

OPEN ROAD

AUTUMN 2014



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Transpower and TRT – The power of collaboration

Finding a solution to a complex problem isn't always easy, but when this group of companies collaborated the result was outstanding. **4**



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OPEN ROAD - AUTUMN 2014

From the GM



Hello and a very warm welcome to Open Road's first 2014 issue, and the second since our new editorial team came on board.

We received many positive comments about the previous issue. And we thank you for them. Open Road will continue to do what you want - profile the people, the companies and even the odd dog or two (see Crazy Dave in our last issue) who make our industry so diverse, so interesting and - let's say it - one of the best to work in.

And, on that subject, if you would like your company featured in Open Road, or maybe you just have a story you would like to share, you are welcome to drop me a line kateb@tenz.co.nz and I'll have our team get in touch with you.

Looking ahead in 2014 we as an industry have good reasons to be optimistic. In the south the Christchurch rebuild is contributing to unprecedented growth, North Island cities are thriving and, as we found in our recent sojourn through the provinces, as featured in this issue, rural New Zealand is prospering.

And so is our industry. 2013 Trailer builds are up 19 percent on 2012 and the best year since 2007. Truck registrations are following suit - 2013 up by 36 percent over 2012.

On the political front, Government initiatives such as the new road user charges and 50MAX are being given the thumbs-up, at least for the most part.

As for us? Well, we at Transport Efficiency will continue to focus on providing quality product sales and service - and on industry development, including a continuation of our popular Service Provider workshops and training courses.

It's going to be a busy year.

I am delighted to mention in closing the success of two of the companies featured in this issue. Both have shown confidence and commitment to our industry and its future. Both have made major expansions in the last few months.

Our South Island distributor, Christchurch based CTS, has opened a new branch in Dunedin, ensuring they optimise their service into Southland but also demonstrate the company's long-term commitment to the region.

W R Twigg in Wellington moved to new premises in Wellington, in effect almost doubling the size of their retail floor space.

Congratulations to James and Michael (CTS) and Glenn and Dallis (W R Twigg) and their respective teams.

KATE BUCKNELL

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THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

Identify a problem and find a solution. It is never that easy in practice. But put in some painstaking work and develop a New Zealand collaborative partnership and it can work. We visit and talk to some key players in such a partnership to find out how it all came together.

Words by Mike Isle

Transpower's Andrew Renton makes contact by phone just as we are about to arrive at Tidd Ross Todd's head office in Hamilton. He is responding to our request for information about a new mobile substation that is making big news in transport and electricity circles.

Everybody says that it is Andrew's 'baby', and we should be talking to him first. Everybody, that is, except Andrew. Even in the briefest of chats before we meet with TRT, the builder of the two trailers required to transport the substation, Andrew, who is Transpower's chief

engineer on the project, is quick to point out that this is truly a collaborative project.

It couldn't have succeeded, he says, without the input and technical skills of, among others, the trailer-builder we are about to meet—Tidd Ross Todd, a company that prides itself on delivering the undeliverable.

Tidd Ross Todd is a staple of the New Zealand trailer building industry. The Hamilton-based company has a long and laudable history in the industry, particularly for one of its specialisations—low-loaders. They built their first low-

loader in 1967 and have built countless since.

Bruce and Robert Carden, who run the company today, are sons of one of the founders, Dave Carden.

We are to meet Bruce along with head designer Bevan Olson who ran shotgun on the design of the substation trailer and TRT's trailer sales engineer Glen Harnett who handled client liaison on the mobile substation project

But first, what are we talking about? What is 'the baby'?



The fixed-width quad for the switch gear and control room (MS2) in front; the transformer is on the rear unit (MS1)

TRANSPOWER AND TRT • NZ

The baby is the largest mobile substation built in New Zealand, and possibly the largest in Australasia. It is not the first (mobile substations have been around since the early 1900s) but there has never been one on this scale, nor with this degree of mobility.

It can be transported on the TRT-built trailers to any one of Transpower's 14 single-unit grid-sites, and bypass the permanent substation for as long as required to safely complete scheduled maintenance. What may have taken up to ten hours of outages per year per community can be reduced to as little as two hours, the time to set up and transfer the power flow to and through the mobile substation, and in some cases eliminated altogether.

The savings in cost to communities together with the minimising of disruption were Transpower's driving motivations for the project and for the hunt by their senior principal engineer Andrew Renton for a workable solution.

In the mobile substation he found it. And also found a great example of collaboration.

Transpower was the end-point customer; Mitton Electronet provided the lead design expertise, Beca New Zealand carried out the protection design, Electronet Transmission installed and tested the equipment and of course TRT designed and built the trailers.

The substation comprises two trailer units. The transformer is on one trailer, a four rows of eight fixed width for the cable roll, and the switchgear and control room are on the second—a fixed width quad. Both have rear steering axles. Combined weight of the units is 113 tonnes. Specialised or modified tractor units are not required.

Both trailers are fully road compliant and require no dispensation. They can be transported easily to any of the 14 Transpower sites in New Zealand and that includes being transported on the Cook Strait ferries.

Those were stipulations of Andrew Renton and his Auckland-based project manager Graeme Winthrop. The BPW running gear is a stipulation of TRT.

Throughout the design and build process, all parties kept in close contact. They had to—each party was providing very specialist skills, not interchangeable. Graeme Winthrop instigated and managed weekly conference calls and the many, many other meetings, as the parties grappled with challenges of a ground-up design whose benefits to the communities are self-evident, but in whose execution became trial without the latitude for error.

Late last year the mobile substation completed successfully the first of its scheduled maintenance missions. There were no problems and the unit is moving through a heavy maintenance schedule with capacity, if required, to handle emergency situations.



Fully set-up within an hour of arrival on site.



From TRT's point of view it has been an immensely satisfying exercise. They have dealt with a 'great' client Transpower and collaborated with some highly specialised companies. From that TRT learnt or developed new applications and innovations they intend to use on other low-loaders—just what they are, is a closely guarded secret.

There is also now the capacity and technical skills for TRT to build further mobile substation trailers and it is no secret that the company is looking for such work in Australia.

But perhaps the last word should go to the man who was instrumental in its start, Andrew Renton:

"We started with the precept of: 'is there another way of doing this better? What are the problems? What are the possible solutions?' There were obviously answers out there, but it became a matter of getting around a table and finding them. Which is what we did, and which is where this succeeded."

COMMITMENT TO CORE VALUES PAYS OFF



77 square metres of floor space and 10,000 permanent product-lines

We meet a South Island company that promotes having an absolute commitment to customer service...and has the evidence to back it up.

Words by Mike Isle

You probably remember the old story of the guy who liked Remington Shavers so much he went out and bought the company. It was a radical if somewhat risky idea. But something akin to that happened some years ago in Canterbury.

Canterbury Transport Engineers was a trailer building company, and by all accounts a very good one.

Their problem, though, and it was a constant one, was sourcing quality parts. Their solution? Be the source. Why not invest in creating a spares company that kept a comprehensive and constantly evolving

inventory of quality transport spares, and have it available for immediate delivery?

The move proved to be a wise one as the parts side of the business steadily grew. So much so that the trailer building side of the company was eventually phased out and in 1987 Canterbury Transport Engineers became Canterbury Transport Spares—now Commercial Transport Spares.

The men who made that strategic move, Eric Britt and the late Peter Swinburn, are no longer with the company. Peter's sons, James and Michael Swinburn, continue the business and maintain the three key attributes Eric and Peter forged for the

company—inventory, service, and delivery. We spoke to James and Michael about the risk factor. It seems a hellishly risky business to invest in an inventory of upwards of 10,000 permanent stock-lines. But, as Michael explains, that risk is mitigated substantially by a key factor—market knowledge. Both Swinburn offspring are relatively young but they have been in the business since they were boys working for their father whenever they could. And today they are surrounded with experienced staff—staff who know the transport business well; some have been in the business for 30 years or more.

“COMMITTING TO
THE CUSTOMER IS
CRUCIAL TO
GOOD BUSINESS”



Personal service, a key factor in CTS success. Ed Foster is in the centre of the photo.



Combine that market and institutional knowledge with product knowledge and it doesn't seem such a risky endeavour after all.

In fact, much of our interview with 'the boys' is spent talking about CTS staff and their relationships with customers. There is clearly a company culture of staff commitment—commitment to the company and to the customers.

Committing to the customer is crucial to good business, says James. He sees it as a key point of CTS difference.

Evidence of that commitment came late last year with the opening of the company's new Dunedin office and warehouse.

Michael says the opening recognises the need to have a local presence not only to optimise the service delivery but also to demonstrate the company's long-term commitment to the region.

Not that there appears to be anything intrinsically wrong with the previous service

from the company. The Christchurch office could take a call from an Otago customer up to 5:30 in an afternoon and still have the order on the road that night.

But Dunedin's 700 square metres of floor space, four staff (one of whom, Ed Foster, offers 20 years of experience with the company) and rep on the road are all steps up to a new level of service for the deep south.

It also promoted the name change from Canterbury Transport Spares to Commercial Transport Spares to better reflect its fast-expanding service to the region.

The southern market is responding positively. Business is brisk and while many of the branch's customers are existing customers who previously dealt with Christchurch, that customer base is now augmented daily by new customers.

Thirty one years ago Peter and Eric made a

move—changing the company from a trailer builder to a transport spares company.

Last year Peter's sons made another—opening a new branch and stocking it with the company's full product inventory.

Both moves were costly and potentially risky. But there were also other common factors. The decisions made by Peter and Eric, James and Michael were based on an explicit understanding of their industry and they acted accordingly.

In Peter and Eric's case it was the need to have a spares company that could supply just about everything the industry wanted immediately—ex-stock. So they created Canterbury Transport Spares.

In James and Michael's case, it was to take that same idea to Dunedin. So they created Commercial Transport Spares.

Fortunately for all, not least the company's customers, it paid off. 📞

OUTSIDE THE CARROT PATCH

The wholly Australian owned company, Rocky Lamattina & Sons Pty Ltd, produces arguably the tastiest crop of carrots in the country. The well-managed family business has emerged as an icon in the fresh produce industry, but they've also had to 'think outside the carrot patch' in order to process up to 600 tonnes a week, all year round, and become the most consistent carrot producers on the continent.

Words and photographs by Mark Pearce

Renowned for its Mediterranean climate of dry summers and mild winters, Mildura is a region of natural beauty and rich soils, growing most of Australia's almonds, pistachios, olives and carrots. It's no surprise then why a family with Italian heritage was attracted to the Murray Sunraysia farmlands of Wemen (75 km south-east of Mildura) to pioneer what is today the most consistent production and packing plant of Australia's tastiest carrots. "My father, Rocky, came to Australia from Italy in 1952," says Company Director Angelo Lamattina. "He farmed about ten lines of vegetables with his father and two brothers for many years in Melbourne. They grew their business to a certain stage but as I was getting a bit older Dad had the idea to go out on his own with his sons. So he sold his share of the business to his

brothers in Melbourne and we moved to Wemen in 1991."

At that time when land prices were reasonable and water was plentiful, the three brothers, Angelo (eldest), Phillip and John, started to build the business, helping their father sow, harvest, wash and pack vegetables with the main aim of getting the optimum amount of growth from the land.

"Originally we bought a 200 hectare property and built a packing facility. The first year we grew 25 hectares of carrots and a few potatoes and broccoli. Slowly we continued to grow more and as time went on we needed extra land, so we bought another 200 hectares," recalls Angelo.

The business continued to expand, eventually purchasing 6,000 hectares; however, the all too common farming



“YOU JUST NEED TO LOOK AT HOW YOU’RE DOING THINGS AND WE ALWAYS ASPIRE TO MAKE EVERYTHING SMARTER.”

story of ‘struggling financial yields’ that the Lamattina family experienced prompted the company to start specialising in carrots.

In the meantime, the drought hit hard between 2000 and 2010, which knocked around every farmer in the Mildura region. Water prices for irrigation sky-rocketed and the quality of harvests during the forthcoming summer periods were poor to say the least. However, the daunting drought opened the door for Angelo and his brothers to think laterally, leading the company to a discovery of effective sustainability.

“With the drought at the time, we decided to buy another 6,000 acre property down in Kaniva (350 km south-west of Wemen) to grow carrots in a cooler climate during the summer. So today we harvest the Kaniva crop from February through to June, and we harvest the Wemen carrots from July through to January. Since we’ve been doing that, we can now grow good quality carrots all year round,” explains Angelo.

In order to cultivate quality carrots as well as specialise in a certain size of carrot, Rocky Lamattina & Sons carries out numerous control measures to ensure superior taste. But really, it’s the years of experience in

farming, machine technologies, innovation and imagination that has prepared them to be the best and most consistent grower.

“The thing is... you can’t cut corners, and that goes for the entire running of the business. You need to be as innovative as possible. You just need to look at how you’re doing things and we always aspire to make everything smarter because that’s how we know we can become more efficient and better,” says Angelo.

Rocky Lamattina & Sons supplies to the central markets in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, using a fleet of 14 Kenworth prime



The Lamattina Top Fuel Dragster Photo supplied



The boys in the patch. From left to right: John, Rocky, Angelo and Phillip Lamattina. Photo supplied.

movers and 17 B-double sets to move 600 tonnes a week. Focusing all their energies on production excellence, the company shifts an average of 25 B-double loads a week, travelling nearly 4.5 million kilometres a year across the eastern seaboard. Equipment efficiency on their trailers has played a major factor in keeping the fleet trouble free, as Angelo explains:

“We were running a different brand before we went to BPW and every time we came into the workshop and needed to buy a part, the axle was different, the suspension was different, even the spring was different. We were going round the merry-go-round so many times and we got stuck, and eventually we got burnt. We thought we were saving a dollar but we learnt our lesson.

“I said to myself, ‘Hang on a minute, we can’t keep doing this. If we put a product on a trailer or if we want to sell that trailer and we can’t get axles or suspensions for it, all of a sudden we’re devaluing ourselves.’ So we made a decision ten years ago to go BPW for not only piece of mind, but because we were able to specify what we wanted from the hanger to the rotor, the disc brakes, right through to the end.”

The day-to-day running of their complex carrot operation includes employing 90 staff who play an important role in making sure customers get their carrots delivered on time. Phillip and John manage the farmland and growing side of the business while Angelo oversees the sales and transport logistics, as well as the processing and washing of the carrots. An extended additional department of the business that Angelo manages is their juicing factory located in Mildura.

“We export the juice mainly to the overseas Asian markets. It’s no easy mission but hard work and performing with smart people is only part of our story. The biggest thing in our company is trust. My job allows me to make sure we are efficient in every

department, be it sales or growing, or cleaning or juicing. I communicate every day with every department to make sure we’re all on the same page, but that also means not interfering too much with the people who know their job. My main task is about delegation, making sure our machine technology is running correctly, and ultimately it’s about trust in the people,” says Angelo.

Talking of machine technology and trust, you need an abundance of trust if you’re also running your own Top Fuel racing team; the pinnacle sport of drag racing.

Brother Phillip Lamattina drives their Top Fuel dragster (pictured) and last year younger brother John also began racing during a couple of meets around the country. Philip’s son, Rocky, who races a junior dragster, is the next generation likely to experience the quickest accelerating and fastest speeds over a quarter mile.

“The racing is a good little thing for us where we can get away from carrots for a couple of days and see Australia every now and then. It helps a little bit with marketing the company as well, because it’s interesting how many people you meet in different industries through the sport. There’re so many people in business that race, and they’ve all become a big extended family for us,” declares Angelo.

Italian heritage and strong Lamattina family values have been ingrained in the DNA of the company from day one. As Angelo clearly articulates, there’s one central interest at heart above all else: there’s nothing more important for people than good food.

“We are very passionate about what we do and we pride ourselves on the best tasting carrots in Australia. That passion gives everyone in our business a sense of pride and at the end of the day if you’re not proud about what you’re doing you might as well give it away.”



We journey to Dannevirke with some trepidation, given it has just had an earthquake, but are rewarded by meeting a man who came up with a simple solution to a complex problem.

Going the extra metres. Simon's novel way of capturing an extra 2.5 metres to carry a second timber bay—a split tipper with moveable headboards.

“SIMON FOUND HIS ANSWER WITH THE ADOPTION AND ADAPTION OF A TECHNIQUE WIDELY EMPLOYED IN LOGGING TRANSPORT...”

“Some logging operators move their bolsters forward with a winch. So that became my solution—winch the sides forward and lock them in.”

It may seem a simple solution, and in essence the thought process that led to it is simple: identify the problem and come up with a solution. But it took a lot of thought to get it to that point and a collaborative effort by Simon and Jackson Enterprises to deliver it.

And there perhaps lies the core to Buckeridge success. Simon and his fiancé and admin manager Danielle Erskine, have a fairly simple philosophy on how to run a business.

And that is - get the staples right.

Those staples are reliability, keeping the fleet immaculate, keeping good staff, keeping customers through outstanding service, and always—always—be on the hunt for a better way of doing things.

Simple, really. 

SIMON SAYS... KEEP

Words by Mike Isle

It's late in the day in Dannevirke.

The bustling rural centre, close to the epicentre of a 6.2 earthquake a few days earlier, is winding down. The town is relieved to get through the day with no aftershocks and looking forward to a cold beer at the end of a typically beautiful Dannevirke day. But Simon Buckeridge is still at it. He has driven a three hundred kilometre round-trip that afternoon filling in for a driver and has only just returned to his office.

He should be ready to relax.

But there are signs he can't. Or won't. Not yet. There are no trucks in the yard. The fleet is still on the road. Our interview is punctuated by the phone and Simon, alone in his office, answers the calls and deals with the issues.

He is keeping a hectic pace. And it seems that holds true for his whole company.

Buckeridge Transport began in 1976, started by Simon's late father Ian and mother Judith. The core work was fertiliser spreading and

general cartage in and around the Wairarapa district.

In 1985 that business moved into logging and timber cartage, developing various relationships within the sawmilling industry.

In 1993 wood residue and fertiliser cartage were added to the operation and by 1997 the logging cartage side of the business was sold and the company focussed on the wood residue and timber and fertiliser cartage.

Simon bought the business in 2005. It now has seven truck and trailer units.

He operates right across the North Island, and his immaculately kept rigs are seen everywhere units are seen everywhere—on the day before our interview we saw no fewer than four in Napier alone.

His bulk tipper units are manufactured by Transfleet, and bifolds by Jackson Enterprises and specced to meet Simon's design innovations.

Foremost among those innovations is one that solved a woody problem—increasing

kiln-dried timber payloads while complying with the new 50 tonne maximum weight.

By the relatively simple expedient of moving the headboard forward, Simon's 11.5 metre, 5-axle trailer can carry two bays of five-metre timber. With the new 50 tonne max weight it was an innovative way of fitting extra timber without the major increase in the tare weight. But was it that simple? Arriving at that idea, yes. Making it work was a little more complex. Simon amplifies:

“With a bifold you can really only have a trailer that is nine metres long. Any longer and the sides can't fold. We wanted 11.5 metres so the idea we came up with was the concept of a split-tipper. The nine metre standard length looked after itself. But Simon was left with the additional 2.5 metres sides to move.”

That became the challenge and the innovation.

Simon found his answer with the adoption and adaption of a technique widely employed in logging transport:

IT SIMPLE.

1. The specification of BPW running gear on the trailer is a first for Simon. It won't be the last. He has already specified BPW for two more trailers, a curtainsider Roadmaster, and bulk chipliner from Transfleet. That's based partly on the six-month, 90,000 trouble-free kilometres run he has had from his trailer.



Simon Buckeridge pictured here left, with one of his drivers Bruce Zander.

CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

Getting a custom-build right involves a merger of ideas and skills, bringing the best out of the customer and the builder.

Words and photographs by Jim Darby

Ultimate Plant Trailers is a Geelong-based business specialising in custom-builds. In the words of Sales Manager, Ben Hood, they target the premium end of the market, “clients who are focused on getting exactly what they want, and the quality they want.” Getting a custom-build right demands a deep rapport between builder and client.

“Everything we do is centralised around custom fabrication. If you contact us for a quote, we have a base model that we start with. Then we discuss what machinery you’re going to carry, what sort of distances it will

be carried over and what kind of terrain, whether it’s urban or rural. It’s all about meeting the clients’ needs from start to finish.”

Maintaining the quality in the overall product means it’s important to use quality components. UPT encourages clients to use BPW axles. “That’s based on the quality of the product, its reputation and history,” Ben says.

“Anyone who knows the industry knows the product speaks for itself. BPW stands out for the craftsmanship that goes into its

axles and when you look at the maintenance requirements, or lack of them, BPW axles pay for themselves five-times over.

“If I was buying a trailer tomorrow, I would insist on BPW.”

Their market is national, with trailers working as far away as Western Australia, but the bulk of them are in New South Wales and Queensland, states where they’ve been able to get a semi-trailer classification for UPT trailers, meaning they can carry a greater payload. They’re working on a similar classification in for Victoria.

The business was started by Peter Rose, 25 years ago, who learnt the craft from his father and then went out on his own and eventually formed a partnership with Matt Kayler-Thomson of MKT plumbing.

UPT has a nine-strong workforce and is growing. Ben Hood says they’ve doubled their output over the last year or so and aim to double it again in the coming year.

“We’re aiming for growth of somewhere between 80 and 100 trailers per year over the next three years.

“But you can’t just double your workforce and then expect the quality to remain high. We gradually put people on, but only the right people. The team we have at the moment is perfect.”

When it gets down to the detail, Ben says UPT sets minimum standard specifications including: flush coaming rail with ties bars; flush-mounted lights in ramps; 5mm checker plate flooring, GR350 steel on all key structural components; 10mm solid front board for further structural integrity and aesthetics; and trailers are sandblasted, primed and finished with two coats of two-pack.

This all ties in with their engineered, hand-fabricated chassis which is laser cut with a camber already in it, adding to the product’s structural integrity. 🇺🇸



Ben Hood: “If I was buying a trailer tomorrow, I would insist on BPW.”

UPT trailer-builds with BPW axles.





Colin and Diane McAuley—"service above and beyond".

THE BEES' NEEDS

There is a company down in Masterton that has a reputation for meeting and beating the hard challenges. We meet the husband and wife team who are proud to have their name on the door.

Words and photographs by Mike Isle

At the beginning of our interview with Colin and Diane McAuley we are given their business card.

It says in part: 'Specialists in: Nationwide Freight Service, Hab Hire, Digger & Tip Truck Here, Water Cartage, Approved Transitional Facility, Container Cartage, Steel and Timber Cartage, Overdimensional Loads, Refrigerated Bee Cartage, Machinery Transporter, Swinglift.'

Well, that says it all. But not quite. What is missing from the card is an explanation of what makes this Masterton-based, family-owned company tick. Why it is so successful? And what is it about those refrigerated bees?

There are some of the answers to those questions on the card. This is a company that seems to be ready and resourced to do anything, anywhere, any time.

Throw something at McAuley's and, as Colin says, "if we can do it, we'll do it. If we can't, we won't. And say so. In a town like Masterton you don't let people down. "That's our name on the door."

The breadth of the company's service is even more remarkable when considering how it all started. It began as a one-man, one tractor operation. The man was Colin's father T.J. (Mac) McAuley, the tractor is a Fordson Major which is still on the site, and the business was general contracting servicing the Wairarapa.

Mac's motto: "Do it all. Do it right. But if it's not right, don't do it at all."

It is a motto he has instilled in his son, and a basis of business—along with quality of staff—that has seen Colin and Diane grow the business to its present 24 staff, 18

trucks, 20 trailers—80% of which is floating long-haul.

Colin and Diane run the company from a shared upstairs office while downstairs and out on the yard Steve and Fiona are in the engine room as, respectively, manager and office manager. But geography is a matter only of practicality and functionality—not of status.

In reality this very much a family company with a family feel. It's a unified and near-horizontal management structure. Colin and Diane recruit well and carefully.

It pays in the end, says Colin. On any given weekend many of the McAuley team (and they have to be a team-player) will be on site, often voluntarily, to help each other whether it is to assist with a tarp-throw, or just to catch up. "They run it like their own business, they watch their five-star rating

"THEY [THE EMPLOYEES] RUN IT LIKE THEIR OWN BUSINESS, THEY WATCH THEIR FIVE-STAR RATING AND THEY KEEP TO THE CUSTOMER FOCUS."



Mac's original Fordson digger—still in the yard, and still going strong.

and they keep to the customer focus."

It also helps them to cope with stress. Or what may be construed as stress by some other operators. In McAuley's case, stress is put in its place by professionalism despite this being more than an A to B operation known for meeting and beating unorthodox challenges.

A case in point is the bees. Colin mentions that it is a big part of their business transporting hives, often between the two main islands on the Cook Strait ferries. It is well into the interview that we realise he is talking just not of the hives, but also of the bees themselves—thousands of them: live, very disgruntled and very much ready to take their disgruntlement out on anybody—if not handled properly by a team of professional trained drivers, who have experienced the odd close call.

In one incident in the early days and the three days after that a thousand or so of them decided to hang-about on a Cook Strait ferry for the return trips. The ferry company and crew didn't take too kindly to that, and truck and its load were designated as dangerous goods. Until Colin sorted it.

Sorting it. It's the cornerstone of the McAuley business philosophy. Other factors are getting and keeping the internal structure right—right staff, right processes, right attitude.

There is also constant self-assessment. If on the rare occasion, McAuley's has to say no to turn down a job, Colin will want to know why. Was it a matter of lack of resources, lack of time, lack of staff? Foremost, what will it take to make it right? What will it need...to get it sorted?



2013 CF 85 DAF and quad 4 axle Hammar Lifter. Both units comprising the most up to date technology.

LET'S TALK HORSE-POWER

This Masterton firm has retired and replaced its entire fleet in one swoop; a courageous decision for any operator. We visit Renalls Ltd and meet the son of the founder to find out why and how it happened, and what the future holds for the firm.

Words by Mike Isle

When we arrive at Renalls' Masterton site, Sam Renall is ready, bearing gifts—a coffee for our writer and another for Rhys Harnett, BPW Transport Efficiency's sales engineer, who makes the introductions.

As we are about to find out during the interview, it is the marque of the man. Sam, son of company founder Herb Renall, is punctilious, precise and professional. By the immaculate state of Herb's office where we conduct the interview so is his father.

Sam is a chip off the old block.

On the day, Herb is away, and is seemingly content to leave the talking to Sam. That's fine with us, as well. Sam is clearly in command of all

he surveys: he knows the facts, the figures, the history and the vision of the company.

He also, as we find when it comes to photography requests, knows the location and load of every truck in his fleet. And is equally adept at fielding calls and resolving issues during the interview.

That fleet comprises seven new Scania, as well as six new Transfleet 5-axle trailers and one Roadmaster; fitted with BPW running gear.

In an earlier interview for Scania, Herb explained that the catalyst for replacing the entire fleet at once came about when the configuration of Renalls' trucks and trailers had to change for HPMV certification.



Blue Chip—The new Scania and Transfleet 5-axle trailer



Renalls—In good shape and in good hands.



Sam Renall

“BPW RUNNING GEAR WAS CHOSEN FOR ITS RELIABILITY, WEIGHT, ADDITIONAL LOAD CAPACITY AND OTHER ATTRIBUTES SUCH AS ROLL-STABILITY AND BACKUP SERVICE.”

New trailers were ordered and Sam says BPW running gear was chosen for the trailer fleet because of its reliability, weight, additional load capacity and other attributes such as roll-stability control and backup service.

With the increased load capacity Herb and Sam then looked to the additional grunt generated by the Scania 620hp V8s.

The Renalls played their chips well and the massive investment is already paying dividends—something that Herb, with his horse racing interest, knows quite a bit about. The rest, like the old fleet, is as Sam says, history.

Herb's history in the industry goes back to 1977 when, after working as a stock-truck driver for another firm he went out on his own with a single Dodge stock-truck.

However, it wasn't long before he saw another opportunity—one that would

provide a winning situation for everybody and create for Renalls its core business today—obtaining forestry waste-product, converting it to woodchips and back-loading fertilizer.

Sam joined the business soon after leaving school. But there was no silver-spoon. He manned the broom like everyone else, gained his licenses, including heavy vehicle license, and did his stint as a driver.

Unlike everyone else however, Sam was told in no uncertain terms by Herb to broaden his horizons. Sam agreed and left the family firm to drive for other companies before completing a Bachelor of Commerce in International Business at the Victoria University of Wellington.


He was ready to come back to the family firm. And learn the chip business.

Chips remain a big part of its business and Renalls has its own chipper as well as the

cartage fleet. The company is based in Masterton where it started but goes as far afield as Gisborne and the Bay of Plenty in the north and Taranaki out west— and includes among its services: wood-waste, chips, fertiliser and bulk cartage.

Business is thriving.

But let us return to the reason for the fleet change. Why all at once? Again, Herb from the Scania interview: “We felt the time was right. We really want to consolidate the business in the next couple of years and having the service back-up, along with the latest technology, means we are well-placed to achieve some good milestones.”

So, that's it. The decision was made, and with new equipment and a second generation Renall on board the future for this already successful Wairarapa-based operator seems in good shape and in good hands. 

HEAVYWEIGHTS

Words and photographs by Jim Darby



Three rigs from the seven-strong Crookston Heavy Haulage fleet on location in Penrith.

“IT’S ALL ABOUT RELIABILITY. WE’VE HAD ZERO PROBLEMS WITH THE BPW AXLES, WE JUST DON’T HAVE TO TOUCH THEM.”

the likes of McColl’s, Linfox and Toll – is now the Operations Manager for Crookston.

“He’s well up on regulations – and you know how they change. He’s taken that worry out of the operation for me. You know, he used to be my boss at Kingstons when I worked there as a tow operator.

“I’m extremely lucky to have him on board – the team we’ve got now is really very good.

axles and they all perform just as Michael would like – “all the parts are cast, not welded, and that makes a big difference.

“It’s all about reliability. We’ve had zero problems with them; we just don’t have to touch them. The oldest float we have out there has done over a million Ks and we’re re-building it now and as far as the running gear itself goes, we haven’t had to touch it until now.

needing earthwork equipment moved around.

“I want to keep growing. We’ve tailored ourselves to the roading market in Sydney and I’d hope we have a very good name in that market – people are coming to us and wanting us to be in partnership with them and I’d hope that keeps going.

“For the last four years I’ve put on one full

BRAKE DANCING – DISC V DRUM

Disc brakes are typically more expensive than drum at the outset, but it’s their longevity and low maintenance that makes Michael Crookston a disc-brake convert.

“Some trailer builders just have a mindset that drum brakes are it, they’re the way to go, but for what we do, with 30-, 40- or 50-tonnes sitting on a float, disc brakes are the way I want to go. They’re fantastic,” Michael Crookston says.

“I like them for serviceability, for kilometres and, with 99 per cent of our work on-road (not on dusty bush tracks), dust isn’t really an issue and replacing the pads is not all that expensive when you need to do it.

“Brake-fade is also a big one for me. Every trailer I have has disc brakes because there’s such a big safety aspect. My guys aren’t going to have to be adjusting brakes on the side of the road, so it’s safer for them and I know those trailers are going to stop, so it’s safer for the public.

“Maintenance is another thing. I don’t have to adjust them, that’s the main thing I like, all we do is poke our head under there; poke a little camera in and make sure everything’s OK, take the wheels off and check ‘em, but that, literally, is all you have to do.”

If you trace the origins of Crookston Heavy Haulage’s founder, they go a long way to explaining his achievements and ambitions.

Michael Crookston, now 37, grew up on a farm in New Zealand and has that pioneering and entrepreneurial edge you’ll find among Kiwi farmers. Add to the mix his mother’s Dutch origins and you get some of the attention to detail that comes from those parts.

And he continues to draw on his parents. “I get a lot of support from my dad in New Zealand,” Michael says. “I speak to him pretty much every day and he helps me out a lot – he does the same kind of work in New Zealand for Porter Hire, a huge company that works mainly in earthmoving throughout Australasia.

“He’s the sounding board for me – Dave Crookston is. I wanted to make my dad proud so that’s why I called it Crookston Heavy Haulage. He’s the person I want to be proud of me, him and my mum. They’re amazing people.”

Michael’s mother, Anna, runs accounts and administration for Michael at Crookston Heavy Haulage’s depot in Penrith, in Sydney’s west.

Michael surrounds himself with talented people. Shaun Wilson – well-known to many in transport having worked as a manager for some of the biggest operators in the business,

Our main struggle is with drivers. The guys we’ve got are fantastic and they get rewarded well, but I’ve got three positions available at the moment that I need filled urgently and I’m just not finding the right people.”

It was with Kingston that Michael bought his first truck; he was driving an interstate run for a freight company when he saw the chance to buy a truck from Kingstons and contract himself back to them as a towie. He did it, and before long saw the opportunities. “I thought, ‘I might build my own,’ so I did.” That was 2003. “I had no contracts and no customers, but I built my own trailer and off it went.”

Crookston Heavy Haulage now has seven prime movers, six floats and a drop-deck trailer. Other than one tri-axle, all his floats are quad-axle with the rear two axles steer axles.

He fits all the trailers he orders with BPW

“We only replaced one set of discs; it’s amazing what we got out of them. I’ve never touched the wheel bearings, never touched the pads. We’d check them over and service them, obviously, but we never had to touch them otherwise. They take some punishment those floats.”

With his existing team of drivers, Michael runs an extensive and ongoing training program, covering issues like drug and alcohol testing, safety training, load restraint and safety around power lines. “It’s a positive for the drivers, but it also sends a very clear message to our customers that we’re here to stay and here to do the right thing. We’re not a backyard operation,” Michael says.

Those customers have a broad spread, but the majority of them are looking to Crookston for haulage related to road and motorway works, with a smaller number

unit per year. Last year (2013) we put two units on. We’ve been turning work away for the last few months, but I’d rather say ‘no’ than say ‘yes’ and not be able to deliver or not be able to deliver to the customer’s requirements.

“Managing growth is extremely hard, but we make sure we live within our means. I’ve already ordered our next trailer – we’ll build up our customer base so it has plenty of work and then we’ll put another one on and so-on, that’s how it works for us.”

Michael isn’t one to look back. Asked if he’d do anything differently if he had the first 10 years of his business over again, he says “probably nothing, I did it the way I wanted to do it.”

So what’s his advice to others on the same path in what can be a tough industry? “Treat people well, be nice to them and they’ll usually be nice back.”



Michael Crookston: His focus is finely tuned to the roading market.

SMOOTH OPERATORS

Mobile phones ring incessantly in Keith and Karen Picone's family home. Gornroamin Transport logistics is run from a kitchen table in Healesville, 60 kilometres east of Melbourne. Cheeky parrots and garrulous magpies watch on, long-term residents on the property's back porch, waiting for a coffee break and a feed.

Words and photographs by Emily Weekes

Transporting bitumen is a tricky business. But that's what appealed to Keith in the first place. With four bitumen tankers and one fuel tanker, Gornroamin Transport is an energetic family business, with a team of excellent drivers who deliver bitumen on time, on temperate and to meet any specification.

"I always wanted to do either gas or fuel, because that's where the elite drivers went," recalls Keith. "That's where the big money is. Doing the dangerous goods."

After working in the industry for 15 years, Keith remembers seizing his first break

in bitumen transporting when he worked at Boral as a relief driver. "They had a bitumen tanker which they were going to sell because it wasn't making any money. It had been running at a 32 percent loss," says Keith, "and the driver left."

"They put me in it and within a couple of months it was running at a 65 percent profit!" laughs Keith. "I got out seven years later."

With a background in dangerous goods driving, Keith takes great care when hiring and training new staff for his business. As he sees it, transporting bitumen is a lifestyle

choice. A task that is complex, unusual and often unpredictable.

"It takes six weeks to train a driver to do bitumen, at least. And our drivers are on a generous salary with eight weeks off each year," says Keith. "The problem is these days we don't have the supply of young people coming through the transport industry, but fortunately we found three new drivers through an employment agency last year and they're all working out really well now."

Keith even decided to buy bigger trucks so that his drivers could have more room on the road. With 300 millimetres more height



"TRANSPORTING BITUMEN IS A LIFESTYLE CHOICE. A TASK THAT IS COMPLEX, UNUSUAL AND OFTEN UNPREDICTABLE."

and flatscreen tvs above the door, along with a microwave oven, fridge, air-conditioning and a dvd player, he hopes that it will be easier for drivers to stick with the job and develop new careers.

"If you're going to be away all week you want to be able to sit on the edge of your bed and put your pants on, instead of lying on your back," says Keith. "Our drivers might sit on the side of the road for eight hours in 40 degree heat without a tree in sight, so we have to make it as comfortable as we can."

A typical workday might involve driving a load of bitumen to a spray crew. If they're only spraying narrow roads it might take them four hours to spray 6,000 litres of bitumen. Gornroamin's tankers hold 27,000 litres of bitumen, which shows the hours that might be involved while waiting for a job to be done.

"It's the most bizarre industry," says Karen, who takes care of all of the logistics. Their drivers might be rerouted due to a bush fire or delayed because of unusual terminal facility

opening hours and clashes with the timing of mandatory rest breaks. "We just have to ring the customer and tell them it's going to be late because we won't let the drivers do anything illegal. It's a real juggling act."


Keith admits that he'd love to develop a new bitumen tanker design, to keep plumbing that would normally be outside in the elements, inside the tank. This would reduce the incidence of bitumen "slugs" getting caught in the valves, which can create havoc for drivers on the road.

In terms of axles, BPW has been their number one stockist since the beginning. "A wise man once said the easiest way to make money is save money. A guy I worked for years ago told me that BPW are the best axles money can buy," says Keith. "When we bought our first tanker, it came with BPW axles and I've just stuck with them. Our oldest trailer is 10 years old. They work extremely hard over the season, but we haven't replaced one bush yet, not even a wheel bearing."

If running a business from home and managing 99 percent of all maintenance issues isn't enough of a logistical challenge, Keith and Karen are also active SES members. The phones ring constantly as Karen carries out her SES duties as Unit Controller, Staging Area Manager, Divisional Commander and Emergency Management Liaison – although thankfully not all at the same time.

When Karen's son died of leukaemia at 14 years of age, Keith felt that he could never repay the millions of dollars Victorians spent trying to save his stepson's life. He signed up immediately. Thirteen years later, the SES is as large a part of their lives as their business, Gornroamin Transport.

The business has to fit around SES calls and Keith and Karen's daughter steps in if they are deployed elsewhere. But the best help comes from an unlikely source.

"Our two-year-old grandson is an excellent stress relief officer!" adds Keith. 



GTB FINDS ITS GROOVE...

In an office perched high above their 10,000 square metre rolling assembly line, Les Lange, General Manager, Genuine Truck Bodies (GTB) talks about the rapid development of the company and their commitment to adding value.

Having doubled in size each year for the past three years, Les explains "it's the quality of the product that is ultimately driving growth".

Words by Adam Cross

GTB is part of Automotive Holdings Group, Australia's largest automotive retailer. Employing more than 5,000 people across a network of more than 150 car and truck dealerships throughout Australia and New Zealand, the group established GTB in 2006 to carry out all pre-delivery and customisation requirements on its Hino truck range.

"You could say, any work that needed to be carried out on a truck from the time it landed into the country up to delivery to the dealer, was performed by GTB," says Les, "this included chassis extensions, wheel alignments, lazy axles, prime mover fit outs, diesel fuelling and delivery Australia-wide."

With a 36,000 square metre vehicle storage yard and a 10,000 square metre purpose-built manufacturing facility in Dandenong South, Victoria, the operation has the capacity to store and service more than 900 vehicles.

Initially set up to service just the AHG dealer base, the facility has evolved significantly over the past five years into a modern trailer manufacturing operation, with the capacity to build and supply a complete range of trailers to both group and non-group customers.

The GTB manufacturing facility is perfectly suited for panel style builds, catering for six, eight, ten, 12 and 14 pallet rigid body trucks and semi-trailers. Currently producing about ten trailers a month, GTB expect to see production increase to 25 trailers per month within the next year.

In addition there is a stand-alone custom build section that works on special projects. Recent examples include an outside broadcast trailer for Sky Racing and 16 multi-temperature delivery vans for Mrs Macs.

Today, the company has a focus on refrigerated transport, which accounts for about 50 percent of the business.

Considering where GTB sits today, it's surprising to learn the company built its first refrigerated trailer just two years ago for sister company Rand Refrigerated Logistics. When Rand went on to acquire Harris Transport later that year, the demand for refrigerated trailers increased significantly. As a result production has boomed, and the company has gone on to build more than 130 refrigerated trailers in the last two years.

"It's an exciting stage of the business," says Les. "Servicing the Rand and Harris fleets provided an excellent foundation for us. Fortunately we were in a position to follow our trailers around the country to ensure they were performing at the highest standards."

"The benefit of being part of such a large group meant feedback from our national fleet managers allowed us to continually refine and improve our product along the way."

"EVERY COMPONENT IS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE CUSTOMERS WITH 'COST-OF-LIFE' SAVINGS."



"For example, our rigid body range (typically constructed with a steel sub-frame), now uses an all-aluminium design borrowed from our refrigerated trailer bodies. This type of innovation sets us apart. We not only saw manufacturing efficiencies internally, but by adding strength and reducing weight we made a better trailer and now, a better truck body."

"As a result, fleet operators have seen immediate benefits in fuel consumption and lower maintenance costs," he says.

"When it comes to build quality, the GTB trailers are flawless. Every component is designed to provide customers with 'cost-of-life' savings. The BPW axles and suspension definitely complement what we are trying to achieve. The trailers look great, have good running gear and drive beautifully. Right now, we are 100 percent confident the product is where it needs to be in terms of quality and refinement."

Part of GTB's success has been its ability to attract quality people from all areas of the industry. With the recent appointment of Tony Kerr as Executive General Manager, GTB is

fortunate to have a strong executive team. Tony is in charge of both the GTB and Vehicle Storage & Engineering (VSE) businesses, and describes the company culture as 'inclusive'. Every one of their 100 plus staff contributes to improving processes within the company.

"If you know what your goals are the decision making is easy. As a group we ask ourselves, 'will this add value to our product or our process?', if the answer is yes then the decision is easy - we do it," says Les.

According to Les, "there is certainly space 'and a want' in the market for another option when it comes to quality refrigerated trailers."

"Our trailers are designed, engineered and built in Australia for Australian conditions and fleet operators recognise the importance of that."

(Les laughs), "We're finally at the stage in our business where we have an engaged and experienced team, the infrastructure is in place, but most importantly we have developed a product we are proud of."

(Smiling, Les adds) "I think it's safe to say we've well and truly found our groove."



From L to R: GTS's Tony Kerr, Tom Livingstone, Les Lange, Aaron Commons and Bruce Thomson.



The success of Semi-Skel Hire is down to service, quality and reliability.

Words and photographs by Jim Darby

TRAILERS FOR HIRE

Geoff Kelly has never advertised but his business is constantly growing. He hires to some of the biggest names in Australian transport and distribution: "We hire out semi-trailers. Every single type of semi-trailer," there are 700 Semi-Skel Hire trailers out on the road as you read this, "and there's more coming, we'll have up to 800 on the road by Christmas."

Geoff knows where they are, pretty much as a parent knows their children's whereabouts: "There's 10 in Mackay, two in Rockhampton, six in Mildura, three in Barnawartha, 25 in Adelaide and the rest are here in Melbourne." Geoff prefers to keep them close to home because that way he has better control over their maintenance. Some of his major customers have asked him to expand the business Australia-wide, but it's the loss of

control over quality that underlies Geoff's reluctance.

The success of West Melbourne-based Semi-Skel Hire comes from its reputation and a big part of that reputation is quality and reliability. His trailers are made by Barker Trailers in Woodend and FTE Trailers in Dandenong and he uses Hammar side-loaders from Sweden.

"We specify BPW gear absolutely and without question," Geoff says, "we have a drop-deck in the workshop at the moment that's having its first set of (replacement) brakes. That's after 13 years – our record is 16. Longevity and reliability are what it's all about."

"We've actually bought some second-hand trailers, not many, but we've actually taken the axles out and put BPW underneath them

so we know we won't have any trouble with them.

"The best compliment I ever got was once when we'd been with a customer three months and I was out at their place, fixing an air leak on a trailer. Paul Callanan walked up beside the trailer and said 'is that you Geoff,' and I said 'yeah,' and he said 'these trailers are as good as, if not better than ours.' That was the transport manager out at Mulgrave at Woolworths."

Geoff says he has never won a single customer by approaching them. Big names like Woolworths, Coles, Tolls, Linfox and Camerons, "they all rang us – we didn't approach them, but if you have 700-odd trailers, you've got to have some customers!" Growth for Geoff will come in increasing his standard fleet, but he also has his eye on

Super-B-double combinations. "We've had a couple of Super-Bs for a couple of years, but we're starting to get right into it because they're finally issuing permits to go out with them." Previously they were used in the docks area adjacent to Semi-Skel's West Melbourne depot. Now they can go further in Greater Melbourne – to Laverton in the west and Dandenong in the south-east.

Geoff's links with transport go way back. When he was young, his father had a fruit and vegie run, supplying shops between Melbourne and Mildura with a semi-trailer. It was hard work with long hours and if Geoff wanted to see his father, then the best way was to go along for the ride – he'd hop in the cabin on school holidays and help out with deliveries.

Eventually Geoff's dad gave the run away and expanded his business in the wholesale markets in West Melbourne. He'd sold his truck, but then it came up for sale again, so Geoff bought it. "I was 19 and I became an owner-driver. That lasted nine years, then the 1981 recession hit and I ran out of work. I was still working for dad a day a week in the market, but he didn't have enough work for me to go full-time."

Eventually things turned around and they started carting their own fruit out of Mildura. "Our biggest day in the market was Monday. We'd get fruit delivered from Mildura, sometimes 1am, sometimes 4am, sometimes later. It was unreliable. So we started to cart our own and it meant we could deliver into our cool room on a Sunday and have fruit there and ready to go

for Monday's market; we didn't have to wait for the truck."

That made a massive difference to the market business. For five years, they doubled turnover every year. "We got to the point where one Monday we had 2,000 boxes of oranges and 3,000 boxes of mandarins to sell and we sold them all."

In the mid-80s, the government introduced a 40 percent investment allowance and on top of 22 percent depreciation, "you could write off \$62,000 of a \$100,000 truck in the first year. So I bought some trucks, bought some trailers and found some work for them. By the end of the 80s, I had nine trucks and 14 trailers. Things were going well, but then the 1991 recession hit. So I sold the trucks and started selling the trailers; sold five and had nine left."

One of the companies he sold trucks to asked if they could hire three of his flat-top trailers. "I was working in the market full-time, it was going well, so I said 'hire them now and you can look at buying them in a few months'."

That was 1991 and the start of the hire business. He started hiring curtainsiders to a distribution company in Dandenong that was doing some work for Woolworths and eventually Woolworths signed Semi-Skel. "They initially took 11 refrigerated trailers and 12 months later wanted 20 new ones. I was getting the order ready when 14 second-hand refriges came on to the market, so I called Woolworths and they said, 'get them and we'll take the 20 new ones too.' That was it, off we went."

A MARKET FOR IDEAS

An economist will tell you a market is a system where parties engage in exchange; usually of goods or services for money, and that it's a process that establishes the prices of goods and services. They're right, but a market can mean a whole lot more on a practical level.

Geoff Kelly puts more than a little bit of the success of his business down to his experience in Melbourne's wholesale fruit and vegetable markets. Working in his father's business, I & JM Kelly, taught him about trust and loyalty, about having the right customers and about giving them the right service.

It's dynamic: "you're dealing with growers and retailers; it's full-on, always a challenge. Business works on a handshake and quality product always sells. We used to bring back oranges from a place called Curlwaa near Wentworth (on the Murray River) and they were that good, after we'd deliver to the shops we'd have 50 or 100 boxes left and would sell them in the market on Monday. And they'd sell in an instant."

Bring that quality back to his trailer hire business and it's a similar scenario: "our trailers are better. We have better lights, brakes, tyres and if something goes wrong, I've got all the parts right here. Customers don't want to wait and I don't want them to wait. We run a service unit. We've got trailers that are 25 years old; we've got trailers that are 25 days old. Every single brake valve they might need is in our service truck. Every one."



Semi-Skel has 700 trailers out on the road and is aiming for up to 800 by Christmas.

THE LIGHTER TOUCH



The Weatherell Quad, built by Fairfax, with refined aerodynamics including side skirts.

A sunny day in Napier, coffee with an old friend of this publication, and an invitation to examine a few of his interesting innovations in trucking. What a perfect way to spend a day.

Words and photographs by Mike Isle

Steve Weatherell has appeared in these pages before—a number of times.

The reason is that he and his company Weatherell Transport are often among the first to embrace new technology or instigate an investigation into better and more cost-effective ways of doing things.

That is why he is here again.

We meet Steve in Napier. He has come down from his Gisborne base especially for this interview and to facilitate photos of a couple of new trailers that are generating a lot of talk in New Zealand transport circles.

The first trailer of interest is a tri-axle skeletal, built by Roadmaster in Rotorua. The area commanding most attention is its tare-weight.

The goal was to build a tri-axle of *less than* three tonnes, using Roadmaster's high-tensile technology. The objective was to have a trailer that could carry a load of full apple boxes without breaching the 39 tonne threshold. The finished trailer came out at 2,920 kilos, including landing legs.

Steve is in the process of permitting it to take up to 44 tonnes under field export

container protocol. That delivers a theoretical payload of 32.65 tonnes.

Steve says the trailer was built for a specific job, carting produce locally within Hawke's Bay. It was not built, he says, for long-haul.

But he is growing increasingly confident that it could have such an application without, at present, it being a threat to the more conventional quads.

The second trailer we look at is a quad.



Steve Weatherell

But here again Steve has opted for the unconventional. Weatherells' new quad is built by Fairfax and was two years in the planning. The goal here was to optimise interior dimensions. Fairfax's standard specs were applied but a different floor configuration and foam-fill skinny walls were incorporated.

A trial unit was put on the road two years ago.

That unit was carefully monitored during those two years and resulting refinements, including even skinny walls and roller double-stacking, hit the road in a new unit late last year. Steve has proclaimed it a success.

More are on order.

Another innovation, which is much more visible but paradoxically Steve is more reticent talking about are the aerodynamics of the quad. Arming his drivers with USB keys has enabled Steve to accurately monitor the efficacy of adding side skirts to the units and then taking that one step further and covering in the wheels as well.

The goal was to improve the aerodynamics and increase fuel efficiency. Has it worked?

"Yes," says Steve.

Steve won't be drawn on by how much, but it is a good bet from his one word answer and his grin that the sideskirts won't be coming off any time soon.

Rounding off the innovations? Take a close

look at the tractor unit—the first eight-wheeler Cat tractor unit in captivity. That was Steve's idea and the conversion was done by Wilkinsons in Cambridge.

Steve Weatherell runs a good operation out of his Gisborne base. He is into his 20th year, mainly sticking with produce, and has 60-odd trucks and more than 100 staff.

Like many operators he attributes a lot of his

success to his staff; some key people have been with him since day-one and stability and consistency remain important to him.

So, here we have a man for whom consistency and stability are important, yet is among the first to embrace and instigate change in and for our industry.

Interesting guy, Steve Weatherell. 



Try building a tri-axle under three tonnes. Yep, it's been done.



Pacific Trailers – keeping manufacturing in Geelong.

Right: The Pacific Trailers team on location. At the back from left are Cameron Cooper, Steve Ryan, Ted Attard and Jason Crawford, at the front are Mark, Carolyn and Frank Brandimarti.



CARRYING ON

The father-and-son team at Pacific Trailers have got the work-life balance sorted. But it took some work to get there.

Words and photographs by Jim Darby

When Frank Brandimarti arrived in Australia in January 1952, he didn't have much in his pocket and he didn't have much by the way of English, but he had a trade and he had a passion for trucks. He'd take whatever work he could find – from grape-picking in Mildura to quarry work in Colac. It was in Colac, on Christmas Eve 1952, that he met his future wife Shirley and things started to turn around: "my language was starting to come good. And then work started to come as a mechanic." He'd always been around trucks – in his native Italy, his father had trucks, before the war his father bought a new Alfa-Romeo truck, but the government took that. When Frank was young "I used to wait for my father to come home up this hill. I could run faster than his truck was going!" Frank worked as a mechanic for a log truck operator in Colac and then for International Harvester in Geelong where he became a supervisor. He even bought a petrol station in Geelong and ran that for a time. Then he bought a truck and worked the run from Melbourne to Adelaide, doing well in the lead-up to the Melbourne Olympics; back-

loading with cement from Port Adelaide for £50; good money at the time. In the 1960s, Frank went to work for Hoare Brothers in their earth moving business and it was during that time, on nights and weekends, he built his first car carrier on a Leyland truck which he'd bought for \$800. "It had two decks and a loading ramp at either end." Frank had a huge appetite for work. He ran a fleet of trucks, took in mechanical work in his yard and started to build car carriers. "At one stage I had 22 trucks and four mechanics. We did all the maintenance. We'd do anything as long as there was a dollar in it." Demand grew for the car carriers and Frank even built one of the first truck carriers in Australia – "we used to put five different trucks in it, going to Sydney and I made it so when they unloaded the trucks, I used to put two containers on it to come home." His son Mark grew up around the workshop. By the time he was 16, all he wanted was to be a mechanic, so he did his apprenticeship as a diesel mechanic. "When I started with Dad, we made four

carriers for Shields, who had the Toyota contract, we were also making tautliners with a rolling deck, but it just became harder and harder to make a margin on the tautliners," Mark said. Around that time, they were told Patrick's was looking to place a major order for car carriers. So Mark gave Patrick's a call. He let the product do the talking: "I rang Patrick's, telling them who I was. I said 'my father's built a lot of car carriers; if you looked out the window, you'd see a couple he'd built.' "The guy from Patrick's was ex-army, straight down the line. He said 'come and see me and bring your drawings'. But we had no drawings, so I went up there and took some photos with me, saying we hadn't done it in a while. He said things had changed a lot since those trailers. You need moving decks, more safety. But he still gave us an order for three. "A fellow saw one of those carriers, and they became a billboard." They sold some locally in Geelong and sold six to an operator in Bendigo: the business was growing and they needed some systems.

"When we built the first trailer," Mark said, "and we were getting it near completion, Dad was already starting the next one. By that time, I thought we should maybe draw it. By the time we were on the third one, I spent a whole weekend drawing it. We started having a bit of an idea. "We had some really good guys working for us. By the time we got to the third or fourth trailer, they knew what to do without looking at the first one. And it just got faster. We were starting to build them faster than other suppliers, so Patrick's ordered another five. And then another five." Demand has levelled off to a point they're happy with – around 20 trailers a year. Mark says they could do more, they could double that, but he's happy with where the

business is. Just as his father has a passion for trucks, Mark has a passion for the surf. If you're a golfer, you can take Wednesday afternoon off and play golf – it doesn't matter what the weather's like, the golf course will always be there. But if you're a surfer, you're in the hands of the weather – you need to be able to make the most of the conditions when they come. Mark has timed it – it's 30 minutes from the Pacific Trailers car park to the car park at Bell's Beach, on the Surf Coast west of Geelong. "We could do 40 trailers a year in the new shed, we could put a lot more guys on, but if we have too many guys on I can't go surfing. In probably the last 10 years I've tried to fit more surfing in and less working. Now we've got good guys and great customers. They know how we operate. They tell

us what they want. We still don't have a website or advertisements. The reliability of the product sells itself." A big part of that reliability goes down to the BPW components they use, including ECO Plus drum brake axles. "They never give us any trouble," Mark says, "if a trailer comes back for repairs, that's never something that needs repairing." Pacific Trailers has had a look at manufacturing overseas, but decided to stay local and keep the jobs and engineering in Australia. "Great staff are important. We have a core team who work really well. They all have their own jobs and do them really well ... you know, there's no better feeling than seeing your own carrier on the road, wherever you are in Australia. 🇦🇺

HALL OF FAME

Recognising his passion for trucks and his contribution to road transport in Australia, with a life's work running trucks and building car carriers, Frank Brandimarti was inducted into the National Road Transport Hall of Fame's Shell Rimula Wall of Fame in 2010. The citation read, in part: "In 1987, Frank was joined by his son Mark and together they continued to build all types of trailers. Trading under the name Pacific Trailers since the early 1990s they have gained a reputation for the construction of uncomplicated, functional and reliable car carriers. However, Frank's passion has always been for the truck. While today the carriers are more Mark's domain, Frank is still arriving daily to ... unravel the mangled mess of another wrecked Kenworth. The delight on Frank's face when he shows anyone who calls by says it all: 'you can take the man out of the truck, but you can never take the truck out of the man'."



Frank and one of his Kenworths – a 1977 SAR; another project of his passions.

FROM VINE TO WINE

Words by Thomas Wöhrle and photographs by Roman Gemmrich, Chateau Pau

It is a long and elaborate road from the grape on the vine to the end consumer. A basic prerequisite for high quality wine is painstakingly careful handling during growth, harvest and transport.



The wine grower's year is strictly organised, particularly if he wants the best possible wine for the bottle. It begins between December and February, when the correct pruning of the vines decides what energy goes into the vine and what quality the wine will be one year later. Following this, the ground needs to be worked, to create the adequate nutritional basis for the vines, followed by the correct tying of the vines to the cross-wiring.

In April, the crop-spraying period begins, during which the wine grower protects the vineyards against diseases and bacteria. After the end of work on the

foliage and the ground, the vines receive a rest period of 20 to 30 days, so that no bacteria are released from the soil. If the sun shines nicely during this period of time, the quality of the wine also improves considerably.

Zickler grape transporter with BPW axle and BPW drawbar installation

The start of September is the right time for the grape harvest, but the exact point of time depends on the weather. In the Pfalz in 2013, there is a delay of about two to three weeks due to the cold and wet

Above: Not only when harvesting, but also during transport, it is essential the grapes are handled particularly gently. If the harvest can be processed with as little damage as possible it will yield a wine with a respective high quality.

ZICKLER A-M-PRODUKT • GERMANY

weather in early summer. "We use a grape harvester for the grape harvest, which is mechanised to remove the grapes gently from the vine", says Achim Pfirrmann, owner of the vineyard Pau in Hochstadt/Pfalz. "Harvesting the grapes by hand would also yield a top quality wine, but is rarely manageable in the larger vineyards, simply due to the amounts that have to be handled."

The transport of the harvested grapes is carried out at Pau using the stainless steel grape transporter "Zickler System Rauch" by Zickler A-M-Produkt GmbH, which is based in neighbouring Böchingen. The axle and drawbar installation originate from BPW, already a reliable partner of the vehicle producer for many years. "In close cooperation with the agricultural machine producer Fendt, we offer numerous special vehicles and machines specifically for wine production", explains Martin Zickler, General Manager of the Zickler A-M-Produkt GmbH.

"We mainly use the various BPW overrun hitches and braked axles for our grape transporters." Furthermore, Zickler imports transport trailers and 3-way tippers from Italy - in Böchingen these are then also equipped with overrun hitches and braked axles by BPW.

In the grape transporter type TE with excentric screw pump, the so-called feed screw and the pump and its rotor are ideally adjusted to each other. For customers such as Pau, this guarantees particularly gentle handling of the harvested material. The grape transporter is characterised by special equipment, easy handling and high operating safety.

Gentle feeding of the grapes, due to optimal adjustment of the individual components, is of fundamental importance for the quality of the wine later", says winegrower Pfirrmann. "This high standard of quality is absolutely guaranteed by the Zickler grape transporter, through the use of high quality materials and components. The high quality and stability of the BPW axle and drawbar installation are part of this."

Protection against viruses and bacteria

The harvested grapes are very delicate in terms of oxidation and bacterial contamination. Therefore, they should be transported for further processing in the vineyard as gently and as quickly as possible. Greatest care must also be

taken when unloading the grapes from the Zickler grape transporter.

"When using the direct screw discharge of the grape transporter type TM, the grapes 'simply' drop out of the grape transporter at the end of the feed screw", Axel Dämmer, Project Manager at the Zickler A-M-Produkt GmbH explains. "For the wine grower, this means the further processing of the grapes must either take place below the unloading area, or that the grapes must be transported upwards with a further machine, such as a conveyor belt, to fill, for example, the press". With grape transporters of the type TE, such as those used at Pau, the wine grower can connect a pressure hose and in this way transport the grapes directly and over large distances or height differences for further processing (press, destemmer, tank, etc.).

"During gentle transport, one of the aims is to keep the mechanical stress on the grapes as low as possible", says Dämmer. "For this, the speed of the screw plays a major role". This can be influenced by the vintner through the capacity selection of the excentric screw pump, its revolutions per minute and the hose diameter. The transport distance should also be kept as short as possible.



Zickler A-M-Produkt

The Zickler A-M-Produkt GmbH, with headquarters in Böchingen near Landau, has been offering product and service solutions for customers in the wine and fruit growing business for several decades. The brand name "Zickler System Rauch" was created in 1996, when the firm Rauch handed over their vineyard programme to Zickler.

Since then, grape transporters, mash pumps and destemmers are produced at Zickler. The company Rauch is a leading producer in the area of machines for fertilising and municipal services machinery. In the course of the long-term collaboration and partnership, today Rauch produces the main components for the Zickler stemmers.



Customer delivery multiple times per year

After unloading from the grape transporter, the gentle handling of the grapes continues. "We do this by pressing the entire grape in a pneumatic press, whereby the grapes are pneumatically pressed against a cloth", explains the vintner Achim Pfirrmann. "Using this procedure, we avoid bitter constituents entering the juice and make it possible to separate from the grapes any foreign bodies from the vineyard." When settling has finished, and with it all suspended and solid particles are removed, only the clear juice is left for fermentation.

During the eight to fourteen days of the fermentation, Pfirrmann holds the temperature constantly between 17 and 18 degrees Celsius, to keep the aroma substances in the wine as far as possible intact. This very gentle fermentation process is quite decisive for the fruit and the character of the wine. After sulphurising the wines and eliminating the yeast, the wine is ready for the fining, where the wine is treated in such a way that it fulfils the legal requirements regarding the contents. An independent laboratory Emmel in Roschbach near Landau checks the wine and gives recommendation for further treatment. After a further eight days, the wine is clear and clean and requires a certain

time to mature, before it is filtered for the last time and then bottled. Depending on the type of ageing, the wine will then mature for some months in barrique barrels for a fuller taste or it is available for sale straight away.

Three to four times a year, the vintner Pfirrmann still makes deliveries to his customers himself. His tours lead him through Germany and Europe, and he even has some customers in Thailand. "Otherwise, our online shop is available round the clock

for orders and has become very popular", says Pfirrmann. "We also offer completely personalised labels for weddings or corporate events, and are always willing to orient ourselves closely towards customer requirements". However, the be-all and end-all is the quality of the wine. 

For more information: www.chateau-pau.de and www.zickler-gmbh.de
Zickler A-M-Produkt GmbH



Achim Pfirrmann
(Managing Director of
Pau the small vintner, left)
and Martin Zickler (Head
of Zickler A-M-Produkt
GmbH).

Customers share in W R Twigg TradeZone celebrations

In New Zealand terms the company is old—well over a century. But some things have remained unchanged—among them customer service. We visit W R Twigg in Wellington and share in their celebrations as they move into new premises—celebrations shared with staff, suppliers and, yes, customers.

Words by Mike Isle

If you are the gatekeeper of a company that has almost a century and a quarter of uninterrupted years of outstanding customer service you tend to be fiercely protective of its reputation. That's certainly true of Glenn and Dallis Jordan who took over Petone's W R Twigg in 2007 and late last year, as W R Twigg TradeZone, moved to their new premises in Waione Street—a move that doubled the size of the engineering supplies and transport parts wholesaler. William Twigg started the company in 1895 concentrating on refurbishing coastal trading vessels. Later he moved on to marine and stationary engines and W R Twigg became the leading supplier of specialist engines for the country's shearing and milk sheds. Along the way he also built a company with a reputation for reliability, quality products and, of course, that service. All of which remains today with Glenn and Dallis at the helm. But there have been changes. Big changes. These days the company has expanded to offer more than 10,000 line items and



W R Twigg's new Petone premises.

is one of the few companies to offer both engineering supplies and transport parts from the one outlet. Glenn says business has grown by more than forty percent in the last year alone, hence the move to bigger and better premises. For all the changes, however, the company has kept to its core values of customer service and quality product. But Glenn is quick to point out a third attribute that has been equally instrumental to the company's growth and success. Its staff. Glenn says the W R Twigg TradeZone staff is perhaps the most important factor of all. And the one, he says, most commented on by customers. "I think what makes us different, gives us the edge, is that all our staff take ownership of the operation. They are constantly adding to their product knowledge, and the focus is very much on understanding the needs of our customers. "In the end that means coming up with the best products and service to meet those needs. "It's our driving force."

And that approach was certainly in force the day the company opened its new premises. The day-long celebrations were well attended with family and friends, staff, suppliers and customers all represented. Although the company remained open for business and tills rang up one of the best sales-days ever, the focus was on informality and conviviality. Under a brilliant blue sky the barbeque was fired up, the bar opened and customers and suppliers alike were treated to the very real and enjoyable experience of being part of the W R Twigg TradeZone 'family'. Even after the business day ended many customers and suppliers remained to continue the celebrations into the night. Through it all, more than one reference was made and glasses raised to the man, William Twigg, who started it all way back in 1895.

For more information about W R Twigg TradeZone's products and services visit the company's website www.twiggwgn.co.nz or phone Glenn 04 570 6688.



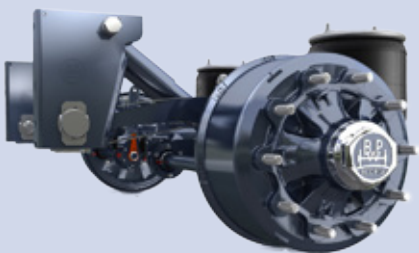
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AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
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Email: sales@tenz.co.nz

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