

OPEN ROAD

BPW TRANSPORT EFFICIENCY'S MAGAZINE FOR THE TRANSPORT INDUSTRY.

SUMMER 2013/14



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The artful legacy

A modern fleet combined with 'old school' service make Reliance Transport more than just a name. **4**



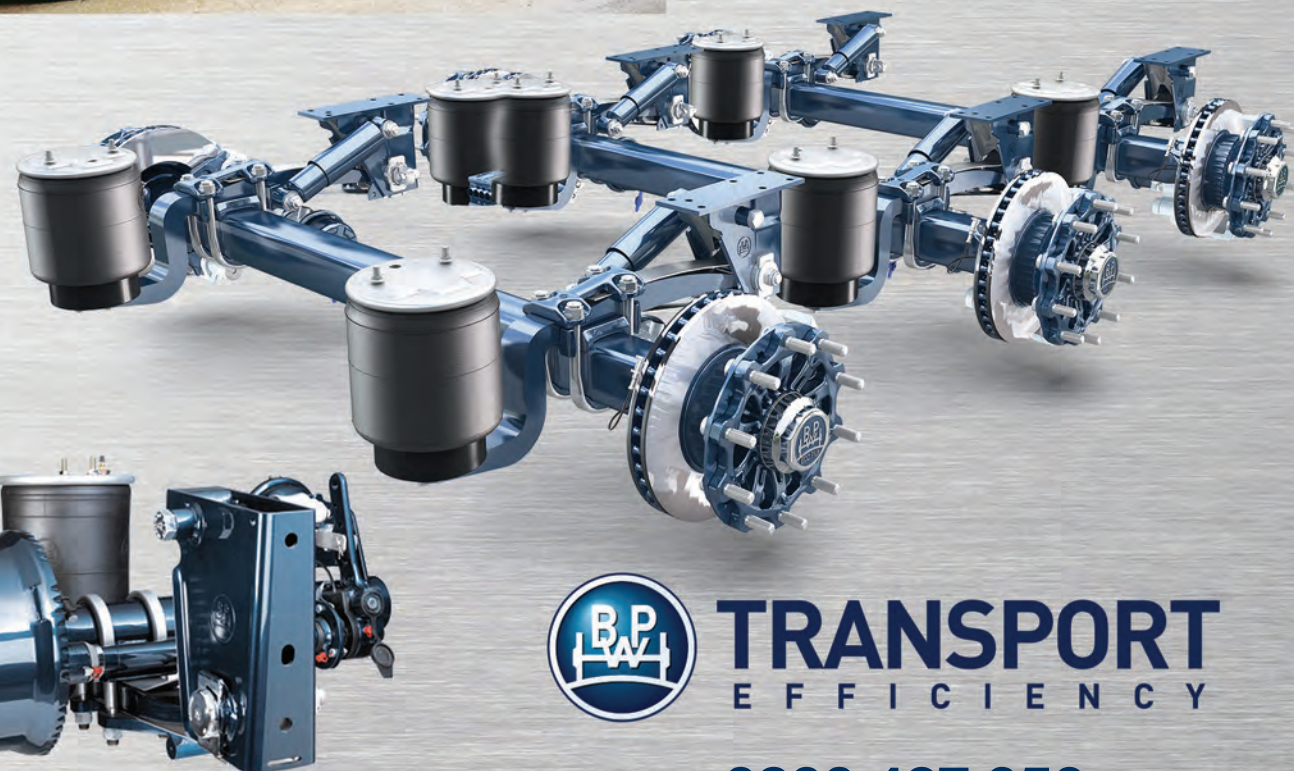


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OPEN ROAD - SUMMER 2013/14

From the MD



Welcome to the Summer 2013 issue of Open Road. You may notice we have updated the look of the magazine and this is thanks to the new team who have taken over its publication since Alan Pearce's retirement. Our focus is still our customers and their stories, both here and Australia, but we have introduced a new feature – an article from our parent company BPW, in Germany. These stories will showcase one of BPW's international customers and highlight innovations that are being made.

As 2013 draws to a close we look back on another busy year, both for us and for the transport industry in general. At BPW Transport Efficiency we have enjoyed the steady growth provided by the market. We have had a few staff changes, and have added another technical position to the team, strengthening the aftermarket support to our customers. We have continued to develop our Service Provider network with more than 800 workshop staff throughout the country completing our training modules.

The industry has seen the introduction of 50 MAX, which has been a welcome and long overdue step for efficiency gains. Although this has seen an increase in trailer sales and modifications, it has also placed a degree of pressure on the permit process and subsequent strain on the resources at NZTA. This has been frustrating for trailer builders and their customers. Let's hope the outcome will be worth the wait and deliver the anticipated benefits.

The BPW Group is focused on becoming the system partner of vehicle manufacturers, and the international mobility partner of transport companies. Those who attended the IAA International Commercial Vehicle exhibition in Hanover in September 2012 will know, BPW clearly demonstrated its direction and market position with the introduction of the BPW ECO Tronic TCONTROL trailer telematics systems, ECO AIR composite airtanks as well as a wide range of high-quality and innovative system components. We trust our local customers will benefit from this global expertise and worldwide network in the future.

We hope you enjoy the new look Open Road, and if you have any feedback, please do not hesitate to email sales@bpwte.co.nz

From everyone at BPW Transport Efficiency, we wish you and your family a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

KATE BUCKNELL

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THE ARTFUL LEGACY

Take a modern fleet and combine it with 'old school' service standards such as reliability and you get a company that takes its name and its market seriously. And that's exactly what Reliance Transport does.

Words by Mike Isle, photos supplied



“Meet the market.”

That was the concept and the promise that marked the beginning of west Auckland trucking outfit Reliance Transport back in 1959.

Founders Ken Darrah and Bob Martin saw the need for fast and, above all, reliable transport to serve the local market gardens.

That was the market requirement and both men were determined to meet it.

That was then, and things have moved on since then. Some things.

These days the company, now managed by Ken's sons Mark and Grant Darrah, has moved from market gardens but those key service deliveries—fast and reliable—have remained and have enabled Reliance Transport to evolve into a modern, professional and successful

company now focussed on container delivery to and from Auckland's port.

Today it operates 12 shifts a week and has a fleet of 36 trucks and 60 semi-trailers.

That's the raw figures and the short history. But as Mark points out in his interview they are not what make the company special.

“There is little unique about us or what we do,” he says.

Mark may be right, if a little modest in that; at least as far as the numbers and the logistics are concerned.

So maybe it is over to a dispassionate journalist to look for something else in the make up of this company, something that has given it a loyal customer base and a reputation for—well—reliability.

Maybe something like this ...



Reliance Transport—a major presence at Auckland's port



Reliance Transport has been in business for more than half of century. In that time you accumulate a lot of what is called these days, in the rarefied climate of corporate-speak, ‘institutional knowledge.’

The rest of us just call it experience.

But it is not the experience itself, it is what you do with it that counts. And there we get back to Mark, Grant and their staff.

Collectively they run a modern professional fleet and service. The equipment is the best and is kept that way by an on-site maintenance team that provides the backbone of the company's promise of reliability.

But as modern as the fleet is, it is more the company's focus on service delivery, instilled by its founders and maintained to this day by Mark and Grant, that starts with recognising the needs of customers and identifying the best way to meet those needs.

That's their success and that's their priority.

It takes constant monitoring of the industry, the market, the economy and the equipment, and Mark and Grant do it well. A day after the interview both are heading overseas to assess new equipment.

Even the casual observer can tell that both men are passionate about their company's reputation and service delivery. It is clearly



in their blood, and their guiding principle.

They are clever and astute. They learn and evolve from their collective experience. They apply it for the ultimate benefit of their customers.

There is the key to their success. Applied experience. An artful legacy. It doesn't make

Reliance Transport unique; but it does make it special.

And reliable.

And a reason why some of Reliance's customers have been with them for forty years or more, and some of the staff even longer. 🚛



Words and photographs
by Emily Weekes

From dust to door



Rob Burns shares a long history with the Axedale clay mine, east of Bendigo, Victoria. His late father started there in the 1940s with a pick and shovel, and later ran the site. Rob and his brothers eventually took over and began to carve out new prospects. In 2001, Rob established Claypro, specialising in delivering high grade, finely ground clay to clients around the state and country.

Axedale clay has been used for more than 100 years," explains Rob. "It's equal to some of the great clays in England and is extremely plastic, which makes it an excellent binding agent."

To date, Claypro's finely ground clay has been used as a plasticiser in crushed rock

on the Pakenham, Geelong, Seymour and Nagambie bypasses as well as construction work on the Calder Freeway.

"Our product also makes a beautiful render and mortar when mixed with sand and is also used in top-end ceramics and pottery production," says Rob.

"The tanker allows us to deliver within 24 hours, but mostly we get it there sooner. It cuts down on overheads and eliminates the bagging process for our customers."

One customer has discovered that the addition of Claypro in the production of heat beads results in a far superior product, which is now exported to Europe, one of the most competitive markets in this area.

"We're still discovering the uses of our product," says Rob. "We supply major national companies under their label and are happy to work with bigger companies who can look after marketing and distribution."

With half his customers based in Victoria, Rob saw the chance to offer a service in addition to the packaging and supplying of Claypro which until now had been done in 20 kilogram paper sacks and 1,200 kilogram bags.

"We saw an opportunity to go to bulk handling and silo and pressure tanker delivery to eliminate the packaging for customers," says Rob.

Some years ago, Rob bought a second-hand pressure tanker to meet deliveries. More

recently, he invested in a 29 tonne, 40 cubic metre Convair tanker.

"We bought a Convair because they are locally made, they discharge and clean out exceptionally well, and they have the option of BPW suspension and axles," says Rob.

"The tanker allows us to deliver within 24 hours, but mostly we get it there sooner," he adds. "It cuts down on overheads and eliminates the bagging process for our customers."

According to Rob, choosing BPW axles and airbag suspensions for the tanker was a "no brainer."


"Thirty years ago I bought a trailer with BPW axles and another one with different axles, which we never stopped having to fix," recalls Rob. "We never touched the BPW axles and the life we got out of it was extraordinary."

"I look at trailers differently to a lot of people,"

laughs Rob. "When I walk past one I can't help checking out the tyres to see how they're wearing. It's become obvious over the years that BPW products cost you less in the long run."

Over the years, Rob and his team have crafted a system that delivers a superior product and attracts a range of customers. Peter Gallagher manages the plant and oversees a number of staff onsite each day.

"Peter has a great eye for detail. He sweats the small stuff, which is good because it makes up for my inadequacies," says Rob with a chuckle. "It's taken us a while to reach the standard we have now and we've learnt a lot along the way."

"I like the variation in what I do," says Rob. "I might be driving the tanker one day, working together with a customer or back here in the office the next. For me, it's always been about the challenge." 

WHERE EVERYONE KNOWS YOUR NAME

Relationships are important to the Piopio-based Progress Transport. We visited the operation and talked to owners Mark and Donna about those relationships and returned with a shaggy-dog story.

Words and photographs by Mike Isle



IT'S RAINING THE DAY WE VISITED PROGRESS TRANSPORT. RAINING HARD. VISIBILITY IS BAD, AND SEVERAL LOCAL ROADS HAVE BEEN CLOSED THROUGH SLIPS. BUT PROGRESS IS BUSY. ...THE BUSINESS IS CARRYING ON REGARDLESS OF THE WEATHER.



He's like a welcoming committee of one-- Crazy Dave.

Blair, one of Progress Transport's main drivers, supposedly owns him. But you get the feeling that Crazy Dave owns the place and owns his owner—he's that nonchalant, confident and relaxed about most things.

In those aspects, the bitsa with the strange and unexplained name epitomises much about this Piopio-based operation. Progress Transport gives the appearance of country homeliness where everyone knows your name. That's deliberate without being contrived. It's also professional. In the highly competitive haulage industry in and around Piopio, relationships are important. So is history.

It's a history that goes back to 1962 when a local, Bruce Thompson, purchased an existing operation, Taylor Bros Transport and changed its name to Progress Transport. A year later Thompson was joined as driver and manager by Terry Bentham, father of the current owner Mark Bentham. The business comprised six four-wheelers and consisted of mainly metal and fertiliser cartage in and around Waitomo.

Mark joined the business straight from school in 1978, initially as a driver, then as despatch manager and then, in 1987, as part owner with wife Donna.

Business was already thriving following the big impetus in the 70s when railways moved out and local operators such as Progress Transport moved in to take up the lucrative stock haulage to local works. It remains a big part of the Progress business today, along with wool and the earlier staples of metal and fertiliser.

It's a diverse business, in more ways than one. The current Progress fleet comprises 17 trucks: a Kenworth, three Freightliners, a DAF and the balance made up of Scania and Isuzus.

There are also 20 trailers. Mark recently moved to BPW running gear, suspension and disc brakes, with aluminium housing bolted to the chassis, which Mark describes as "top quality combination with no problems."

The drivers and other staff in this Progress enterprise match that quality. Quality staff is not uncommon in the trucking industry and many of the firms in the industry point to that as a factor in their success. But Progress



Above; Crazy Dave.

Right: Mark Bentham pictured here (right) with driver and Crazy Dave owner Blair

boasts something a little extra and a little bit special.

Back to Crazy Dave and his owner Blair.

Blair and Crazy Dave were born, raised and "educated" around Piopio.

Like Mark, Blair joined Progress from school and has been with the company for 14 years.

It's the same with much of the rest of the 25-strong staff: local, long-established and in some cases multi-generational.

Mark and Donna's own son Patrick is in the business as a driver. That makes a third generation of the Bentham family.

It's raining the day we visited Progress Transport. Raining hard. Visibility is bad, and several local roads have been closed through slips.

But Progress is busy. Mark, with his despatch background, is busy reallocating trucks and loads. The business is carrying on regardless of the weather.

Blair and Crazy Dave (snug in his purpose-built compartment bolted to the chassis) will take time off for the requisite photo.

But then it is back to business.

It's a business built on reliability and relationships. And in this town, a town in which everybody knows your name and which incidentally is just down the road from the legendary Colin Meads, the last thing you want to do is drop the ball.

Even Crazy Dave is not crazy enough to fetch it back for you. 🐕



FAMILY FORGING ITS FUTURE

Beginning with a single truck, Geelong's Dunoon family now transports thousands of tonnes of sand, soil and turf blends across the region using its fleet of trucks and trailers.

Words by Tamara Heath



A Hamelex White 4-axle dog trailer making a delivery to Geelong's Simonds Stadium. The business supplied turf sands and aggregate for the construction of the new playing surface at Simonds Stadium in 2010.

NEWCOMB SAND AND SOIL • VIC

Walk into Newcomb Sand and Soil Supplies and you could be greeted by any one of the five Dunoon siblings. Joanne runs the office of the Geelong-based business and Pamela oversees sales. Their brothers Chris and David are the operations and general managers respectively. Their youngest brother, Stuart, is the earthmoving and workshop manager.

daughter are always around. Chris's three sons work here on Saturdays," he said. The Dunoons run their seven-day a week business from an onsite office on the Bellarine Highway that was originally the family home. David, 48, points to one of the offices, saying "that was once my bedroom". Doug and Joy initially began the family business by storing and stockpiling sand and



Parents, Doug and Joy, who began Newcomb Sand and Soil Supplies as a much smaller enterprise 50 years ago, are now in their 70s but continue to play an active role in the business. "We have the next generation coming along too," said Stuart, 40, a trained diesel mechanic who has been working in the family business for 20 years. "My two daughters and David's young

soil for industrial and residential markets in and around Geelong, with their first major contract being the supply of sand for the installation of natural gas pipes across Geelong in the 1960s. It was a job that came to the couple's fledgling business via a bit of luck, with the company running the job, McConnell Dowell, apparently looking up local sand suppliers in the Yellow Pages.



Above left: The tight-knit Dunoon family (back from left) Joanne, Stuart, Pamela, David, Chris, and (front) Doug and Joy. Above right: The Hamelex White 4-axle dog trailer at work on the Geelong foreshore, by Newcomb Sand and Soil Supplies' driver Ron Rantall Below right: Newcomb Sand and Soil Supplies' Stuart Dunoon.



"OUR FUTURE IS BEING FORGED BY OUR PAST"

"We were the only one," said Stuart with a laugh. Newcomb Sand and Soil now employs 32 people, as well as an increasing number of subcontractors, and operate a fleet of trucks, trailers and heavy machinery. Its fleet of trailers includes a 1994 Bassett Tipper on BPW conventional hubs, a Hamelex White 4-axle dog trailer, a Kennedy quad-axle low loader trailer, UPT plant trailers, and they are waiting for the delivery of a new Hercules 4-axle dog trailer, all on BPW AL II airbag suspensions and axles. Stuart said the family's first trailer was equipped with BPW Transpec New Generation axles, which they bought in 1980. "I remember Dad and I going to Fowler Road, Dandenong, to buy it. We traded it in only about 13 years ago," Stuart said. "Funny thing is, in 2010, I saw the trailer being used by one of our subcontractors. I knew it straight away. We did 990,000 kilometres in that trailer and it was still going," he said. "We use BPW running gear because the hardware doesn't need to be replaced. They are maintenance-friendly and more cost effective than others on the market." The family believes that, in addition to reliable equipment, it is their focus on reputation that

has allowed them to build such a successful business over half a century. "Our future is being forged by our past," said David, who joined the family business two years ago after an 18-year career with Transwest - Kalari. "Our parents led by example. Dad always paid his bills on the first of the month. Everyone got paid, no matter what. "So that is what we continue to do. No-one told us to do it, we just do it. "And we treat all of our customers the same, whether it is the lady buying a bag of mulch or the contractor buying 100,000 tonne of material." Stuart agreed, saying the family has customers who have been coming to them for more than 40 years. "Our business is driven by pride rather than dollar," Stuart said. "If you look after your customers then everything else just follows." Newcomb Soil and Sand marked 50 years of business on 3 November, with the family hosting a celebratory function for its current and former employees, contractors and clients.



BPW axles have some interesting and unusual applications, but putting a couple on the road in their new home is one out of the box.

DREAM MACHINES

Words and photographs by Jim Darby

Terry Dwan would call himself a tradesman, somebody who likes making things, and that he is, and he's very good at it, but he also makes dreams come true.

Take Rodney and Wendy Woodrow – farmers from Wandoan in South-Central Queensland – they'd worked hard on the land for decades, raised four children and their dream was to hit the road and travel.

"This has been our 20-year plan, to go travelling, we didn't just come up with it overnight," Rodney said.

But there were some minimum standards to meet: "My wife wants a hot shower, a flushing dunny and clean clothes – you won't get that out of a caravan."

Enter Supafloats in Warwick, Terry and Geraldine Dwan's business that specialises in custom-built truck backs and gooseneck floats. "Rodney had been pretty much dreaming of that float for a long time before he put anything down on paper. When he came to us, he knew exactly what he wanted as far as living area and water and everything else goes," Terry said.

"He needed some help with trucks and trailers, but you know it makes it a lot easier when the customer actually knows what he wants."

"That doesn't mean you can't make adjustments along the way. You always get changes," Terry said, "when we get to the

fitting stage, we always tell our customers to come and walk through it ... we'll put things in position, like the sink and the toilet and make sure it's where they want it. We had Rodney here probably a dozen or 15 times while we were building that trailer."

In the end, it took 2,800 man hours to build. Quite a rig.

Terry's background is metal fabrication. He did his sheet metal apprenticeship in Warwick and set up Supafloats with his wife Geraldine ten years ago. Their son David has also joined the business. All-up, there's six people working at Supafloats, including three apprentices, and they have plenty to keep them busy.



“WE DESIGN AND BUILD GEAR TO GO INTO THAT COUNTRY AND COP IT.”

“Business is good at the moment. It’s all a little bit touch and go with all the Northern Territory and three quarters of Queensland being in drought, that’s not helping us a lot. Until the drought breaks and the cattle industry gets back on its feet properly again, we’re not going to have 18-month wait-lists like we’ve been spoilt with in the past,” Terry said.

They work Australia-wide but their main markets are Queensland, the Northern Territory and the top half of New South Wales. A lot of it is demanding country. “We’re doing a lot of heavy duty gear up into the Territory and North Queensland. We

design and build gear to go into that country and cop it – all dirt road work, all rough work and that’s one of the reasons we use BPW running gear. We’ve never had problems with it, whether it’s on-road or dirt road, we’ve never had a problem with it.”

Many of Supafloats’ customers want a float for stock work that can double-up for sporting interests like campdrafting and polo-cross. A typical build would be a 45’ trailer that could take ten or 11 horses in the back and have living quarters at the front. They can be used as a mobile camp for stock work on a property and then, on the weekends, they go and play.



A SUPER FLOAT

Wendy and Rodney Woodrow’s Supafloat set-up is the ultimate home away from home. In fact, it is their home. They’ve leased out their farm and hit the road. “We could buy a holiday house for what we paid for this,” Rodney said, “but you might find you’re in a street with nobody talking to you.”

There’s always conversation on the path they travel – he’s a clay target shooter and coach, so they follow that circuit and they follow it in style.

The cabin behind the Mercedes Benz Axor 1833 truck is Rodney’s man cave, a workshop complete with tools and toys right down to a working lathe.

In the float, from front to back is a bedroom, fully-equipped kitchen and extendable living/dining area and bathroom and laundry. Right at the back is an in-built bay for their Suzuki Sierra and an outboard motor for the fold-out boat. This bay can also double as a guest bedroom.

The roof catches water to fill five tanks underneath and there’s a grey water recycling system – all-up there’s enough water to drink, wash and flush for three weeks. There’s even solar power and a dish for phone, internet and satellite TV.

The trailer is fitted with BPW ECO Plus axles and airbag suspension. When it comes to the running gear, the float’s builder Terry Dwan says: “we haven’t had a fault with it, so why would we change?”

Top: Wendy and Rodney Woodrow – off the farm and on the road.
Below: Wendy Woodrow – room to move.



“We’ve got gear up north that might never see bitumen. They might see a bit of it doing Warwick (rodeo) and Paradise Lagoon (campdrafting), but that’ll be the only two times in the year they see bitumen, the rest of it they’re on dirt and gravel roads,” Terry said. “They’re a well-fitted out, massive caravan on top of BPW axles. If you want it to stand up to those type of conditions, that’s what you have to build. People don’t want to fix things, they just want to drive ‘em – who wants to get under it?”

Dust, and keeping it out, can be a huge challenge. The only guaranteed way Supafloats has found to make the inside of a float dustproof is by pressurising them. “Towing them behind a truck doing 100 k an hour down a dirt road, that thing’s a vacuum cleaner,” Terry said. “You get the tiniest pin hole in anything – a door seal, whatever – and it’s going to suck because the bull dust is just whistling past and it’s a negative pressure inside wanting to suck it in

Clockwise top left: A father and son team: Terry (left) and David Dwan of Supafloats.

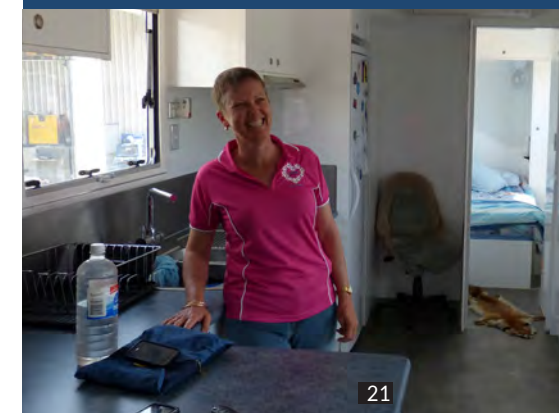
From any angle, this is one very well thought-out home for the road.

Built tough for the toughest terrain – BPW ECO Plus axles.

Room for the runabouts – the bay that hosts the Suzuki Sierra and outboard is accessible from inside the trailer and can double as a guest bedroom.

because of the speed you’re doing.”

In his design work, Terry uses a basic auto-CAD software program, but he also inputs with a plug-in from BPW. “It’s loaded in there, so if I want to put wheels on a trailer, I just drag-and-drop. It’s the same for every one of the BPW components, it’s even got your raise and lower on the airbags. I’m no computer genius, but I can work it.”





Where it all started: the hothouses that produce the quality that these days extends to all aspects of KPH.

SOMETHING SPECIAL IN DRURY

Quality control and management are the cornerstones of this growing business in South Auckland. We visited KPH Transport to see the successful model at work.

Words and photos by Mike Isle

The first thing to strike you when you visit the KPH Transport plant in Drury, south of Auckland, is the order. Everything about the place is orderly, tidy, immaculate, and business-like—just like the business itself. KPH Transport started back in 1994 when

a youngish commercial grower called Brett Wharfe was on the hunt for a better way to deliver his produce—and that of surrounding growers—to market. There was nothing much wrong with the existing system, independent contractors, but Brett was striving for reliability and, above all, quality—hallmarks of his produce business NZ Hothouse (NZH).

NZ Hothouse itself had shown impressive growth through produce quality and centralised logistics. The latter was to provide the answer Brett was seeking for his delivery issues—he would centralise his transport, take it in-house and maintain his own quality control. KPH Transport was born.



Above: Brett Wharfe and his management team pictured outside their Drury head office. Brett is to the left.



It started with one truck, and recognition that the truck and its driver were the company's direct interface with the customers—both needed to be immaculate—an instilled culture that is maintained today. Ten years ago KPH decided to expand its operation into transporting produce for other customers. Today KPH Transport's twenty trucks—99% Scania and all chilled—deliver produce throughout New Zealand and to international airports where it is exported to high-end Asian markets. The company's own three-bay workshop maintains the fleet. And does it well; only one truck has been "retired". Another factor is fleet management; KPH's transport manager, Tim Sewell, has a policy of running his newer trucks on the long-haul routes and when they "get a little longer in the tooth" they are then put on the short-haul routes. Reliability of the fleet is crucial. All running gear is BPW, which Tim describes as 100% reliable. He has never had an axle failure. All temperature control units are Thermo King—again 100% reliable. Brett's philosophy of never regretting buying quality has paid off.

Whilst fleet and produce quality is relatively easy to maintain with good management and specs, driver quality is somewhat more challenging. NZH director Simon Watson explains: "There is a shortage of good quality drivers, and it seems to be getting worse. The (driving) industry is not as attractive as it once was as a career path. It's an industry problem. We (KPH) have addressed it by holding on to our drivers and recognising their skills; we also train one or two new drivers a year. But not all companies do that, and not all are as fortunate as KPH in terms of driver quality." Part of the problem, says Tim Sewell, who is responsible for much of the training, is the cost and time required to get into the business—it can cost \$2,000 or more to get a heavy vehicle licence and takes more than 18 months. KPH usually pays that for its budding drivers, but others don't and the cost can be prohibitive for youngsters starting out. KPH Director and General Manager Paul Butler says at KPH they believe it's important to be part of the solution not add to the problem. Some of the solution lies with the government. He says the government has

changed the driver qualification requirements to make it slightly cheaper to keep a licence. But to ensure that driver quality is not reduced the government should look to funding or subsidising driver training courses. In KPH's case, staff quality is matched by staff quantity. Including packing-house staff, KPH Transport and its parent company NZ Hothouse employ about 270 staff, peaking to more than 300 during the growing and packing season. That makes them one of the largest employers in the district. To maintain that size operation, to maintain the quality crucial to the food industry, to maintain the relationships critical to a successful business and to maintain a long-haul fleet in top-class condition requires something special. When you visit KPH Transport in Drury you can feel it: the orderliness, the commitment to quality and, above all, the professionalism. These guys know what they are doing, and how do it. Brett Wharfe, his management team and the upwards of 300 staff have created something special in Drury. It's called quality.

SPECIALISED PORT OF CALL

ME Transport Services, a newly formed world-class logistics operation, was born out of a call from customers who required end-to-end specialised services.

Words and photographs by Mark Pearce



ME TRANSPORT SERVICES • NSW

Darren Stocks is a third generation transport man who remembers driving the family truck for his grandfather Max and father Tony some thirty years ago. At that time, the Stocks family had a long, proud and hard-working history carting livestock in the Central West region of New South Wales. Darren then decided to get out of the transport game to become an electrician; over the years it was the concrete plant business that attracted his skills, followed by the opportunity to head up global logistics interests for global manufacturing business operations.

vacant property in Parker Street, Carrington NSW, just three years ago, and a subsequent \$8 million spend on infrastructure, the two road transport veterans were able to consolidate everything and put their assets to work to build a world-class coal activities and bulk logistics operation. “We currently have an asset list of about 130 pieces of equipment. We run a standard fleet of 28 Mack prime movers, a fleet of front-end loaders, forklifts, crushers and screens, and a mixed fleet of more than 70 B-doubles, flat tops and single tippers,” explains Darren. Carting between 5,000 and 8,000 tonnes



Darren Stocks
Managing Director
– ME Transport
Services



“THE BPW GEAR STACKS UP, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE’RE WORKING OUT AT THE MINES AS THEY NEED FULL SPECS OF EVERYTHING THAT WE RUN.”



He spent a lot of time dealing with networks throughout the manufacturing, mining and port industries, and after many years of experience, he and his business partner kicked off ME Transport Services. Darren is now the managing director of ME Transport Services and confesses the real reason he went back into the road transport game was the people. “The idea of ME Transport was born out of our customers needing specialist services. I left the industry a couple of times but it was the customers who wanted me back,” he says. With the purchase of a 15,000 square metre

of coal, on any given day, from the bottom of Lake Macquarie into the coal loader at Carrington, and running a general fleet from Sydney and the Hunter Valley to Newcastle, the company decided to standardise its tipper trailer fleet using Tefco Trailers and Colt Industries, which are all running on BPW drum brake axles, and AL II air suspensions. Flat tops and B-doubles from Freightier Trailers make up the rest of the fleet, of which 90% is also fitted with BPW equipment. “My first BPW experience was with a Tefco trailer back in 1990, so that was the beginning

of it all. The running gear is quite important to us because our main focus is standardising the fleet so we can reduce our stock of spare parts. We need a stable platform to operate on and that’s why we have also opted for all the equipment that we have. Our work today is not just on the highway, we’re off-road as well, and the BPW gear stacks up, especially when we’re working out at the mines as they need full specs of everything that we run.” The newly established port precinct premises are a vital component for Darren and his team in providing a one-stop, end-to-end logistics

service for their customers. Apart from the coal hauling division, ME Transport operates a containerisation and packing division for general bulk freight, and quarantine services with a fully accredited on-site quarantine wash bay to clean, inspect and sign-off on massive machinery and other equipment imported into the country. ME Transport also controls a bulk storage facility to consolidate cargos from 5,000 to 20,000 tonnes, which they cart and load onto the ships to be transported all over the world. “When you’re in this game, you’ve got to be

in the port precinct to bring product under bond straight off the wharf so we can get it inspected and cleaned, and we’re able to consolidate bulk materials and load the cargo while it’s still under bond or quarantine. We also provide the loading logistics, management and reporting on all movements in and out using our four-deck 120-tonne weigh bridge. That’s what people want - they want to be able to make one phone call, send off an email, and say here’s our schedule for the month.” Darren still enjoys the hands-on approach as he often jumps into a truck or a loader to

understand what his staff and the drivers in the field are facing; after all, it’s been his ‘family first’ attitude and the passion of the people who have been instrumental in driving his success. “Running a staff of 50 odd people, it’s good for morale if I get out there in a rig. It’s good for drivers and operators to see you out there in the trenches and for me to see the issues they’re facing on a day-to-day basis. It’s all about having staff who understands the logistics industry, and people who want to buy into the dream.”

NO SUBSTITUTE FOR EXPERIENCE

He's driven his own trucks, he's driven stock-cars. But what drives Andrew Drinnan is the will to be ahead of the game. We examine why a wealth of experience makes for a successful operator.

Words and photographs by Mike Isle



Andrew Drinnan is an engaging character and an interesting talker.

Spend an hour in his company and you come away infused with good yarns, anecdotes and an insight into thirty years of ups and downs in the transport industry.

There is not much Andrew hasn't done or— with his current fast growing fleet—yet to do. He has just taken delivery of a new truck and trailer rig and, like the rest of his 11-strong fleet, it will be contracted to Toll Holdings for general cartage throughout the North Island— often putting in double shifts.

That's the other thing you realise about Andrew Drinnan, he doesn't do anything by half measures. He is driven and his work ethos is impressive. Not only does he run his fleet, he and his wife Raewyn own a couple of farms up north, he's also a well-respected rugby referee, the patriarchal head of a successful sporting family, and at an earlier time drove stock-cars.

He is passionate about all of them. But his earliest love was his trucks. Even back in the beginning in 1987 when he started as an owner-driver with the erstwhile Bexley Corporation he had the upward momentum. Soon his one truck, a Nissan, became five trucks; impressive when you consider he was then contracted to Waikato By Products who had an ideological aversion to owner-drivers.

Back then Andrew's main occupation was carting fat and bones to abattoirs throughout Auckland. A specialist business but Andrew soon sewed up half of the market.

Half the market. Cue a discount war to claim the rest and the stripping of profits. Andrew decided to look elsewhere. What he came up with was rubbish.

In 1992 he entered the waste management and waste care market. By 1995 when he sold that business to Onyx he was the third biggest operator in Auckland.

After that came the Peter Baker Transport contract. That rolled along for a while until Peter Baker decided to replace his fleet with an independent contractor. It went out to tender. Characteristically Andrew was in for that, though most pundits weren't considering him a front-runner. They were wrong. Andrew Drinnan Investments was the successful tenderer. Andrew found out on his honeymoon.

That stint in Andrew's career path began with five trucks in 1995; by 2003 he had 36 trucks in 16 centres nationwide.

The relationship with Bakers ended in 2009—a combination of a downturn in the economy and cost cutting. Andrew took a break from transport and concentrated on the farms and Absolute Waste, a company he started in 2006, though he still had a seven-strong fleet lying dormant.

An opportunity to get back into the transport business came in 2011 when he was invited to contribute one truck to the Toll fleet. That is now eleven trucks; some on the Auckland to Hastings run with general freight and others out of Auckland and Whangarei.

He employs seventeen drivers on the Toll contract.

His operational philosophy is simple in principle, if not in practice. It is to be ahead of the game. A truck ahead. Most often Andrew will have planned to have a truck ready at a moment's notice to respond to any additional requirement Toll may have. Flexibility is the key, he says.

At the end of the interview Andrew talks with pride of his family and of the role of his wife Raewyn in the business. Raewyn is at an early education course, their daughter is at ice-skating practice, their son at rugby practice. Andrew is about to go off to inspect his latest addition to the Toll fleet.

The family relationship is strong.

The relationship with Toll, which resurrected Andrew's trucking career, is also strong. Andrew likens it to a partnership and makes sure his fleet and drivers live up to the high standards Toll demands.

The future looks good for Andrew Drinnan. He can look back on a wealth of experience and by his own admission a life in which he drove himself and others to succeed.

The pace may have slackened a little. Not by much, but enough for Andrew to enjoy the fruits of all that experience.

Andrew Drinnan is content.

"Come on, we'll go and see the truck," he says.

The interview is at an end. Andrew is moving on.



An active mover

O'Sullivan's Transport was borne of an idea between brothers in 1969. On the family farm in Elmore, Victoria, the business began with the purchase of a 34-foot two-deck trailer and one International prime mover. Now a leader in livestock cartage, O'Sullivan's runs a fleet of 55 prime movers and 90 trailers.

Words and photographs by Emily Weekes

“When I was twenty, a long time ago,” laughs Gavin O'Sullivan, “I bought a small livestock truck. My brother, Peter got his license a year later and we lived out here on the farm, building the business from there.” After acquiring other businesses along the way, the brothers began to specialise in livestock transport. Today, O'Sullivan's is one of the biggest sheep carriers in Australia, moving thousands of sheep and cattle each week. It's a specialised industry with drivers needing to have their own dog and a passion for driving. “Good drivers are the backbone of our business,” explains Gavin. “We don't have a big turnover of drivers and some have been here more than 30 years.”

Still operating from the family farm, O'Sullivan's relies on a dedicated staff of almost 100, from drivers and mechanics to logistics and operations specialists. “We have five drovers in utes attending markets in each state every day, which is a big cost,” says Gavin. “They work long hours, might have to drive 400 kilometres to their next market, and won't finish until the evening.” “Only a few carriers offer this service but we're passionate about livestock cartage and know the difference it makes to our customers,” says Gavin. The transport company offers full feedlot facilities to hold cattle and sheep for scheduling, as the client requires. Gavin points

“ONLY A FEW CARRIERS OFFER THIS SERVICE [DROVERS] BUT WE'RE PASSIONATE ABOUT LIVESTOCK CARTAGE AND KNOW THE DIFFERENCE IT MAKES TO OUR CUSTOMERS.”

to a typical page in his diary, an evening's work sorting out the logistics of what has to be done in the paddocks across three states the next day. “It's not for the faint-hearted,” Gavin jokes. “We have four phones going of a night and we're often here until 8pm – our reputation is built on how quickly and safely we can move stock around and our ability to make up loads.” With such a large share of the market, O'Sullivan's is also able to shift variations of numbers; buyers are not restricted to making up a full load and more customers are catered for, no matter how big or small their request. Fleet Manager, Mark Oliver began working at O'Sullivan's in 1985 as a mechanic and later a workshop foreman. He's now responsible for managing the fleet of 55 prime movers as well as more than 90 trailers on BPW heavy duty suspension and drum brake axles. “I've seen a lot of changes in 28 years and all for the good,” says Mark. “Today we have

better technology in trucks, trailers and of course, BPW axles and suspensions.” “We've set our base on one lot of parts and one lot of brake shoes across the fleet. They're strong, robust and rarely let us down,” he explains. “Our trailer manufacturers know our specs and our builds, so even the maintenance is more streamlined now and we have access to BPW parts within 40 kilometres which is great.” He also sneaks in a mention of Gavin's induction in 2010 into the Shell Rimula Hall of Fame in Alice Springs. “It was recognition for service to the industry,” says Mark, “not just as an actual owner but more for what you've contributed.” As a founding member of the Livestock Transport Association of Victoria (LTAV), it seems fitting recognition. Gavin started the association in 1987 and is a life member. “It was just a matter of getting everyone together,” says Gavin. “We did it from this

office, got out the phone books and invited all the carriers to a meeting. Sixty turned up on a Saturday morning and most didn't know each other.” In the early days, the LTAV achieved volume loading for livestock and removed sheep carrier licenses. “We were a new body,” explains Gavin, “so we went to government intent on lobbying for a better deal for road transport.” With his son, Sam now Operations Manager, Gavin attends the markets each day, returning to the office to help with logistics in the evening. “I still like the droving side of it,” says Gavin. “In 45 years, I've never got sick of going to sheep sales.” Of the business, Gavin finds the most satisfaction in having built a solid service for their customers over so many years. “It's been a good journey and we've learnt a lot as we've come along.” With a grin, he adds: “I guess you like to see the look of your trucks coming around the corner to the sale yards too.”

How good a rig looks and how well it runs reveals a lot about its operator; about their pride in their work and their determination to deliver.

The milk run

Words and photographs by Jim Darby

The milk always gets through to towns like Dalby, Roma and Chinchilla out west of Brisbane, thanks to Joe Bennett and his drivers. They'll get it through come hell or high water. And over recent years there's been a hell of a lot of high water.

Joe's run covers around 5,800 kilometres a week between the Dairy Farmers depot at Crestmead in Brisbane and smaller depots out

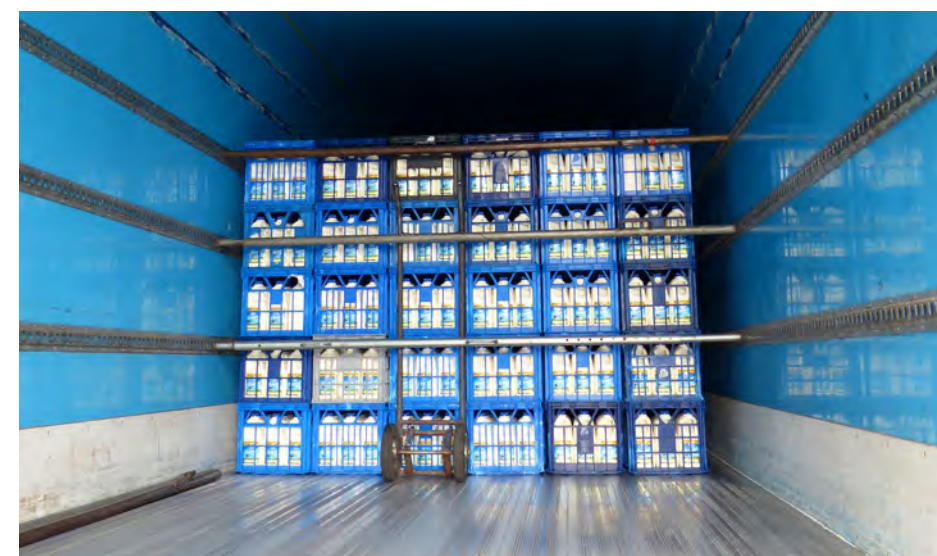
west. To do it, Joe relies on one rig – a Volvo FH540 Globetrotter pulling a Southern Cross Arctic Star refrigerated van on top of BPW running gear.

To keep the show on the road, quality is paramount.

The trailer runs on BPW drum brake axles, well-known for durability and longevity. For proof of that, look no further than Joe's

trailer – it's just had its first set of replacement brake shoes and drums fitted at 1.8 million kilometres and that was only due to stone damage.

In Joe's words: "when I bought this trailer, I said to Phil Foxe at Southern Cross, 'what's the best suspension?' and he said 'BPW'. So I said, 'right, that's what we're using. You get what you pay for, that's what it all boils down to.'"



Above: Carrying the load – the size of the destination depots means the milk still has to be loaded and unloaded using hand carts. Below left: Joe Bennett (left) and his driver Shane Strasburg. The trailer has clocked up 1.9 million kilometres and is on its third truck.

It's a unique operation. Because they're often delivering to small depots, it's a hands-on job – the milk is moved in crates with a hand trolley, rather than on pallets and that means around 30 hours a week is taken up loading and unloading.

The week starts with a major clean. The truck and trailer usually return to Joe's home base at Iredale on Sunday morning and the clean-up is a family ritual in the afternoon.

"My eldest son, he does the van, and I do the truck and Kath (Joe's partner) does the wheels. People ask: 'how do you get it so shiny?' Want to know the secret? We use tank water, rain water from the tank – don't have to use a chamois and don't have to use any polish. Use town water and you get streaks in it. If you wash it and keep it clean, it'll stay clean, but if you leave it, you'll never get it back."

Pride in appearance is part of it, and that tells a lot about how you present your operation to the world, but there are practical benefits too. It means the entire rig gets a complete inspection, much like a pilot inspecting the aircraft when it's on the ground. As Joe says: "you go over every part of it don't you? You pick up any problems."

Joe shares the driving with his son Sam and Shane Strasburg of the well-known Queensland trucking family. They know the gear and the terrain. With floods a regular event in Queensland over the last few years, Joe and his team have had to be smart but flexible to get the milk through.

"In the big (2011) floods we probably covered an extra 1,000 kilometres ... you'd have to guess where the flooding was going to be so you could work out if you could get into a place and get out again.

"When the floods happened this year, I rang Kath and said 'meet me in town with enough clothes and food for three days and I'll just go and sort it'. So I just went and sorted it and came back when it was finished."

THE HIGH WATER MARK

It was mid-January 2011. All the rain was falling upstream in the catchment. There was so much rain up there. Downstream in Iredale, near Grantham, where Joe and Kath live, the creek was rising. When it comes up that can make the crossing difficult and the short run to the Warrego Highway becomes impassable.

Joe asked Kath to keep an eye on it, to let him know when the water subsided so he could get his truck across. Only this time, the water kept getting deeper. It started coming down in waves two to three metres high. What was once the Lockyer Creek was now a torrent. At its peak, the water rose 18 metres, around 60 feet.

Joe, Kath and some of their neighbours were watching the rising water in astonishment. "You would have seen footage of a car with people on top float past," Joe said. "That was here. Then a girl came floating past with her head bobbing above the water. I started wondering what I could do."

There were some rescue personnel in the area – one of them on Joe's side of the water and three others who'd been attempting to save the people on top of the car on the other side.

So Joe launched his boat into the boiling flood waters, hoping to rescue the woman, but at least confident he could bring the other rescuers over to his side of the bank. He got those three across and in the end they abandoned the rescue bid by water, beached the boat on what was normally part of Joe's front lawn and hopped into a couple of 4WDs, following alongside the torrent. They spotted the woman again and as they did she was rescued by helicopter. Ordinary people doing extraordinary things.



Above: Heading out into the flood waters in 2011 and bringing back the rescue personnel. The shed in the inset shot can be seen on the right of the main shot (above). (The flood photographs were taken by Joe's neighbours, Annette and Gary Johnston).

A bulk goods transporter with environmental credentials

Rüdebusch Baustoffe und Transporte e. K. from Braunschweig, a city of approximately 250,000 people and located in the state of Lower Saxony in Northern Germany, has a fleet of 190 tractor units, and delivers to building sites primarily.

Words by Juliane Gringer, photographs by Olaf Meinhardt





Every ten minutes, a vehicle from Rüdebusch Baustoffe und Transporte e. K. arrives at the building site: Asphalt is delivered, and it has to be on schedule in order to arrive hot. The vehicles are precisely timed, which is made possible by good scheduling, plenty of experience and solid teamwork. Rüdebusch supplies construction materials of all kinds: Sand, concrete, gravel, mineral mixtures, asphalt, crushed stone, topsoil, cobblestone bedding – everything that is required for building new roads or renovating existing ones. The logistics company with its headquarters in Braunschweig focuses on bulk materials: 35 years after its foundation, Rüdebusch is now one of the biggest bulk haulage companies in Northern Germany – with 250 employees and four sites: in Braunschweig, Hecklingen, Ilfeld and Felsberg. Fleet manger Dieter Placzek is in charge of Rüdebusch's vehicles. He has been with the company since 2003. "When I started here, we had 75 vehicles in the yard, and now there are 190 tractor units," says the 64 year old. "This includes many tipper vehicles, but we also look after general cargo, sea containers or silo transports." Rüdebusch delivers to building sites primarily, but nevertheless its vehicles are equipped with disc brakes: "We have had great success with the disc brake, even in the harshest of conditions," says Placzek.

Rüdebusch also offers recycling of construction materials

Rüdebusch is a versatile company with many revenue streams. One of those is the concrete filling station. In addition, the company is also active in recycling: Rüdebusch can prepare construction materials in its own recycling

Opening spread: Building sites are supplied by the company not only with bulk materials and other construction materials, but also with vehicles such as this excavator.

Above: Rüdebusch has many tippers in its fleet: They transport bulk materials such as sand, gravel or mineral mixtures to building sites, where roads are being renovated or new ones built, for example.

Top right: Rüdebusch also has a ship in its fleet, the 'Inga R'. On a trip to Hamburg, it can hold as much as 48 truckloads. This saves money and protects the environment.

yard at the port in Braunschweig. For example, if building rubble is created during the renovation of motorways or demolition of buildings, the company transports it away, processes it and returns it to the site owner for use. The haulage company can also handle waste management for a construction project. What is more, Rüdebusch can store and tranship bulk goods at Braunschweig port, as well as loading and unloading inland waterway vessels. The company's own ship, 'Inga R', regularly operates for one of the main clients. This is located in the Harz Mountains, and needs to transport crushed stone to mixing plants in Cuxhaven or Hamburg. Rüdebusch used to transport this by road all the time – until the company bought the 'Inga R'. Now the deliveries go through the Mittelland Canal. One trip alone can carry 1,350 tonnes of material, corresponding to 48 truck journeys. This means transporting by water saves money, and the ship is one of the most environmentally-friendly means of transport.

Environmental protection is consistently practised at Rüdebusch

Driving as greenly as possible is an important goal for Rüdebusch. The company has "adopted a green policy for its operations", is how Dieter Placzek puts it. It has long been a matter of course for the company to use biodiesel in its tanks. What is more, the fleet is completely replaced every three years – this also makes it possible to drive the latest and thus particularly environmentally friendly vehicles at all times. "Technology sets the standard, and we feel ourselves obliged to fulfil it," says Placzek. "In addition, the vehicles are cheaper the more of them you have on the road." Last but not least, consumption also drops: "Seven or eight years ago, our trucks were using something like 50 litres per 100 kilometres, whereas now it is 30 litres," explains Placzek. The company is 35 years old: Founded in 1978 by Hans-Hermann Rüdebusch, an independent driver on local goods deliveries, Rüdebusch gradually extended his fleet and founded more branches. The company opened its own training centre in 2007 for providing driver training. The company's own driving school also puts fuel-saving driving on the curriculum. "We want to train our drivers according to the possibilities," says Placzek. Whether they are able to put their knowledge into practice is indicated by the telematics systems that all vehicles in the Rüdebusch fleet are equipped with: The devices not only indicate the current location of the vehicles, they also help the schedulers. They record data about the fuel consumption and braking distances, thus contributing to reducing pollution emissions and tyre wear. 



"WE HAVE HAD GREAT SUCCESS WITH THE DISC BRAKE, EVEN IN THE HARSHTEST OF CONDITIONS."

Dieter Placzek (right), fleet manager at Rüdebusch Baustoffe und Transporte e. K.



Filling up with concrete – at Rüdebusch, it is possible to draw off even small amounts of the building material

A horn sounds, lights flash and machinery starts to whistle; the conveyor belt rattles: This is a machine for filling up, but not with fuel – it is concrete! The grey mass flows into the customer's trailer from a height of two metres. One cubic metre, no more is required, he only wants to pour the foundation for a garden shed. Such small delivery amounts are no problem at the Rüdebusch filling station, indeed it has actually been specially designed for this: A concrete mixing plant in miniature format. The service is intended for private customers, gardeners and landscape designers. Often, they are unable to mix small and medium amounts of concrete on site, since this requires machines that also need to be transported, and takes time.

With the filling station, customers don't need to worry about this. "We saw a facility such as this at a company that we know in Southern Germany, and decided to adopt the idea,"



explains fleet manager Dieter Placzek. "It is a complete success, the demand is high." On Saturdays, the customers queue up – always when the DIY crowd are starting their projects. The service is uncomplicated and rapid: You report in and state the amount of concrete you need. After paying, you are given a chipcard. Then you drive your vehicle or trailer

underneath the loading conveyor. A chain hanging down indicates where the middle of the pile will be, showing where the concrete will be unloaded. The chipcard triggers delivery of the correct amount, the horn and flashing lights show when the "filling process" is starting and finishing – and after only 90 seconds you can drive off.

A Matter of Time...

Aotearoa Haulage is an outfit that has no time for down time. As a result, they have doubled their business in just two years.

Words by Mike Isle

One of the more satisfying, yet frustrating, challenges of putting a magazine story together is taking a fleet photo. Unless a photo already exists, a trucking operator will usually not have the time nor the will to take the fleet off the road to get one taken.

A case in point is Marsden Port-based Aotearoa Haulage.

On the day we visited to take photos and talk about a Quad that had been on the road for four years, Aotearoa had ten trucks hauling logs from throughout Northland to the busy port at Marsden Point. The only truck to be seen is one in the workshop for scheduled maintenance.

Taking the others off the road is out of the question.



The Quad, pictured in 2012, soon after its Type 2 conversion.



Family affair: (Left to right) Phil, Denise and Steve Batchelor.

That's the way it should be. It's good for business—and the way the Aotearoa management team of brothers Steve and Phil Batchelor and Steve's wife Denise have built their business.

No time for down time.

In two years their effort, and that of their drivers, has doubled the size of the business.

A great client helps. Aotearoa has Rosewarne Cable Logging, and Steve describes them as "excellent." But even that wouldn't last—certainly not for the five years like this one has—without maintaining the service delivery and the fleet on the road.

That fleet comprises three Freightliners (with another to arrive the day after the interview), three Scania's, three Western Stars and ten

trailers—mostly Patchells.

All on BPW running gear since 2009.

BPW was fitted to the Quad they took delivery of in 2009. The idea of the Quad was to do away with the lining up at gantries—some of which were, as Steve puts it diplomatically, "a little marginal." Originally the Quad came as a Type 1 with two steering axles. But with the advent and advantage of extra loading of Type 2 it was converted in 2012.

In September 2013 the regulations changed to 22 tonnes on the rear group. Weighing tolerances became not as crucial and the benefits of the Quad became even more apparent. The Quad these days is rarely off the road and has never had a breakdown.

Of course businesses rely on mechanical

reliability. But it is rare your life also depends on it, at least to the extent it did earlier in the life of Steve Batchelor. He's a helicopter pilot, and whilst these days he doesn't fly much, for many years in the past he was the pilot of the Whangarei Westpac Rescue Helicopter.

He learnt a lot about health and safety in those days and is quick to emphasise in his interview that it is a key operational factor for Aotearoa Haulage. The company is yet to have a major accident and does what it can not to court fate—that means a stringent maintenance schedule and an emphasis on driver training.


The latter is evidenced in a very tangible way. Aotearoa is a major contributor to the Northtec driving training course and employs some of its graduates. However, despite the efforts of Northtec, Aotearoa and others, lack of quality, trained drivers remains an issue for the north.

In the last few years truck numbers have tripled. Driver numbers have not; in fact they have remained largely static. There is no immediate solution in sight.

But Aotearoa Haulage is trucking along. Literally in the case of the Quad. As the interview draws to a close the Quad drives past the head office—too late for a photo—and the driver is on his way to the port with a full load from up north.

We are reluctant to stop him.

But does it matter? Not really. Denise will find a photo on her computer—better than than pull the unit of the road.

No one, least of all Aotearoa, has ever doubled their business taking photos. 

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