Johannes Mankge (second from left) with Bell Sales Representative Johnny Smit (third from left) and three of his children (from left): August, Grace and Tumelo Mankge.

a new TLB. This paid off handsomely for Johannes as the income the machine generated enabled him to pay it off in a mere 24 months.

"The mine hired my TLB and used it to assist in patching potholes and do general maintenance on the roads and other infrastructure around the mine," he says. "The three older sons of my six children, Joseph, August and Tumelo, all work at the mine but in their spare time they work for me and enjoy working with the TLB as I'm a hard taskmaster and don't like young people sitting around being idle."

The same platinum mine is now set for a major expansion and again Johannes has been proactive by buying a new machine, as he's confident of landing more contract work during the mine's expansion phase.

"I again went to Bell Middelburg and this time I met their new Sales Representative, Johnny Smit, who told me all about their new, exciting range of Backhoe Loaders made by JCB," he says. "Johnny guided me through the full range of JCB Backhoe Loaders – I was amazed at how many different models there are – before eventually choosing the JCB 3CX Global, which seemed the closest match to my previous machine."

Johannes was particularly impressed by the JCB 3CX Global's ROPS/FOPS cab, which is an essential safety component for working on mines. He believes the fact that his machine is brand new and boasts this safety feature will benefit him when plant is hired and contractors are appointed.

"Representatives from the mine are set to come and assess my machines to see how and where they can be utilised. I'm confident that with the way I've maintained the older Bell 315SL TLB and the fact that I have a brand new JCB 3CX Global machine, they're bound to put us in line for contract work," Johannes adds with a broad smile.

"I've always had all my servicing done by Bell Equipment's branch in nearby Steelpoort where they know me now. We buy all our consumables like air and fuel filters and lubrication products from them as we believe that is the right thing to do to ensure longevity of one's equipment."

"I may be getting on but I'm still ambitious and I'm working hard to fulfill my dream of owning a wheel loader that will benefit the mines, and even a grader that I could rent to our local municipality. And the way that Bell Equipment has looked after me, I'm confident this company will be part of my plans."

