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The “Caterpillar” trademark is world famous but who are Gough Gough & Hamer? In New Zealand their name is synonymous with Caterpillar and as their sole Cat dealer, the company has grown with the promotion and use of their product and also with the development of a growing nation. The history of Head Office is not the purpose of this narrative but we would like to begin by giving the reader an idea how the company was formed and what went on in the earlier years . . .

The forerunner of Gough Gough & Hamer was a firm called Carrick Wedderspoon which was a Christchurch based company that had been formed in 1918 as engineers and merchants. The principal goods sold were electrical with Mr Harry Hamer being the secretary and Mr Edgar C Gough as the engineer.

In 1929 this company was in financial straits and Mr Hamer and Mr Gough approached Mr Tracy T Gough with the idea of forming a new company. That company was to be known as Gough Gough & Hamer Ltd and to be formed to buy out Carrick Wedderspoon. At that time, Tracy Gough was operating a shoe shop in Christchurch known as C D Gough & Son Ltd and was able to finance the new company.

The new company was duly formed and then bought out Carrick Wedderspoon. The location of the business office was in Tuam Street in Christchurch and continued to sell electrical goods.

The company was able to secure the franchise for Caterpillar tractors from A S Paterson Ltd in August 1932. This firm had held the agency for a number of years but were having difficulty selling machines in the depression years.

The Caterpillar Tractor Company had been formed in 1925 from two separate American companies, Holt and Best, that each built crawler tractors amid intense rivalry. The products built by each company were similar in design and performance.

The design of the Best machines was simpler and they were cheaper to build than Holt machines but Best did not have the manufacturing and sales capacity that the Holt company enjoyed. Eventually the two companies amalgamated to form the Caterpillar company.

Gough Gough & Hamer started to promote the new franchise and with that in mind in 1933, organised a seven
Gough Gough & Hamer did this to demonstrate to Ellis & Burnand that the use of tractors for logging was more profitable than using steam haulers.

Charlie Ingles, from Taranaki, drove the machine at that time. A Cat Twenty was also sent to Mangapehi later to assist with the loading of the logs onto the bush tram.

The Goughs employees who made up the contract gang were Charlie Ingles (the driver), Ted Giddies (the bush boss), the Price brothers (who were the cross cutters), Rangi Poturangi and Johnny Te Huia (the two skiddies) and there were two Maori fellows whose names could not be recalled.

Jack Peacock and Harry Wilson were also on the job as general hands able to do any of the work.

In May and June of 1934, Goughs had looked at a contract at Manunui, near Taumarunui, for Ellis & Burnand but Jack Peacock had reported that the Manunui bush was difficult. He thought only two thirds of it was possible for tractors to work with the balance being “very difficult”. They did not proceed with this option.

The directors of Ellis & Burnand visited the Mangapehi operation on 15 January 1935 and were greatly impressed with the way the tractor was handling the work. The contract was for eight months and Goughs contracted to supply 11 million feet of timber to the mill in that period.

After the contract had been concluded...
Ron Cooke, a budding photographer, was lucky he had his Kodak Box Brownie to record this series of a D7 coming to the rescue of its big brother.

He came across this piece of drama quite by chance one Sunday afternoon in 1958 when major earthworks were being carried out on River Road behind the Taumarunui Hospital.

Both machines belonged to the Ministry of Works and there were a few anxious moments after the D8 had slipped on the fill as there was only soft pumice preventing it from rolling down the fill and into the Whanganui River.

Ron diligently noted the date on his prints (13 April 1958), the place and the size of the machines but it was not until the publication of this book that he discovered who owned the two Caterpillars.
The need to purchase the property came about because changes were required to be made to the internal layout of the building to provide better facilities. Greater storage areas were necessary for the increasing quantities of spare parts that needed to be stocked.

Due to the Korean war and the restructuring of Europe, there was a huge demand for timber and farm produce so the sales of machines soared. Farmers were getting £1 per pound for their wool so they too were buying machines, mostly D2s.

The property was purchased in June 1951 for the amount of £7000. The company was now able to improve the building to suit its needs and as the economy was booming in the early 1950s, it was an opportunity to keep the tax bill down.

The first of these improvements was the parts office. The renovations went on...
A big concrete dam was to be built and a canal constructed to take the water into Lake Rotoaira. The concrete dam was never proceeded with but the canal was although there were changes in the plans.

As a result of the changes a newly required Otamangakau canal of 1640 yards (1.5 km) was dug with a huge Ransomes Rapier dragline on walking pads. This machine was very impressive in operation. The Wairehu canal of three and three quarter miles (6 km) crossed over swampy areas nearer the lake and during construction some of the canal was dug with this dragline.

Much of it however, was excavated with a suction dredge floating in the water of the swamp. After the canals had been dug the dragline sat alongside the Te Whaiau canal for several years until it was eventually dismantled and taken away.

As the Wairehu canal flowed at a considerably higher level than Lake Rotoaira the water had to be slowed down in its descent to the lake. Several dropshutes were built on the canal with huge concrete blocks to slow the flow and small machines were used here during construction.

There was also a fish control station built so that eels and lampreys could not get from the Whanganui River watershed into the Rotoaira and Taupo lake systems. Small machines were used to cut back the side slopes and prepare the dropshute slopes for the foundations of the concrete spillways. They worked on winch ropes from the D6C tractors of Keith Robinson Contracting. There was a Caterpillar D2 owned by Des Ray from Whangamata and also a IH TD6 owned by Arthur Newman from National Park.

There was much activity in this barren part of the land for quite a period with many machines operating there constructing the roads, dams, tunnel outfall and canals. It was extremely cold in the

The huge Ransomes Rapier walking dragline which was used to dig some of the canals on the Western diversions. At the completion of the job it sat for several years on site before being dismantled and taken away.

*photo courtesy David Laing, Pukekohe.*

The Western Diversions

A big part of the scheme was at the planned outfall of the western diversion tunnel where all the western diverted waters would be redirected into Lake Rotoaira. This was at the end of Access Road 4.

A Caterpillar D2 tractor on the scheme belonging to Des Ray. Small machines such as this one were used for cleaning up operations. The operator’s name could not be recalled.

- photo courtesy David Laing, Pukekohe.
The roads in the area were all gravel for many years and it took years for the main highway north and south to become tarsealed. This was accomplished in 1964.

These roads were very demanding on service vehicles and our vehicle costs were high. The only part of the highway between Otorohanga and Raetihi that was not sealed in 1964 was in the vicinity of the Makatote Gorge south of National Park.

The MOW had been working for some years in that area to improve the road. A new high level curved bridge was planned to cross the Makatote Stream.

This section of the road and the bridge was completed in 1966. The terrain of the area was also very hilly as, to go anywhere from Taumarunui, necessitated a climb out of the valley where the town was situated. One thing about the area in my time was that we never had difficulty in getting new vehicles, although during the early years vehicle acquisition was a problem.

Dryden Construction from Auckland did a great deal of the work on the southerm approaches to Taumarunui in the mid 1950s. They were responsible for improving the main highway from Piriaka southwards to Owhango and worked for some considerable time on the Piriaka Hill.

They used 2U D8 tractors and carryalls for this work and called upon the branch for any major repairs to their machines. The MOW did the first portion of the Hiwi Hills north of Ongarue during the 1950s and NZ Roadmakers improved the Waterfall Hill south of the Eight Mile turn-off from Te Kuiti in the late 1960s.

The continual improvement of the roads in the area resulted in the visitations the branch had from large contractors from outside the area. The first anyone at the branch would know was when a tractor operator would turn up at the parts counter asking for filters for his machine.

Inquiries would then reveal that there were one or two machines working on such and such a road and had been there for several weeks. A couple of contractors come to mind here, they being Green & McCahill from Auckland and Horowhenua Earthworks from Levin.

Horowhenua Earthworks did a big job on the Kaitieke Valley Road in the early 1960s and hardly called on the branch for service work at all. They had relatively new machines and just did not require service. One of the machines used was a D9 and this machine created quite a stir in the area due to its size and power.

Later they carried out major improvements to the River Road, downstream from Taumarunui at Herlihy Bluff. This...
In 1978 Caterpillar released into the market, the D10 tractor which had been on the drawing board for several years. It was of 700 HP and weighed 90 tons when equipped with blade and ripper.

This machine was radically different to anything that had gone before. The machine was built of modular components which could be removed for repair without disturbing other components.

Each final drive and steering clutch could be removed quickly from the machine and the transmission could be rolled out of the rear of the machine. It was a serviceman’s dream come true.

The final drives were elevated above the track frames and were therefore not subjected to the shock loading that previous final drives had suffered. We have found that the final drives now last for years whereas before, the final drives had to be regularly serviced.

The D10 was the first change to the basic design of the track type tractor that had occurred since machines had come onto the market. No longer were the sprocket and pivot shaft below the bevel gear shaft, now the sprocket was on the same axis.

A massive shaft through the machine allowed the track frames to pivot, the whole arrangement being submerged in oil. The track rollers were on bogie arrangements on the track frames that allowed them to roll over obstacles and there were idlers at each end of the track frames.

The first two of these machines in New Zealand were sold in late 1980 and soon became renowned for their ability to rip the hardest rock. Several more machines followed.

This elevated sprocket design of machine was gradually introduced to all of the product line down to the D4 size. The smaller machines however did not have the oscillating bogie system for the track rollers.

Special arrangement tractors were produced for logging applications and these were known as Track Skidders. These machines had more of the track frames to the rear of the sprocket so that the machines were better balanced when hauling logs.

The product line was extended when the D11 tractor was announced in 1986. This was a 770 HP machine that soon became the only machine for heavy ripping. It is a massive machine weighing in at 96 ton when equipped to go.

This is the latest type of tractor used for logging – a 527 Tracked Skidder belonging to Grace Brothers of Turangi. The machine is working in the Taupo Forest in 1999 and has a seven litre 3304 engine developing 150 hp and an operating weight of 21,500 kg including the blade and grapple. Compare this machine with the old RDBs shown in the earlier pages of this book which had a 20.4 litre engine developing 95 HP and an operating weight of 18,000 kg when equipped with a Hyster winch. It must be remembered however, that there is 60 years of technology between the two machines.

Shape of the future

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Ray Mathieson had a deep affinity for Caterpillar tractors and spent over 60 years of his life sitting in the seat of various size machines. Even after surviving an almost fatal accident at Kaitieke in 1982 his faith in the product was unwavering. Appropriately wearing his Cat cap, Ray is pictured seven months before his death in November 1999 in familiar surroundings. Throughout his lifetime there was always a track to be pushed through, paddocks to be worked up, logs to be pulled and with a straight exhaust pipe and no earmuffs, Ray’s immortal words were, “It was music to my ears!”

- photo courtesy June Mathieson, Owhango.