

# the bulletin

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**70<sup>th</sup>**  
ANNIVERSARY

BULLETIN - VOLUME 1 - 2024



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Dear Customers

It is an honour and a privilege to address you as the new CEO of Bell Equipment in this our 70th year in business. I am humbled by the legacy that has been built and encouraged by the significant growth opportunities that lie ahead.

Firstly, on behalf of our entire team, I extend gratitude to our customers. Your partnership over the past seven decades has fuelled our growth, challenged us to innovate, and inspired us to continuously raise the bar. As we embark on this new chapter together, please know that your satisfaction and success will remain at the forefront of everything we do.

As part of our existing growth and investment strategy, our commitment to business in South Africa and our team and stakeholders here, we are looking forward to launching exciting new products. Foremost is our Bell Motor Grader that we will be proudly manufacturing in Richards Bay as from next year. We believe we've designed a leader in performance and reliability that will take its place alongside our ADT line in the local and global markets.

Our Articulated Dump Truck continues to perform well globally, and we have some innovative developments to ensure we continue to be a technology innovator and leader. This includes the first commercialised above surface autonomous ADT operation using a Bell truck, which was launched in Europe earlier this year. Our engineering team will also be working with a European technology partner to develop a fully battery-operated ADT as part of our responsibility towards finding suitable solutions for a zero-carbon future.

To grow our presence in the underground mining space we are working on a six-ton LHD (Load Haul Dumper), and to complement our Forestry & Agriculture product range we have our newly developed Bell Timber Processing Head, which we expect to put into production during early 2025. Our new Bell Heavy Industries (BHI) division takes our manufacturing solutions beyond yellow metal. Through BHI we aim to help stimulate the South African manufacturing sector via contract manufacturing and skills transfer to support local demand.

Looking to the local market, we expect this year to be relatively flat, especially with national elections in May. The construction sector remains volatile with the promised large infrastructure spend not materialising as quickly as hoped. Although coal exports are a concern, we expect demand from other mining sectors to remain consistent with the levels seen during 2023.

Rest assured that whatever happens, we will be doubling down on our efforts, working closely with our alliance partners, to continue to deliver strong and reliable machines and support to our customers.

Thank you for entrusting us with your business and your friendship.

*Ashley Bell*  
**Ashley Bell**  
Group Chief Executive

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Afrimat saw first-hand how Bell B60E ADTs came out tops in terms of production and fuel consumption which convinced them that the Bell B60E ADT would be the ideal haulage vehicle for the planned expansion at the Nkomati Anthracite mine.

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**HEAD OFFICE - RICHARDS BAY, SA**  
**TELEPHONE**..... +27 (0)35 907 9111

**SOUTH AFRICAN CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES**

Bloemfontein ..... + 27(0)51 - 4327855  
Cape Town ..... + 27(0)21 - 3809000  
East London ..... + 27(0)43 - 7321415  
Empangeni ..... + 27(0)35 - 9072500  
eThekweni (Durban) ..... +27(0)32 - 9471637  
George ..... + 27(0)44 - 8780930  
Jet Park (Johannesburg) ..... + 27(0)11 - 9289846

Kimberley ..... + 27(0)53 - 8410710  
Kuruman ..... + 27(0)53 - 7123072  
Middelburg ..... + 27(0)13 - 2468900/1  
Mthatha ..... + 27(0)47 - 5314905  
Nelspruit..... + 27(0)13 - 7552110  
Newcastle ..... + 27(0)34 - 3756190/1  
Piet Retief ..... + 27(0)17 - 8261523  
Pietermaritzburg ..... + 27(0)33 - 3869319  
Polokwane ..... + 27(0)15 - 3075374  
Port Elizabeth ..... + 27(0)41 - 4863775

Rustenburg..... + 27(0)14 - 5921160  
Steelport..... + 27(0)72 - 3460025  
Tzaneen ..... + 27(0)15 - 3071129  
Vryheid ..... + 27(0)34 - 9815541  
Wolmaransstad..... + 27(0)18 - 5962319

**AFRICA CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRES**

Harare (Zimbabwe) ..... + 263 242 447374  
Kitwe (Zambia) ..... + 260 962 249 900  
Matsapha (Swaziland) ..... + 268 251 874 96/7  
Mazubuka (Zambia) ..... + 260 962 249 900

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T: + 27 (0)35 907 9297  
E: bulletin@bellequipment.com  
W: www.bellequipment.com



# Bell products and support keep Fraser Alexander a step ahead

**When looking at what is commonly known as a mine dump, few people will realise that they are actually looking at a dam for which the proper term is a tailings storage facility or TSF and while the mine that it serves is still active, that facility is a dynamic structure that needs to be designed, built and maintained with extreme care.**

Tailings is the slurry waste created by a variety of mining processing plants and when cousins, Fraser and Fred Alexander, first started using cocopans to remove these tailings from the Witwatersrand gold mines over a century ago, in 1912, little could they know that the essential service that they had started would grow into the vibrant group that Fraser Alexander is today.

This South African-based, black-owned group has operations across 10 African countries, including South Africa, as well as Peru, Brazil, and Chile in South

America. Fraser Alexander provides material handling, mineral processing, mining, re-mining, water treatment and tailings management services to the mining industry.

Jack Reabow is the Senior Plant Manager at the Fraser Alexander Tailings Management Division, which manages over 100 TSFs, and he tells us more about what the division does in offering such essential services to the mining industry. "Our division mainly handles two aspects of the business," he says.

"Firstly, we design, build and maintain tailings storage facilities and secondly, we re-mine older facilities with hydro-mining for reprocessing as the extraction techniques have now been refined to further extract saleable commodities such as gold and platinum from the 'mine dumps'."

The recent failure of a TSF at Jagersfontein in the Free State has once again placed emphasis on maintaining the integrity of these facilities to ensure the safety of the people and property in the area surrounding such a facility. This filters through to leading companies in this field such as Fraser Alexander is known to be.

"Given the nature of our work in having to move large amounts of earth and slurry, you would appreciate that we use earthmoving equipment of various types and sizes, and during the last two years some of our excavators had reached the end of their productive lives at between 15 000 and 18 000 hours," Jack explains. "We use an on-key maintenance system called PRAGMA to create a full-service history prior to selling the equipment on auction that further aids us in obtaining better rates for the older equipment."

Fraser Alexander favours two sizes of excavator, a 20-ton and a 12-ton machine. The application of a particular size is often determined by the underfoot conditions where the excavators will work as softer ground demands a lighter machine is used.

"While extending a TSF on a large mine near Lydenburg we had rented an excavator which turned out to be a Kobelco SK220XD machine. This model so impressed us with its superior production and frugal fuel consumption figures that we took a conscious decision to replace our fleet of 20-ton machines with Kobelco SK220XD models of which we now have seven," he says. "We're also keen to look at the Kobelco SK135SR model at 13,5 tons to slot into the 12-ton size application and have made enquiries about this particular machine with our Bell Sales Representative, Ebrahim Astree."

Jack expands on their reasoning for buying the Kobelco SK220XD Excavators mentioning that as a truly South African brand, Fraser Alexander is keen to support similar local companies such as Bell Equipment. He says the pricing on the Kobelco Excavators was favourable compared to other







similarly weighted machines and the excellent fuel consumption, in an era of ever-increasing fuel costs, was a major influencer on their decision. Ultimately the Bell Care Package that Bell Equipment offered, as the Southern African distributor of Kobelco Excavators, swung their vote. Under this Care Package, lasting 36 months or 6 000 hours, all servicing and repair would be done by Bell Equipment.

"We've been impressed by the design of the Kobelco's undercarriage as when we work on top of tailings dams, we 'walk' any excavator a lot meaning that we move it around to various places where it is needed, and often in abrasive and wet material," Jack continues. "We check on how many rollers and track guides there are to minimise the strain on the tracks and undercarriage and the Kobelco's design really suits our application in this regard."

Jack adds that as far as daily and regular maintenance checks are concerned, the placement of the filters and other maintenance points on the Kobelco Excavators makes it easy to do daily checks while standing on the ground. This avoids operators having to climb on top of the machine, which can be deemed a safety risk.

Fraser Alexander's Kobelco SK220XD Excavators have varied uses of which building the walls of tailings facilities, preparing platforms for hydro-mining equipment to operate from, and digging trenches that will convey the hydro-mined slurry to a catchment area, are key. The Kobelco Excavators are also used to place the large-diameter HDPE pipes into areas where the tailings will be pumped. With all this activity, an average fuel burn of 14 litres per hour has impressed the Fraser Alexander teams. The company does diligent fuel and lubrication sampling that is sent away for analysis.

"Despite the wet material we work in, we still have to contend with hot, dry and dusty conditions and this has prompted us to buy the Kobelco Excavators with third-party automatic lubrication systems that Bell Equipment fits for us pre-delivery," Jack says. "We insist on servicing every 250 hours as experience has taught us that this type of preventative maintenance ensures the longevity of machine life. It also supports our Environmental Social Governance (ESG) concern of lowering our carbon emissions."

When re-mining older TSFs, Fraser Alexander is tasked with removing the top layers of soil to gain access to the richer residue-bearing soils lower down and to do

this they employ a fleet of Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs). "At some of our operations near Rustenburg we had a fleet of Bell B25D ADTs that had clocked really high hours over the 15 years we used them, and these were replaced in March 2023 with three new Bell B20E ADTs," he says. "The reason for choosing the Bell B20E ADT is that Bell Equipment is the only ADT manufacturer with a vehicle in this class that can be registered for use on a public road, which is where these ADTs need to run at times, and do so without an escort vehicle."

"The 15 years of sustained service we were able to extract from the older fleet of Bell B25D ADTs points to Bell Equipment's legendary sound design and build and made buying another model ADT from the same company an easy decision."

The Bell B20E ADTs run in cycles of 3 to 5km and with even torque distribution over the three axles Jack and his teams are confident of good tyre life. They are enjoying the benefits of the full Fleetmatic® monitoring system and get regular updates on their average fuel consumption per hour and loads carried.

Considering the nature of Fraser Alexander's many varied tasks in the Tailings Management Division, no fleet of earthmoving equipment would be complete

without the use of a versatile tool such as a backhoe loader and the company recently replaced an older machine with a new JCB 3CX Global Backhoe Loader.

"We had no hesitation in choosing the JCB 3CX Global machine as its reputation as a robust tool precedes it and having the backing of Bell Equipment as the South African distributor is a bonus not be sniffed at," Jack says. "It was competitively priced even with a third-party lubrication system fitted and a Bell Care Package to 24 months or 4 000 hours."

This versatile machine is currently being used on a mining site near Brakpan where it is used to dig trenches for piping, packing material into retaining walls, and levelling platforms. Its fold-over forks have proven incredibly handy in loading and unloading wooden pallets of consumable materials. Access to JCB's LiveLink monitoring system ensures weekly downloads of essential performance data.

"We're well pleased with the new additions to our earthmoving fleet and knowing we have the backing of a solid company such as Bell Equipment for the care and maintenance of these new machines gives us the confidence to continue with our essential services, which at their core come down to protecting our environment," Jack says.



**Jack Reabow, Fraser Alexander's Tailings Division Senior Plant Manager, with one of the 15-year-old Bell B25D ADTs.**



# Mabona Civils enters into contract mining with two Bell B40Es

**When Andile Mbele was a young graduate working his way up through the ranks in a small municipality in the northern part of the Eastern Cape province, he always thought that there had to be a more efficient way of delivering infrastructure projects to ease the lives of people living in rugged conditions in that province.**

Andile and his single parent mother had early on realised the value of tertiary education, and his double degrees in Quantity Surveying and Construction Management are proof of this. "During my studies I gained valuable work experience with Group 5 Housing and Projects, building low-cost housing and after 12

months I resigned, went back to school and later became a Project Manager in the Umzumvubu Local Municipality in Mount Ayliff, which is the area where I was born and grew up," Andile says. "When another more challenging opportunity opened up in the nearby Ntabankulu Local Municipality, I jumped at the chance to learn even more about infrastructure development as I thought I could make a difference to people's lives."

The dedication Andile showed brought rewards as he got to gain more valuable experience working in community-based public works programmes and overseeing infrastructure projects funded by the Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) scheme to help municipalities develop their infrastructure.

"It was when I was involved in training SMMEs to develop local contractors in building trades and civil works that I had the inkling that should I be able to obtain a 4CE grading, I could become a contractor as well. I thought starting a plant hire company would be a challenging but manageable business plan, except I didn't have money and certainly no plant to hire out," Andile says with a self-effacing grin.

But help was at hand and Andile's older brother, who is a doctor, assisted him financially, and with a mutual friend signing surety, this enabled them to scrape together the money to buy a rebuilt grader.

"This happened in 2009 and my company Mabona Civils & Plant Hire came into being," he says. "I'm proud to say that 14 years down the line, we're still using that grader."

The grader alone was not enough as Andile realised that to successfully tender on roads contracts, he'd need a roller and a water truck as well, as those three machines form the backbone of any roads project. Andile subsequently attended an auction in Johannesburg where he met people who promised that on payment of a large deposit, which was in fact his entire savings, they would build him a new water truck in no time.

"I duly paid my money and these guys kept sending me pictures of water trucks to supposedly show the progress on my truck, but all I had in the end was these pictures as these unscrupulous people took my money and ran. An expensive but unforgettable lesson to learn."





Fast forward to 2012 and by now Andile and his company, Mabona Civils & Plant Hire, had grown beyond merely doing plant hire and had successfully tendered on several infrastructure projects. "I had, through hard work and saving more, built up the funds to buy both a roller and a water truck and completed an R8 million roads project in Umzimkulu along with other smaller projects in water reticulation, drilling boreholes, and doing bulk water line projects," he says. "I was also able to buy an excavator with funds from a house I had sold, and successfully completing these projects lead my company to being upgraded to 6CE status, which meant we could tender on even larger projects."

Andile soon discovered that on many of the projects he had landed, he was the site manager, the HR manager, a driver, the supervisor and had to fulfill many other roles that did not necessarily stimulate him. A chance meeting with the mutual friend who years before had signed surety for his grader, led to them discussing contract mining in the Mpumalanga coalfields where the friend had become a successful contract miner.

"This was a completely new challenge to me and it really got me thinking that I could do plant hire in coal mining, running big trucks," he says. "I had made many new connections through networking and road-running, a sport I love, and soon found two rebuilt Bell B40D Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) with relatively low hours that I bought for a contract on a coal mine where they actually wanted five such trucks."

Not wanting to put all his eggs into the proverbial single basket, Andile started looking around for other coal mining contracts and found one on a large mine near Belfast, Mpumalanga, but here the demand was for new ADTs that would guarantee production.

"I researched the broader ADT market and again came back to Bell Equipment. The company struck me for notably designing and building an ADT fit for the South African mining environment and that in my book had to count for something," Andile says with a smile. "I obtained my own financing and ordered two new Bell B40E ADTs in November 2022 and they were delivered to our site near Belfast in February 2023."

His two new Bell B40E ADTs have slotted into a fleet of similar haulage vehicles, at times hauling overburden to a dump some 1,5km from the mining area and coal 2km to the run-of-mine tip.

The two new Bell B40E ADTs have been bought with extended warranties of 10 000 hours on their wet drivetrains along with a care package, which translates into Bell Equipment mechanics handling all servicing, maintenance, and repair during that time.

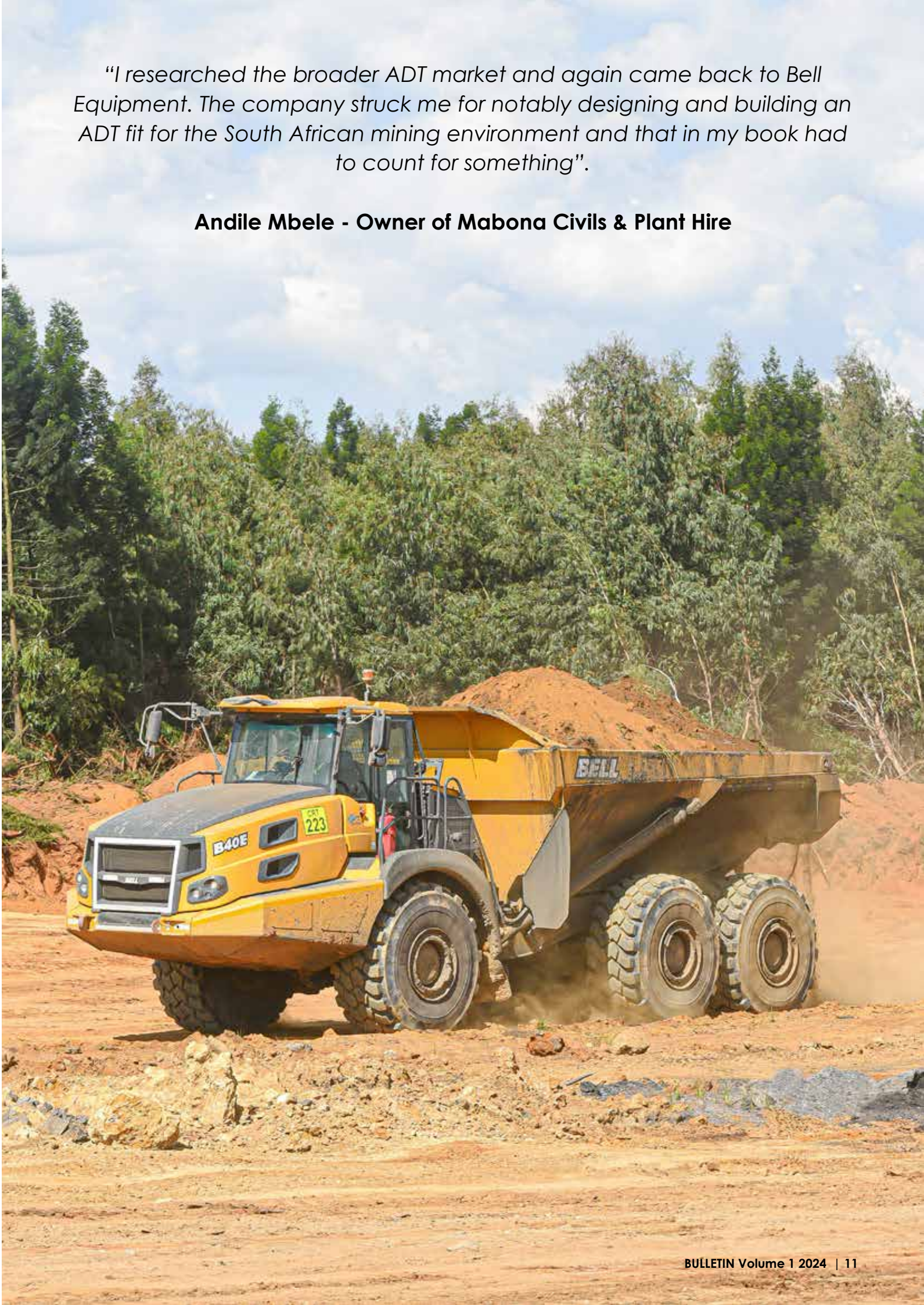
"Looking ahead, I believe this will be the core of my business plan in the future," Andile says. "The confidence that a proven model like the Bell B40E ADT provides, along with legendary technical backup from Bell Equipment, will surely prove successful with sustained uptime and positive production figures."

*"I researched the broader ADT market and again came back to Bell Equipment. The company struck me for notably designing and building an ADT fit for the South African mining environment and that in my book had to count for something".*

**Andile Mbele - Owner of Mabona Civils & Plant Hire**



**Owner of Mabona Civils & Plant, Andile Mbele (left), with Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Anthony Enslin.**





# JCB 3CX Sitemaster is lifechanging for loyal JCB customer

**JCB as a medium-sized plant asset has the best resale value and offers a solid return on investment of around 30 percent, which is very good news for users of this world-famous brand.**



This was recently said by Jayson Buyskes, Managing Director of Mike Buyskes Construction (Pty) Ltd, a Pretoria-based construction company that recently celebrated its fiftieth year in business. Judging by the number of JCB-branded plant this company owns, it's a brand that has earned its keep within this dynamic construction company.

Mike Buyskes, a carpenter by trade, started his construction business in Pretoria in 1972. He first concentrated on the residential market but when that showed a downturn in the 1980s, he turned to the commercial and retail market and soon made his company known to be one that brought projects in on time and on budget with quality finishes thrown in as standard.

Jayson Buyskes, Mike's son, joined the business in 2009 after completing a BSc Construction Management degree at the University of Pretoria. "We've diversified into constructing industrial warehousing, shopping malls, motor dealerships, and office parks all over South

Africa as well as tourist lodges locally and in Zambia," Jayson says when we meet on the site of yet another head office construction project in Centurion. "We employ around 260 full-time staff with local labour drawn from areas where we're working. These casual labourers are trained in a variety of disciplines, which leaves a legacy of skills when we complete projects."

Mike Buyskes Construction is particularly proud of the work that it's done over the 50 years of its existence, but also of the people involved. Mike himself is still an active director as is his wife, Mearl, and Mathebula Mahlangu, who started as a manual labourer. The other directors are Jayson Buyskes, Leon and Corné Lees, and Gerhard van Vuuren.

"In terms of yellow metal machines used in the construction of various big and small projects, we've only ever bought JCB machines," Jayson continues. "Our first ever JCB Backhoe Loader was a 3CX 4x2 we bought in late 1998 and a second 3CX 4x4 model followed in 2002."

Jayson says their JCB Backhoe Loader fleet has grown to number six and the general rule is that each site is allowed to use one such machine under an internal plant hire process should the project budget allow it.

"We've found what works best for us is to run yellow metal equipment such as a JCB Backhoe Loader to between 8 000 and 9 000 hours. This allows the first three-and-a-half years in which to pay it off and a further five years to meet the target hours for replacement when we send it to an auction house where the machines are snapped up by an eager market looking for well-maintained backhoe loaders," Jayson explains. "We were pleased to learn that Bell Equipment is now the official distributor for JCB equipment and subsequently bought our first two JCB 3CX Sitemaster machines through Sascha Caixeiro, our Bell Equipment Sales Representative, who we've found to be very knowledgeable and helpful."

The two JCB 3CX Sitemaster Backhoe Loaders were delivered in November 2022 and January 2023 respectively and made an immediate impact with the higher specified equipment they boast. Having forks allows for loading and unloading pallets and bulk bags and the 6-in-1 front bucket allows operators to do handy tasks like levelling and shaping embankments. An extension on the backhoe dipper allows for deeper trenches to be dug.

"A machine we've always wanted was a roller and in April 2023 we took delivery of a JCB CT260-120 Tandem Roller, which is so useful for compacting backfilled trenches and layer works behind retaining walls," Jayson adds. "We also use it on surface bed

preparation and final layers when constructing basements, retail centre-line shops, and warehouses where we've seen it comfortably compact between 400 and 500 square metres in a day, which is impressive."

Jayson mentions that to ensure longevity of their JCB equipment, all new machines are bought with a Starter Care Package, a full-service plan that runs for 48 months or 5 500 hours. During this time all servicing and repairs are done by mechanics from Bell Equipment wherever they may be working in the country, and this gives them the peace of mind knowing their yellow metal fleet will deliver sustained uptime.

This solid mechanical care translates into frugal fuel consumption with the JCB Backhoe Loaders returning average fuel burn figures of 4,5 litres an hour during medium to light work and the JCB CT 260-120 Roller, a mere 2,5 litres an hour.

"I'd like to tell you about another JCB machine we had and still sorely miss," Jayson mentions smiling. "It was a 2008 model JCB 540-170 Telehandler that was so versatile with interchangeable tools and its incredibly long reach, but its most important feature was its very low maintenance costs. When we sold it eight years later, we did not lose a cent on it, and we feel that needs to be said."

"We've also been impressed with the levels of service we've received from Bell Equipment with the company's service department responding quickly and always having the correct service kits and consumables on hand. That type of service encourages brand loyalty."



**Jayson Buyskes, Managing Director of Mike Buyskes Construction (Pty) Ltd.**



# JCB Backhoe Loader is a game changer on Gert Coetzee's farm

When Gert Coetzee buys any piece of mechanised equipment for his irrigation farm in the fertile Vaalharts Valley in the Northern Cape his eye is always on the resale value of such a machine, which is why he confidently bought a market leading JCB Backhoe Loader after a good maize crop in 2022.

Gert, his wife, Marelette, and their son, Pieter, farm their land in this unique area on the north-eastern border that the Northern Cape has with the North West Province. Started in the 1930s, the Vaalharts Irrigation Scheme is the largest of its type in the Southern Hemisphere. Water from the Vaal and Harts rivers is channelled along more than 1 000km of concrete-lined canals to 1 280 farms in the area that cover more than 39 000 hectares. Each farm is identified by a block letter or a number.

"My son Pieter will be the third generation of our family to farm this land as my own parents had been here for 50 years before me," Gert Coetzee says. "We grow maize, wheat, ground nuts, soya, some cotton, and lucerne, which is all under irrigation. Our latest plantings are pecan nut trees planted in the corners surrounding our circular lands under pivots."

The Coetzee family currently has 45 hectares under pecan nut trees and plans to systematically plant another 20 hectares.

"While growing pecan nuts has really taken off in the past 30 years, with growing exports since the early 2000s, you may find it interesting that our lucerne is also exported," Gert explains. "It is in high demand in China and

especially in the Middle East where it is used as fodder for horses and camels."

Lucerne from the Vaalharts Valley is harvested between August and May the following year and is baled before being exported. Handling the large bales has always presented a challenge for the Coetzees along with digging irrigation ditches and trenches for irrigation pipes.

"We've long dreamt of how convenient it would be to have our own, new backhoe loader that could handle bales with a fork attachment or dig trenches and backfill them because hiring equipment is expensive and you can never get a machine when the need is at its most urgent," Gert continues. "We were also loathe to buy a used machine as you're never sure what hidden problems you may be buying."

"The price difference between new and used backhoe loaders is very small and to us it made sense to rather look at buying a new machine," says Pieter Coetzee.



**(From left): Pieter, Gert, and Marelette Coetzee, with Bell Equipment's Kimberley-based Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe.**

The Coetzee family farm had a good 2022 and a bumper maize crop meant they could shop for a new backhoe loader. "I was taught to always look at the resale value of any machine for when you should want to replace it, and we applied the same principle when looking at the wider backhoe loader market," Gert says. "The first name that stood out for us was that of Bell Equipment and when we learnt that this truly great South African company was now the official distributor of JCB equipment, the plan came together for us due to both Bell Equipment and JCB having such solid reputations and their equipment known for proven resale value."

Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in Kimberley, Eric van der Merwe, assisted the Coetzees with the purchase of their JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader in November 2022.

"As soon as the JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader was delivered to our farm, Pieter cheekily claimed it as 'his' machine," Gert says smiling. Pieter adds: "It's such an easy machine to operate and the controls are smooth and responsive. The fold-over forks work well for when we pick up bulk bags containing fertiliser that weigh up to two tons and crates full of pecan nuts that weigh 500kg, but to load three lucerne bales at once, we're considering getting a larger set of forks made by a third-party supplier."

"It's amazing that when you realise all you've been doing with the machine, you suddenly don't know how you had survived all those years without such a multifunctional tool," Gert says. "You'll appreciate that in the hot Northern Cape sun we like to keep our irrigation pipes buried under the soil and apart from the aforementioned loading applications, trenching and backfilling have been foremost in our uses of the JCB 3DX Plus Backhoe Loader – a true multitasking wonder!"





# B60Es provide the most cost-effective mining solution for Afrimat

When Afrimat, a leading mid-tier mining and materials company, bought out the assets of the Nkomati Anthracite mine in 2019, the company did a critical evaluation of the mine's landscape and haulage vehicle requirements. Given prevailing underfoot conditions in both dry and weather, they decided to buy the largest Articulated Dump Truck (ADT) on the market to fulfil their needs.

The Group, known for its entrepreneurial drive, supplies industrial minerals and construction materials to a range of industries across southern Africa. In addition, Afrimat supplies bulk commodities such as iron ore and anthracite to local and international markets. During the last year, Afrimat also started supplying phosphates to the agriculture sector. As of 2023, it is listed in the 'General mining' sector of the JSE Main Board, having been previously listed in the 'Construction & Materials' sector since 2006.

It is about the Group's anthracite commodity and the haulage vehicles that move it, that we chat with Adriaan Lategan, Afrimat's Physical Asset Management Lead. "Since buying the Nkomati Anthracite mine, which lies between Komatipoort and the Eswatini border in Mpumalanga, we've had several challenges to overcome," he says. "One was the flooding of our main pit in 2021 due to heavy rain, which took eight months to dry and become productive again. This prompted us to start looking at developing further pits as production areas."

Adriaan mentions that instead of asking their current mining contractor to increase his fleet size, which would have meant increased production costs, Afrimat, after careful and critical analysis of the haul distances and underfoot conditions amongst other factors, decided to rather deploy its own fleet of haulage trucks for this purpose.

"As we usually do, we researched the wider earthmoving equipment market and did some testing of various haulage vehicles at our Jenkins iron ore mine in the Northern Cape," Adriaan explains. "Here we saw first-hand how Bell B60E ADTs came out tops in terms of production and fuel consumption which convinced us that the Bell B60E ADT would be the ideal haulage vehicle for the planned expansion at the Nkomati Anthracite mine."

Afrimat placed its order for four Bell B60E ADTs in the second quarter of 2022 and the machines were delivered in January 2023. They are matched with a 120-ton excavator loading with a seven-cubic metre bucket. Creating the new pit means stripping off the topsoil which is stockpiled for use in later rehabilitation.





Then the overburden is removed and this, according to Adriaan, when dry, has a relatively low specific gravity which means that the operator in the cab of the Bell B60E ADT can sit and watch his onboard load indicator steadily climb as more material is added to the large bin with its heaped 35 cubic-metre design capacity. This optimises the loads on the average 1km haul to the waste dump.

"I should just mention that another important reason for us buying Bell ADTs stems from the long and solid business relationship we have with Bell Equipment," Adriaan explains. "We believe on the sales side to trust a single point of entry which we have with the company's Sales Representative, Sascha Caixeiro. On the maintenance and repair side, we will approach whichever Bell branch is closest to an operational site and introduce ourselves to the branch and workshop manager, so creating a relationship where everyone knows what we expect and we get to know the Bell managerial, technical and support staff, which is always a pleasant experience."

Adriaan mentions that they did the same when their Bell B60E ADTs were delivered to the Nkomati

Anthracite mine. He approached Brett Peddie, the Bell Equipment Customer Service Centre Manager at the Nelspruit branch from where the machines would be supported.

"We were impressed that Adriaan and his Afrimat colleagues took the trouble to visit us personally to clarify how they would prefer having their Bell B60E ADTs serviced," says Brett. "This gave us an opportunity to introduce our support staff to them as new customers and so establish open lines of communication."

Afrimat's new Bell B60E ADTs have been bought with extended warranties that are backed with a 12 000-hour Bell Care Package. "As we don't yet have our own mechanics on the mine, we thought it imperative to rely on Bell Equipment's technical staff to be totally in control when it came to maintenance and repair of this fleet, as small as it may seem," Adriaan says. "These four Bell B60E ADTs form such an important part of our operation that we'd like to minimise downtime due to servicing and repair when needed by using the best skilled mechanics and where better to find them than from the original supplier of the equipment."



**Adriaan Lategan, Afrimat's Physical Asset Management Lead.**



Afrimat has found good use for the full Fleetmatic® package which provides comprehensive feedback on machine performance.

"This care by skilled mechanics is already paying off because once small initial technical hitches were ironed out, the Bell B60E ADTs are achieving the budgeted 400 hours per month and doing that with very frugal fuel burn," Adriaan adds. "Currently the units are running with their full loads and returning average fuel figures of below 20 litres an hour. This has

surprised and impressed us all, although it is expected to increase a bit as the haul conditions will change due to inclines getting steeper."

"With new equipment being hard to find due to most OEMs having long lead times, using a contractor may be the more convenient option currently," Adriaan states. "However, we have found that in the long term, using one's own equipment is the more cost-effective way of mining and buying these Bell B60E ADTs is proving that point on all fronts."



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## SAFCOL's investment in three Bell 225F Loggers pays dividends

The delicate balance of investing today to save in the long term certainly holds true for the forward-thinking management of the Timbadola Sawmill. What gives this balancing act a real homegrown flavour is that the spend was directed at a proudly South African company that produces a uniquely local yellow machine product.

The South African Forestry Company SOC Limited (SAFCOL) is a state-owned company that falls under the Department of Public Enterprises. It has operations in the KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, and Limpopo provinces as well as in the Sofala and Manica provinces of neighbouring Mozambique.

At the largest sawmill in the Limpopo Province, Timbadola, situated at Levubu, which lies to the east of the town Louis Trichardt, we find Senior Sawmill Manager, Aubrey Kwamba, who holds a qualification in Wood Technology from the Saasveld Forestry College.

Aubrey tells us: "This particular sawmill was built around the 1930s and its boilers, commissioned in 1937, are amongst the oldest in the world."

The Timbadola Sawmill produces mainly structural timber with 85% of its production for the construction industry. The balance is split between an ever-decreasing furniture market and pallet manufacturing.

"Our mill processes 120 000 cubic metres of pine timber annually and employs 430 people," Aubrey explains. "We sell 50% of our production into Gauteng, 40% into the local Vembe district, and 10% across the border into Mozambique."

SAFCOL sources its timber from its own forests surrounding the Timbadola Sawmill and the company uses its own harvesting and extraction equipment to bring the timber to the roadside. From there it is transported to the mill by haulage contractors. At the mill, contractors were, until recently, used to unload the timber trucks, and sort and stack the logs in preparation for them being fed into the mill.



(From left): Log Yard Supervisor, Boyisie Shai, Production Manager, Thokozeni Khumalo, and Wet Mill Foreman, Peter Sithole.





"As any progressive business does, we analyse our overhead costs on an ongoing basis and we came to the realisation that if we could unload the timber ourselves, we'd be saving money in the long-term," Aubrey says. "To do this, we realised we'd have to buy cost-effective loading tools.

Aubrey tells a charming story of the company's oldest Bell Logger, a vintage 125A model dating back to 1970. It had clocked an estimated 50 000 hours and was later named after a retired employee with the surname Savhasa who had operated it for many years. "This answers the question as to why we've always relied on Bell Equipment for our timber-handling equipment as longevity coupled with reliability is key in our industry," Aubrey says.

"We own two Bell Wheel Loaders fitted with timber grabs that have served us admirably as well, having clocked 56 000 and 28 000 hours respectively."

The Timbadola Sawmill owns two 220A Bell Loggers bought in 2010 that are currently undergoing some tender loving care before being put into service again.

"We looked critically at rising costs in fuel, labour, utilities, and general inflation and decided in 2020 to review our inbound costs, which have the potential to affect us negatively as some timber is sourced from as far as 80km away. Going forward, handling will be insourced by deploying our own timber handling equipment, which will now save us a massive amount of money."

According to Aubrey, they researched the wider market before deciding on buying three Bell 225F Loggers. Their decision was ultimately influenced by Bell Equipment's competitive price, their positive experience with previous machines, and above all, the support they knew they could rely on from Bell Equipment's technical teams in nearby Tzaneen.

"Soon after we took delivery of the three new Bell 225F Loggers in mid-2022, Louis Fivaz, the new Branch Manager at Bell Equipment Tzaneen, paid us a visit to personally assure us of his teams' commitment to looking after our Bell-branded equipment and they have done exactly that," Aubrey says. "We're happy

to say that Bell Equipment's response times are prompt, and the availability of parts and service kits assure us that we'll continue to extract long lives from these new Bell Loggers, which certainly have made a positive impact on our production and bottom line."

The Bell 225F Loggers have been bought with standard warranties of 12 months and unlimited hours. Aubrey mentions that the machines operate in two nine-hour shifts during which they run for a total of 13 to 14 hours, which points to busy production schedules and high utilisation figures. They have been pleased with how much quieter the new Yanmar engines run and the favourable average fuel figures per hour.



# Bell Forwarder streamlines operations for Buhle Betfu

Timber forwarding is often thought of as the unglamorous link in the timber supply chain. Felling trees, extracting and cross-cutting them gets the adrenaline going as it's mostly noisy and busy. However, before the timber reaches the long-haul transport, done by either road or rail, it must be moved from the roadside to a loading depot. This must happen continuously, efficiently, and above all, safely.



Buhle Betfu is essentially a transport company but one with a difference as it's a South African empowerment success story. Buhle Betfu evolved out of the well-established Cargo Carriers. The name Buhle Betfu means "our pride" in Siswati, the language of eSwatini (formerly Swaziland) and it's this pride which has carried it forward since its founding in 1986. The company's vision statement is "We are on the move" and, judging by its past successes that have been acknowledged with several awards, the pace of its movement is steadily increasing.

"Buhle Betfu operates in two industries namely sugar and timber," says Vinesh Gayaram, the company's Operations Manager. "Sugarcane transport, with the loading outsourced, is done with a 12-vehicle fleet in the Malelane and Komatipoort areas. In timber, we operate a 24-vehicle express fleet that supplies 80% of the timber that feeds a major pulp and paper mill west of Mbombela."

It is near this giant pulp and paper mill at Ndogwana in Mpumalanga that Buhle Betfu has its base for the timber haulage operation.





"We employ around 140 full-time staff and from here we cover the areas of Camelot North and South as well as Sudwala," Vinesh adds. "We're fortunate to have a low staff turnover and most of our employees have been here for a long time, which adds to our collective skills base."

Having timber handling and transport as its core business, the timber division of Buhle Betfu has since its inception made use of Bell Loggers to sort, stack, load, and unload the timber in its various forms. "Buhle Betfu has owned 15 Bell Loggers in various model sizes over the years with all of them being A-series machines apart from one newer Bell 225F series Logger," says Maurizio Spasimante, owner of Forest Trading, a company closely associated with Buhle Betfu, and which looks after the fleet's maintenance. "The company has been innovative with new technology and using a performance-based operations system has been self-regulatory in finding ways to carry larger payloads and speed up production."

The need to speed up production to provide a constant stream of timber to the pulp and paper mill was recently highlighted by Buhle Betfu's clients. They suggested that the company look at replacing previous all-wheel drive road trucks that were loaded using Bell Loggers with two specialised timber forwarders fitted with their own cranes. This would enable them to load and unload the timber independently during the forwarding process with the added advantage that it could include infield loading when that was required.

"What our clients wanted to see was a timber forwarder fitted with its own crane that could work independently of mechanised teams using Bell Loggers to load or unload timber, and this all in the name of keeping the timber supply to the mill flowing," says Johan van Zyl, Buhle Betfu's Shift Manager and someone who is constantly at the forefront of the production process. "The thought was too that should there be timber left in a compartment, a forwarder, being versatile and high enough off the ground to get over stumps, could also load infield and so speed up the supply process."

"While we researched the market thoroughly, our decision was made all the easier by what Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in Mbombela, Daniel van Huyssteen, a qualified forester with excellent product knowledge, could tell us," Vinesh adds. "Knowing Bell Equipment and the quality of their design and build, especially in their forestry-focused products, along with their excellent technical support, gave us the confidence to order a Bell TF302E Forwarder in January 2023."

The Bell TF302E Forwarder was delivered to Buhle Betfu in May 2023 and put straight to work. The operators, former truck drivers, took a while to get used to the seat swiveling through 180 degrees while using the onboard crane to load and unload the truck with timber.

The timber that Buhle Betfu transports is all cut to 2,4 metre length which the Bell TF302E Forwarder's crane handles easily with its maximum capacity of 1,65 tons. The teleboom extension has proved to be incredibly handy when certain types of timber more suitable for pulp may be stacked at the back of piles and the longer reach of the crane enables it to comfortably load selected logs.

The Bell TF302E Forwarder has twin bunks that are ideally suited to the 2,4-metre log lengths.

"The Bell TF302E Forwarder runs an average haul distance of 5km and while most of the roads we traverse are hard and solid, some can get very slippery in our long rainy season in Mpumalanga," Johan explains. "We believe that with the Bell Forwarder's even distribution of torque across all three axles, we will enjoy true 6x6 traction in all weather and underfoot conditions, and extended tyre life. The current fuel consumption of slightly over 13 litres an hour is fair, and we believe this will improve as our operators become more accustomed to the machine."

Buhle Betfu's Bell TF302E Forwarder has been bought with a standard warranty of 12 months or 2 500 hours. Both Maurizio and Workshop Manager, Pieter Woest, are of the opinion that it's easy to deal with Bell Equipment as you can talk to someone you know in the Nelspruit branch. "Bell, as a family business, is known for reaching out and ensuring each customer's machine delivers maximum uptime as they were designed to do," Maurizio says. "Buhle Betfu is a firm believer in the advantages of preventative maintenance and will fully familiarise its maintenance crews with the Bell TF302E Forwarders even while they are still under warranty."



**(From left): Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Daniel van Huyssteen; Buhle Betfu Workshop Manager, Pieter Woest; Buhle Betfu Shift Manager, Johan van Zyl; Buhle Betfu Operations Manager, Vinesh Gayaram; Forest Trading Owner, Maurizio Spasimante, and Buhle Betfu Bell TF302E Operator, Louis Malomane.**



# Bell, Finlay and Kobelco machines are Bethlehem Sand & Klip's dream team

When Strauss Landman, owner of Bethlehem Sand & Klip was faced with two potentially big problems of how to efficiently load dolerite stone out of his quarry while keeping a close watch over an ever-increasing fuel bill, he had to act quickly.

Bethlehem Sand & Klip has been in existence since 1998 when Strauss bought out a small sand mining operation near his hometown of Bethlehem in the eastern Free State. Hailing from farming stock, Strauss had started his working life transporting agricultural produce and building sand, which led him to diversify into supplying building materials and stone aggregates.

"We now run our own quarry to the north of Bethlehem where we extract dolerite stone, crush and screen it to size, and also operate a ready-mix concrete plant in addition to two sand mines," Strauss tells us. "We supply building material and ready-mix concrete to large parts of the eastern Free State and Qwa-Qwa and, to a lesser extent, areas in Northern KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga."

Since the founding of his business, Strauss has relied on Bell Equipment for his loading and haulage equipment and still owns Bell Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) and Wheel Loaders that have stood him in good stead for many years. "When Bell Equipment became the distributors of Finlay crushing and screening equipment, we saw potential in the plant hire market and soon had Finlay J-1160 Jaw Crushers, Finlay C-1540 Cone Crushers, and Finlay 694+ Screens working in tandem on plant hire applications," Strauss adds. "We have over time reduced that fleet and the plant hire application as often the equipment would work too far away for us to properly manage and maintain it, and damages would occur."

Bethlehem Sand & Klip however retained two Finlay 694+ Screens that it uses for screening river and plaster sand, a Finlay 683 Screen on a long-term coal





processing contract in the Witbank area, and a full train of a Finlay J-1160 Jaw Crusher, C-1540 Cone Crusher and 694+ Screen at its quarry site outside Bethlehem. Here this crushing and screening train, which produces some 130 tons of aggregate an hour, is loaded using a Kobelco SK210LC-10 Excavator bought in 2019.

"These Finlay machines have really proven their worth for us and given us a solid return on our investment," Strauss explains. "We've been very pleased with the performance of the Kobelco SK210LC-10 Excavator, which is why, when faced with the prospect of having to extract the blasted dolerite rock at our quarry and maintain a steady flow of production to our crushing and screening train, we once again turned to Bell

Equipment and the company's Sales Representative, Chris Botha, whose advice we've come to trust.

"Chris assessed our needs and suggested we buy a 38-ton Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator for a two-fold application, with the main one being loading the blasted dolerite rock in the quarry and secondly, to create a stockpile at our sand mining operation from where the mined sand is fed into a Finlay 694+ Screen for processing into river and plaster sand."

Strauss is adamant that while they concede their new Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator is still new, having passed a mere 500 hours by April 2023, they've been impressed by its work rate and above all its fuel consumption.

"With both the applications of the Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator, it's our own diesel that's going into the tank as part of our overhead and we've been pleasantly surprised by how little diesel a machine of this size, boasting a bucket size of 2,1 cubic-metres, uses," he says. "When creating a stockpile of sand, it literally does the work at the rate of two 20-ton Excavators using an average of 20 to 22 litres of fuel an hour.

"A dolerite quarry is no place for a 20-ton Excavator, no matter how tough it may be and this Kobelco SK380XDL-10 machine purrs away loading ton upon ton of blasted rock into our Bell B25D, B30D, and B30E ADTs for the short haul to the crushing and screening train."

With the price of fuel increasing sharply in the last two years, pushing up the overheads of any business, mining operation, or farm that uses especially diesel, the arrival of Bethlehem Sand & Klip's Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator could not have come at a better time.

"We can honestly say this Kobelco SK380XDL-10 Excavator works at double the rate of a 20-ton Excavator while using fuel at about the same rate and that we have to put down to the machine's great design and a variety of options like reducing the break-out force, which further reduces the fuel consumption," Strauss says. "We've bought the machine with a standard warranty as we've come to rely on Bell Equipment's legendary high service levels that we believe will set the machine up for a long and productive life."



From left: Owner of Bethlehem Sand & Klip, Strauss Landman, with Jake.



# Bell Care Packages keep AMC's B40E fleet in top condition

**A positive experience with a smaller branch of a well-known original earthmoving and haulage equipment supplier convinced a leading contractor in crushing and screening to buy many more of that brand's larger Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs).**

African Mining & Crushing (AMC) was founded in 2009 by Warwick and Matthew Hughes and is headquartered in Bloemfontein, South Africa. "Our core business is drilling and blasting, crushing and screening, and loading and hauling of run-of-mine (ROM) material and aggregates," says Chrisjan Roodt, AMC's Procurement Manager. "We also design, manufacture and install infrastructure on mines and quarries."

"The bulk of the minerals we process are iron ore, manganese, coal, gold and kimberlite on the ROM side while on aggregates, we have experience with road and concrete stone, ballast and Rip-Rap."

"A while ago, we bought two older Bell B20D ADTs that we wanted to use as vehicles for training purposes in our quarry near Bloemfontein as we put a premium on the proper training of our drivers and machine operators," Chrisjan continues.

"The ADTs had done between 14 000 to 15 000 hours each and we set about rebuilding them in our own workshops as we were confident that they'd still be delivering productive hours even as training vehicles, in years to come."

Chrisjan goes on to explain that they were pleasantly surprised by the service that they received from Bell Equipment's Bloemfontein branch. Even for these older model ADTs, replacement parts were readily available and were far more reasonably priced than what they had expected to pay for original OEM parts.

"We have been involved in a crushing, screening, and materials handling role on a major opencast manganese mine in the Northern Cape for some years now. In 2022 we received more contract work from the mine to assist with overburden removal on a cut-back project which would expand their mining pit and another contract where we would remove topsoil to enlarge an existing waste dump," Chrisjan adds. "For these purposes, we realised immediately that we'd need more new haulage vehicles and approached, amongst other sales representatives, Wikus Kleynhans of Bell Equipment, for a quotation on six new Bell B40E ADTs."

"We've long considered Bell ADTs to be the market-leading ADT in Africa having been designed and built locally and with the correct number of Bell B40E ADTs available and a B-BBEE score that favoured us and us supporting local content, we placed an order for six B40E ADTs and took delivery in July 2022."

Following soon on these contracts was more work and AMC again turned to Bell Equipment for four more new Bell B40E ADTs which were delivered in December 2022.

On the site clearing topsoil for the expansion of the waste dump, the Bell ADTs are loaded using a 100-ton excavator and haul topsoil to a topsoil dump over some 2km in one direction, for 24 hours a day. At the crushing plant, other Bell B40E ADTs in the fleet haul crushed manganese, with specific gravities (SG) of between 1,8 and 2,2 due to varying loose bulk densities, over shorter distances to export stockpiles. From there the manganese is fed into a rail loadout facility.

The new Bell B40E ADTs have been returning an average fuel consumption of 14,2 litres an hour and this pleases their owners and clients alike. "We must commend the high levels of service we receive from Bernard Niemand and his team at Bell Equipment in Kuruman," Chrisjan says. "Their response times are great and attention to detail, especially on software updates, has been exceptional. We get the feeling that we're really being taken care of."

"We're acutely aware that underfoot conditions play a big part in both fuel consumption and tyre life and for this reason, and as far as we're able to, we grade some of the haul roads that we mostly use. We also know that with Bell Equipment's even distribution of torque across all three axles of a Bell ADT tyre life is improved."

AMC's 10 new Bell B40E ADTs have all been bought with Bell Care Packages to 10 000 hours during which time Bell mechanics will do all servicing, preventative maintenance, and repair. Chrisjan notes that calculated in the long run over 10 000 hours, the cost of servicing each machine on this basis is very reasonable with the added guarantee of having mechanics from the supplier doing properly supervised work and using original replacement parts and service kits.

While AMC does not have a fixed policy on machine replacement, Chrisjan mentions that the current fleet of Bell B40E ADTs will almost be a test case for the company: "We run some of our other equipment to 20 000 hours and plan to do that with the Bell B40E ADTs as well. This is a target we're confident of reaching given the solid design and build of the Bell B40E ADTs and especially with the level of extended care we're receiving under the Bell Care Package."

"We'd like to standardise on one make of ADT and we're willing to walk the long road with a supplier such as Bell Equipment and its sales representative. This process, we believe, will be good for both parties and especially for us in terms of the service we receive and buying replacement parts and service kits, which by the way we consider Bell Equipment to price very reasonably."



(From left): AMC Operations Director, Zane Murray with AMC Procurement Manager, Chrisjan Roodt, and AMC Maintenance Manager, Piet Bester.



# Bell 225F Logger sustains sawmill production for Rance Timber

**Traditionally Bell Loggers have been known as quite simple yet robust machines, which is probably why they have become the industry standard as a loading and timber handling tool. But, as robust as they are, they can also display the odd quirk as the workshop and transport manager of a leading South African timber group will attest to.**

CJ Rance (Pty) Ltd, trading as Rance Timber, is a sawmilling company manufacturing premium quality South African pine-sawn board products that has been in operation since 1910.

Rance Timber has grown from humble beginnings as a one-man business in the earliest pioneering days of the timber industry in South Africa, to a successful, modern enterprise employing 1 400 people over both the forestry and sawmilling divisions. It has been the backbone of the timber industry in the Amathole

region of the Eastern Cape and continues to play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the rural economy and its people.

Its log resource is supplied mainly from the 15 000 hectares of plantations owned and managed by its sister company, Amathole Forestry Company. These plantations are managed on a sustained yield basis according to best international and environmental practices.

The company operates two sawmills, namely Kubusi Sawmill and Sandile Sawmill, and is committed to providing industry-leading service and quality for its valued customers.

It's at the Sandile Sawmill that we chat to Devan Sternberg, Rance Timber's Workshop and Transport Manager and a man with the responsibility of looking after a vast fleet of timber and forestry-related vehicles and machines comprising utility vehicles, Bell Loggers, transport trucks, wheel loaders, and skidders.

"Rance Timber (Pty) Ltd is a timber company in the true sense of the word with its own forests and two sawmills and it therefore owns the whole value chain in producing saw timber that has a wide variety of uses and markets," Devan says. "Here at the Sandile Sawmill, we process pine logs from 13cm to 23cm in diameter and create timber products that are sold throughout the South African market.

These products include structural, industrial, and packaging timber."

Getting the timber from the forestry compartments to roadside depots, onto trucks, and then onto stockpiles at the sawmills presents its own challenges and for a very long time Rance Timber has made use of Bell Loggers in the 220A Teleboom and 225A Crankboom ranges. The company's fleet of Bell A-series Loggers numbers 30 machines.

"We run eight Bell Loggers on infield operations, another five loading transport trucks, and the balance at the two sawmills," Devan says. "Our oldest Bell Logger dates to the 1980s and was completely refurbished five years ago."





A further four machines were subsequently refurbished by Bell Equipment in East London fairly recently.

"In that way, we extract further lives from these rugged machines and can do that if the machines' frames are intact. When refurbishing them, we generally fit a new engine, new wheel motors and replace the hydraulic pump under the seat as well as re-bushing the grab.

Refurbishing or rebuilding will typically happen at around 10 000 hours with second and even third lives extending a Bell Logger's life to 30 000 hours and in some cases 40 000 hours, which constitutes a wonderful return on the initial investment."

In 2021, Rance Timber took the decision to buy a new Bell Logger specifically for use at the Sandile Sawmill where unloading of timber off trucks, sorting on the log deck, and feeding into the mill only occurs during daylight.

"We had consulted with Anthony Enslin, Bell Equipment's Sales Representative in East London, and took delivery of a new Bell 225F Logger in July 2021, the first such machine in the Bell F-series," Devan adds.

"It made an immediate difference to our production at the Sandile Sawmill as there is now a sustained feed to the mill off the log deck.

"Having had only A-series Loggers before, we were impressed with how much quieter the new F-series Logger runs with its Yanmar engine and the fuel consumption is much better."

Rance Timber's new Bell 225F Logger has been bought with a standard warranty and has by now exited the warranty period with around 2 000 hours on its hour meter. Despite this and the fact that Devan manages a fully stocked workshop and substantial parts holding, Rance Timber still insists that mechanics from Bell Equipment in East London do the major milestone servicing at the 1 000-hour marks.

"What makes our relationship with Bell Equipment special is that Denton Webber and his team in East London may be almost 100km away, but should we make that phone call, they drop everything to attend to our needs and always have," Devan says. "That level of service sells subsequent machines and breeds brand loyalty."



**Rance Timber Workshop and Transport Manager, Devan Sternberg.**

# Unitrans Mining chooses Bell Equipment as machinery supplier

**Unitrans Mining, a leading player in the mining industry, has selected Bell Equipment as one of their machinery suppliers for their latest contract. The decision was driven by the unparalleled availability and unwavering support offered by Bell Equipment, setting them apart from their competitors.**



Kobus Burger, Operations Executive: Unitrans Mining, emphasised the long-standing relationship the company has cultivated with Bell Equipment over the years. "As a group, we have always relied on Bell Equipment for many of our mining, haulage, material handling, and agricultural machinery requirements," Kobus states. "This enduring partnership has been built upon the foundation of trust and reliability that Bell Equipment consistently delivers to Unitrans."

When the time came to fulfil the requirements of their new contract for a leading South African cement manufacturer, Unitrans Mining again turned to Bell Equipment without hesitation. Their specific needs called for 30-ton Articulated Dump Trucks (ADTs) complemented by 50-ton Excavators. Bell Equipment's

machinery perfectly matched Unitrans Mining's criteria, including competitive pricing, availability, and life cycle costings.

In the past, says Kobus, it was common to pair the right loading tool with a suitable haulage vehicle when establishing a fleet of yellow equipment for an opencast mining operation. "However, today, the process has become more analytical. Various factors, such as life cycle costings, have gained significance in determining the fleet's efficiency, return on investment, and long-term viability."

The Unitrans Group specialises in supplying logistics and handling services in petrochemicals, industrial and freight solutions, mining, and bulk material



handling, tailored agricultural services, food, and consumer logistics and people transport.

Due to the nature of the mining division's work, large fleets of yellow machines are inherent to their operations. As part of its established policy, new machine fleets are procured whenever new contracts are secured. The latest contract will see the team mining limestone that will be used to manufacture cement and for this it was necessary to procure the relevant equipment.

As an opencast mining operation, the contract entails several tasks. Firstly, it involves the removal of topsoil and overburden, with the topsoil being stored for future rehabilitation of the mined areas. In addition to excavating the desired product, Unitrans Mining is also responsible for constructing access ramps into the mining pit and maintaining haul roads, with particular emphasis on dust suppression.

Kobus explains that in determining what yellow machines are needed for such a specific contract, as much information as possible is gathered from the client. "Establishing the appropriate cycle distances and frequencies associated with the shifts worked is crucial. This information allows us to determine the optimal pairing of loading tools and haulage vehicles and the quantity required to ensure a sustainable service."

Part of this process includes researching the broader equipment market to determine which suppliers have the matching loading and haulage vehicles and then look at availability, price, and the all-important life cycle costings. These include fuel, maintenance, and the proven technical support that they as clients can rely on from the equipment supplier.

For this limestone mining contract, it was not just the technical aspects that influenced Unitrans Mining's decision to opt for Bell Equipment, but also the aftersales service. Drawing from their past experiences, Unitrans Mining knew they could rely on Bell Equipment's solid support network, ensuring their machines' smooth operation and maintenance throughout the contract's duration.

#### New fleet acquisition

Unitrans Mining took delivery of a number of Bell B30E ADTs and Kobelco SK520XDL-10 Excavators in December 2022 for the limestone mining operation. The fleet was put to work almost immediately. The Bell B30E ADTs were fitted pre-delivery with automatic lubrication systems and the Kobelco Excavators with lubrication and fire suppression systems.

"We have for several years successfully, and very satisfactorily run ADTs manufactured by Bell Equipment in a variety of sizes, but we're new to the experience of owning Kobelco Excavators," continues Kobus.

"We've been impressed by this combination of Kobelco loading tool being ideally matched to the Bell Equipment haulage vehicle, and given the general length of our contracts, there is enough time within the contract to justify the capital investment and expectation of a solid return, especially with these two brands."

Unitrans Mining focuses on load and haul operations while subcontracting the drilling and blasting process when mining limestone. Collaboration with the drilling and blasting contractor ensures efficient operations, explains Kobus.

"The average haul distance for limestone is 1,2km to the run-of-mine tip in one direction and 1,8km to the waste dump. The machines clock between 250 and 300 hours in a month. Mechanical availabilities generally exceed 90%.

"The Bell B30E ADTs were purchased with standard warranties of 12 months and unlimited hours, while the Kobelco SK520XDL-10 Excavators can rely on 12 months or 2 500 hours of specialised care," concludes Kobus.





# Standardising on JCB Backhoes makes sense to Campbell Scott

**Like a Karoo sheep farmer likes to keep his breeding herd young and vibrant, so does an owner of a plant hire company in that same area prefer to keep his fleet of backhoe loaders well-maintained and in peak condition and for that, he has a few tricks up his sleeve.**

Campbell Scott grew up on his parents' farm in Underberg in the foothills of the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg. The Scott family farmed cattle and sheep and planted maize. After school, the energetic and ambitious Campbell first qualified as a diesel mechanic before setting off on a 12-year-long stint doing the rounds amongst the many sugarcane and

vegetable farmers of the lower Midlands, fixing their tractors, implements and vehicles from a mobile workshop.

"During this time as a roving mechanic I bought my first backhoe loader, albeit a well-used machine, but soon had it working well with some repair and good care," Campbell says. "In 2007 I had the opportunity to buy a small farm just to the south of Graaff-Reinet in the Karoo and used this machine to fix the roads and infrastructure on the farm."

What started as an idea in Campbell's mind soon grew to fruition as he bought more used backhoe loaders that had been repossessed by financial institutions after finding that there was a demand for a reliable plant hire service from especially the farmers in and around Graaff-Reinet.

"I found that mobile machines like backhoe loaders work best in this area because when different work sites aren't too far apart the machine can simply be driven there and onwards," he says. "I had realised though that as pressure from clients built to have reliable machines that didn't break down, I'd have to start buying new machines, and did so in 2014 when I bought the first new JCB 3CX Backhoe Loader."

Campbell tells us that this machine gave him 12 000 hours of profitable service and when he sold it late in 2022, he still got a fair price for it as it had been well-maintained.

"I'd given this a lot of thought and decided that the key elements in ensuring that machines don't break down while clients are paying hourly rates are sound general and preventative maintenance and that my operators buy into caring for the machines they operate. These elements add to the machines' longevity and a subsequent sound return on investment," he adds.

Most of Campbell's Backhoe Loader operators started their working lives doing manual labour on farms and through diligent training and skills transfer, he has seen them grow into responsible machine operators who fully appreciate the need to take care of that piece of yellow metal that feeds them.

"I started off buying the operators motor scooters so that they could get to the work sites on time, and this has grown to them now all owning their own 4x4 utility vehicles, which we help them to buy and pay off."

Campbell had standardised his Backhoe Loader fleet to run on machines made by JCB and his fleet of seven contains five JCB 3CX and two JCB 3DX machines. His business plan is simple and for this he believes he needs simple but durable equipment, which is what he has found in JCB Backhoe Loaders with good resale values.

"We do a few things differently and the first is that each operator has his own machine that comes with its own set of marked diesel drums, and the refuelling is recorded along with daily prestart check sheets. Then each machine carries a spare rear and front tyre on a rim and along with that go essential consumables such as hydraulic hoses in a bag, a grease gun, and replacement filters. We simply cannot afford downtime with our client base and therefore our operators are trained to fix minor things like replacing hydraulic hoses."





Campbell has also achieved superior uptime and longevity by bucking the trend of recommended services at 500-hour intervals and then some. Due to the dusty Karoo conditions and harsh terrain where his equipment is often deployed, he services his JCB Backhoe Loaders on 250 hours and then does a double flush of the engine oil and drivetrain to ensure that impurities are properly flushed out of the engine and drivetrain.

His JCB Backhoe Loaders see a wide variety of uses on farms where they are used to build and repair roads, and drainage ditches, do excavations for culverts, repair dams, and dig irrigation trenches. Local schools hire the machines to level platforms for sports fields and planned facilities, and local construction companies have requested hydraulic hammers to be fitted on the backhoe boom for demolition duties.

"I can honestly say that JCB Backhoe Loaders are durable machines. Proof of this is the one used machine we still operate, a JCB 3CX 4x2 machine we bought from a construction company in Johannesburg, which despite its 18 000 hours of

service, I'm confident enough to send anywhere in the country," he says smiling. "As mentioned before, our machines bear the brunt of hot, dry and dusty conditions with hard rock that tests buckets, pins, and bushes, and our JCB Backhoe Loaders come through just fine as our operators have the experience of knowing not to punish the machines.

"I'd like to emphasise one last important point about why we get such good life and service from our JCB Backhoe Loaders, and that is that we only use genuine JCB branded replacement parts. Years ago, we tried the shortcuts and so-called bargains that pirate parts and building of new pins and bushes offered, but that just does not work. Buying genuine parts is the way to go."

Since Bell Equipment became the official distributors of JCB equipment in South Africa, Campbell Scott has enjoyed the service his company has received from the Bell Equipment branch in Port Elizabeth and at the time of our visit, was speaking to Sales Representative, Tom Swartz, about buying another new JCB 3DX Backhoe Loader.



**Tom Swartz, Bell Sales Representative (left) with Campbell Scott, Owner of Campbell Scott Machine Hire.**

# JCB Rollers and Backhoes impress ALS Equipment Hire

**In Potchefstroom, the historic town in the North West Province founded by the Voortrekkers and known for its university, there are many businesses offering plant hire. One such company stands out from the others as it is known to be a solutions-driven company because of the experience its owners have in mining, bulk earthworks, road construction and a host of other disciplines.**



That company is aptly named ALS Equipment Hire and is a sister company of the larger ALS Plant Hire that specialises in contract mining of a variety of commodities such as gold, platinum, chrome and especially coal. ALS Equipment Hire is in the capable hands of Johan Janse van Rensburg, the Managing Director, and Malan le Roux, the Group Operations Manager.

"We don't believe we're boasting when we confidently say that here in our area, we're a solutions-driven plant hire company," Johan Janse van Rensburg says. "A farmer may call us and tell us about a problem with a dam silting, up as an example, and we, with our broader experience, can offer a viable solution to that problem.

"Most plant hire companies have Backhoe Loaders of one make or the other but very few have the experience to effectively use that and other equipment that will provide a lasting solution to a problem a client may have."

ALS Equipment Hire has a policy to replace equipment at approximately 7 000 hours. Some older machines are at times moved to the group's award-winning farming operations where production demands aren't that critical while others are traded in on new models. In September 2022, two backhoe loaders and two rollers that had reached these respective limits were sold out of hand with full service histories.

When deciding on replacement backhoe loaders and rollers, ALS Equipment Hire researched the market thoroughly but, in the end, relied on the experience of Bell Equipment Sales Representative, Kobus van Niekerk, with whom they have built a solid business relationship stretching over many years.

"Kobus, who with his extensive product knowledge we've come to trust, told us all about Bell Equipment now being the South African distributor for the market leading JCB Backhoe Loader and Roller ranges. Although we've never owned any equipment from the JCB stable, we were happy to buy some machines as



they came from a reputable manufacturer, which was further backed by Bell Equipment, with whom we've enjoyed a long business relationship," Johan adds. "The machine models in question were two JCB 3CX Backhoe Loaders and two JCB 116D Rollers, one with a smooth drum and the other a pad-foot Roller."

Since the four machines arrived in November 2022, they have apparently seldom seen the inside of ALS Equipment Hire's yard, such is their demand. The two JCB 3CX Backhoe Loaders have been used on civil construction sites where their uses are never-ending from stockpiling building material, digging trenches for services that can be quickly backfilled, loading building rubble onto tipper trucks and various other housekeeping functions.

with vibratory capacity, such as the JCB 116D Rollers, are thought to be hard to find in the plant hire industry, so with the purchase of the two JCB machines with different drums ALS Equipment Hire believes they have the edge in their operational area.

Johan again brings up the important point of ALS Equipment Hire being a solutions-driven plant hire company when he says the following: "About 18 months ago we landed a contract to manage the main solid waste dump site for the local JB Marks Municipality and after careful consideration we knew exactly what equipment we'd need to effectively manage this site, where up to 180 truckloads of waste are dumped every day."

ALS Equipment Hire deployed two older Bell B30D Articulated Dump Trucks with large volume coal bins that could haul the big loads of household and light industrial waste that was brought to the site. Another fabricated wheeled loader from a mining site does the grunt work of building berms to contain the layers of waste but the real star of the show is the newest addition to that working fleet, the JCB 116D Pad-foot Roller. With its almost 16-tons of operational weight, the Roller compacts the layers of waste quickly and effectively after which the layers are covered with soil.

"Our thinking has been that using this fleet on the solid waste site is effective and should we finish the contract and move on to other sites, we'd be able to use this same equipment in civil construction, road building, and bulk earthworks as well, so making full use of its versatility," Johan says.

"But proving our effective use of the equipment comes by virtue of the fact that a recent audit of our performance showed that in 18 months our compliance had risen from 17% at the start of the contract to 87% as we stand now, and we're pretty proud of that!"

Johan makes a firm point that it was his company's long business relationship with Bell Equipment, stretching over 30 years, and the mutual trust that exists between the companies, that gave them the confidence to buy a brand of equipment that they may not have owned before.

"We're aware now that JCB is an innovative company that has kept pace with new technology that has been incorporated into its equipment, especially in the 116D Rollers, and knowing that we can rely on Bell Equipment for technical backup wherever we work in the country, makes it all worthwhile."



**Johan Janse van Rensburg, the Managing Director of ALS Equipment Hire (left), with Malan le Roux, the Group Operations Manager.**





# ORV upgrades its Loadall Telehandler and joins the Bell family

**A fourth generation of passionate Karoo livestock farmers is doing more than making hay while the sun shines, turning high-quality crops grown along a major river into nutritional animal feeds, and using a world-class machine to unload raw products and load ready feeds for wide distribution.**

Prieska in the Northern Cape is situated on the banks of the Orange River, South Africa's biggest and longest river that gives life to this arid province. Along its banks, farmers grow wheat, maize, lucerne, and grapes. Three generations back, during the days of controlled agricultural markets, the Botha family needed lucerne for their animals in the Karoo.

But as the adage goes, nothing succeeds like success, and soon the feed that the Botha's produced for themselves under the name Oranjerivervoere (ORV) was sold to other livestock farmers in the area with the company's products now spread across the whole of South Africa and into Namibia.

"Ours is a real family business with my dad, Johan, still keeping an overall eye while I look after the production plant. My brother Jan-Philip manages the

agriculture and our sister Jacolize, an accountant, sees to the finances and administration," Johan Botha Jnr tells us. "As we are livestock farmers ourselves and know what feed keeps our animals in peak condition, our products are constantly evolving, and we rely on animal nutritionists to develop feeds that will benefit the needs of each livestock farmer and have each animal develop to its full genetic potential."

The Botha family has erected an impressive plant to produce the feeds on the outskirts of Prieska. The plant runs around the clock for five days of the week as a constant movement of truck and trailer traffic brings in raw materials and takes ready products away for distribution. Central to this activity is one yellow machine that is constantly on the move, unloading trucks, feeding raw material into the plant, and again loading trucks.

"We've used a JCB 531-70 Loadall for the past three years to do all the material handling and loading in the plant and decided it was time to replace it with a newer model," Johan Jnr says. "Our policy is to limit such a machine to three years of constant usage and that machine had exceeded that time. Such was the quality of its design and build, we felt it natural to replace it with a similar machine, which is ideally suited to our purposes."

Johan mentions that in a 24-hour cycle, the JCB 531-70 Loadall would typically be used for 10 hours. This would involve unloading big bales of lucerne and bulk bags of wheat, maize stover, and urea with the bags weighing up to 1,2 tons. Big bales of lucerne stacked seven high would be fetched from an exterior shed to feed into the plant.

"We've found that one of the really big advantages of the JCB 531-70 Loadall is its tight turning circle enabled by the three-mode steering that allows the machine to place bulk bags into tight spaces. The crab motion of the machine is a definite advantage and stacking big loads up to seven metres in height is a bonus while not forgetting its interchangeable tools like quickly swapping out the bucket for a set of forks."

Other standout features for the JCB 531-70 Loadall are the single-lever control, standard 4x4 configuration for superior traction, heavy-duty axle tips that help to absorb the enormous stresses generated during continuous movement of heavy materials, and daily checks and lubrication operations that can be done at ground level.

"The wheat and maize stover, along with the lucerne that we use for the feeds, creates a very fine fibre-based dust and were it not for the reversible fan on the JCB 531-70 Loadall that clears the radiator, we'd be in real trouble here, especially during our hot summers," Johan Jnr says. "That is why we're strict on the preventative maintenance we do ourselves while leaving the major servicing to mechanics from Bell Equipment working out of the Kimberley branch of the company."

"While mentioning the latter, we're very happy to now be dealing with Bell Equipment as the official distributor for JCB equipment. We can say that dealing with Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe, when purchasing the new machine, and Shaun Malan and his maintenance teams, has been a positive experience and we look forward to continuing this business relationship."



(From left): Johan Botha Snr, Bell Sales Representative, Eric van der Merwe, and Johan Botha Jnr.





# Bell and OVL partnership builds strong foundations

The Govan Mbeki Local Municipality has praised Bell Equipment Sales South Africa Ltd (BESSA) and the Overlooked Group (OVL) for collaborating to build four houses for indigent families in the Municipality's eMzinoni area, thereby reducing the housing backlog.

BESSA, the South African dealer for Bell Equipment's mining and construction equipment, contributed over R1 million during 2022 towards the project. This complemented BESSA's commitment to socio-economic advancement, given its customer base, which includes mining houses, emerging contractors, and various government spheres. OVL, a 100% black-owned company renowned for its expertise in housing projects, facilitated and provided project management expertise.

The official handover of the houses took place in November 2023 when Councillor Thandi Mtsweni, a Member of the Municipality's Mayoral Committee for Planning and Development, thanked OVL and BESSA for their commitment to socio-economic development. Tiaan Swanepoel of OVL highlighted the holistic community approach, engaging local contractors, subcontractors, labourers, and suppliers, to amplify the project's impact on the ground.

Gary Bell, Chairman of Bell Equipment Limited, emphasised the company's commitment to South Africa. With a team of 4 000 employees, Bell is deeply rooted in local production, fostering a network of about 1 250 local suppliers, and generating approximately 30 000 jobs through the multiplier effect of their supply chain.

Importantly, this partnership extends beyond housing, highlighting Bell Equipment and OVL's role in nation-building and socio-economic empowerment. Together they embody the spirit of unity and progress.

"Bell Equipment appreciates the opportunity to work together with the Overlooked Group and the Govan Mbeki Local Municipality to create change for the betterment of people in South Africa. This type of project fits in well with what we do around the country. We work in hundreds of different regions and have many such projects," said Mr Bell.



The happy moment when the ribbon at the front gate to Gogo Nana Aslina Kuhlase Mthimunye's own house was cut.

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## Introducing new Bell Equipment Group CEO Ashley Bell

*Bell Equipment Limited appointed Ashley Jon Bell (41), grandson of the company's founder Irvine Bell, as the new Group Chief Executive Officer (CEO) effective from 1 January 2024.*

This follows the resignation in July last year of Group CEO, Leon Goosen, who left the company on 31 December 2023 after 16 years of service, five and a half spent as Group CEO.

Ashley is well acquainted with the company having served as a non-executive director on the Board since March 2015 and has provided valuable input as a member of the Board's Risk and Sustainability and Social, Ethics, and Transformation committees.

A qualified commercial helicopter pilot, Ashley holds a degree in business management and has previously worked for Bell Equipment after graduating in 2007 assisting with product marketing management of the Bell Articulated Dump Truck (ADT) and Backhoe Loader ranges. Since then, he has jointly established and managed several successful businesses in various industries.

He also co-founded Matriarch Equipment with his brother, Justin Bell in 2009. The company focused on developing innovative equipment for a wide spectrum of industries and enjoyed notable success in agriculture and forestry due to its 'customer-centric' approach and quick turnaround of niche solutions. Bell Equipment acquired Matriarch in 2019 as part of its strategy to revitalise its presence in the agriculture and forestry industries and its products now fall under the Bell brand.

Gary Bell, Non-Executive Chairman of Bell Equipment, congratulated Ashley on his appointment. "Ashley joins a sizeable team representing the third generation of the Bell family actively engaged in the business and it's heartening to see the next generation stepping up to play an integral role in the future of the company. Having worked closely with Ashley for several years he has all the personality traits and credentials we need, is well aligned with the Board's strategy, and is a good fit to lead our experienced management team. I have every confidence that he will build on our family legacy with dedication and a passion for the business. On behalf of the rest of the Board, we congratulate Ashley on his appointment and look forward to working with him in his new role and contributing significantly to our continued success and growth."



**Bell Group CEO, Ashley Bell.**

Ashley said: "I am fortunate to have grown up in an environment where Bell Equipment has been a central theme, and I am both honoured and excited to step up as Group CEO. I look forward to working with the entire Bell team, supported by our customers and suppliers, to ensure we execute our group strategy and make a positive impact for all stakeholders. I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Board for the trust and confidence they have shown in me taking on this role."

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# Bell acknowledges excellence in sales

Bell Equipment Sales South Africa (BESSA), including Bell Zimbabwe and Bell Zambia, held its annual sales conference and 2022 awards ceremony in the KwaZulu-Natal Drakensberg at the end of 2023 where the Central region was crowned Region of the Year.

The prestigious awards for Salesperson of the Year (invoiced sales) and Salesperson of the Year (unit sales) were presented to Sascha Caixeiro and André Jordaan respectively. Sales awards were also presented in a variety of other categories, which included sales of equipment manufactured originally by Bell Equipment and that of the company's product partners in South Africa, namely JCB, Kobelco, and Finlay.

Outgoing Bell Chief Executive, Leon Goosen, and BESSA Managing Director, John Fleetwood, expressed the company's appreciation to the sales team for their efforts and encouraged them to take confidence in the strong momentum Bell has created in the market through market-leading support and premium products, which are backed by a dynamic team.



The 2022 winners in alphabetical order are: André Jordaan (JCB Backhoe unit sales, JCB overall unit sales, JCB Finance award, Bell Unit Sales), Anthony Enslin (JCB Excavator unit sales), Chris Botha (Bell Invoiced sales runner-up), Ebrahim Astree (JCB compaction unit sales), Eric van der Merwe (Finlay unit sales, Finlay invoiced sales and joint winner of Top JCB Telehandler unit sales), Fiona Johnson (joint winner of JCB Wheel Loader unit sales), Haig Thompson (Kobelco unit sales), Johnny Smit (Bell most improved salesperson), Keith Milne (Bell Forestry & Agriculture unit sales), Sascha Caixeiro (Kobelco invoiced sales, Bell Mining & Construction unit sales, Bell invoiced sales), Thandwefika Mateyise (joint winner of JCB Wheel Loader unit sales, Bell public sector unit sales), and Tom Swartz (joint winner of JCB Telehandler unit sales).

Below: The Central Region, celebrating their 2022 Region Of The Year Award.





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