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In his foreword Chairman John Poole writes of the difficulties getting started and of financing such a huge project. In thanking his sponsors and contributors he expresses his appreciation for their support and explains why this important record of the transport industry is being presented as two volumes. He also gives his logical reason for choosing the book’s title . . .

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The road transport industry featured in the final issue of the historic magazine Roll Back the Years (October 1987) and the editor noted in his introduction that there were basically three ways to travel—on land, water or by air. Each has been with the world for varying amounts of time but to the pioneering back country settler, it took a long time for road, rail and riverboats to come together . . .

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Imagine the thrill and excitement of a schoolboy riding in the cab of an International 190 logging truck during the early 1950s when the timber industry was booming. From the age of 10 or 11 years of age RON CAMPBELL of Whangamata was right amongst it and casts his mind back to some of the trucks and drivers of that period . . .

TIDSWELL: Five different motor trade enterprises . . . . . . 120
Only a small snippet of the 99-year life of BOB TIDSWELL, a successful local businessman, can be told on these pages. With the help of Bob’s son Don and several interviews and articles that have appeared in the 1980s historic magazine, Roll Back the Years, it will be discovered who was responsible for the many important advances made in servicing the motor industry . . .

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The name, Jack Turner Ltd, has been around since the 2nd World War and before that the company had been owned by “Baldy” Margan since 1925. Jack Turner Ltd changed hands in 1961 when the Adam Bros took over and as Jack Turner had passed away in 2008 at the age of 95, the bulk of the information about his former boss has come from JOHN ADAM who started driving for Jack as an 18 year old in 1950 . . .

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WENSOR: Keith was itching to drive trucks . . . . . . . . . . . . 151
After a lifetime of owning and driving trucks KEITH WENSOR reflects on life behind the wheel . . .

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Due to its complexity and difficulty in providing enough detail it has been decided to enter only the trucks featured in the photographs . . .
THE TANK TRAP: One of the most well known landmarks on the “Punga” (SH41) is this stretch of road below Quarry Road that had a “road block” erected during 2nd World War when the threat of a Japanese invasion of New Zealand was anticipated. Very few of the pioneer logging contractors are left to describe this war relic but from their brief descriptions it seems the tank trap was fairly crude being constructed of huge logs that could be dragged across the road and anchored to others buried in the ground. The means of defence against tanks was never tested and while the remains have long disappeared, the name still lives on. This photo, of a fully loaded Graham Ferris in his R series International 190, seems very appropriate to introduce readers to the stories that follow, many of which tell of the respect that operators had of the “Punga” in the days before the road was upgraded. By a co-incidence Graham Ferris sold his International trucks in 1965 to Eric Deadman who has the honour of leading those who will undoubtedly stir a few memories or create friendly debate over who had the best truck or carted the biggest load . . . - photo courtesy Ferris collection, Taumarunui (ref: 12672).
Unfortunately accidents do happen

Bruce Edkins says accidents are a fact of life in the transport industry and while nobody wants to become a statistic, accidents are bound to happen regardless of the circumstances.

“Fortunately, none of our drivers lost their lives due to an accident although for the number of crashes we experienced, nobody suffered serious injuries.”

Photos of accidents were a necessary for insurance purposes but also a reminder to drivers of “what not to do.”

There is no single accident cause Bruce says as the conditions seemed to play a larger part than driver error. Drivers had to cope with fog, snow, wet greasy roads because of papa although inexperience, speed and drivers falling asleep were also factors.

“Overall the drivers we employed were pretty competent and we were proud of the courtesy they showed other road users.”

A very dejected driver (Mike Hohaia) ponders on the results of his inexperience when tackling the notorious Punga. The air operated brakes had overheated and when he tried to pull into Quarry Road, a parked car was blocking his escape route. He just made it around the next corner and took the only option available. Fortunately the damage was minimal as he was only carrying a small load of posts and battens from NZFP. The wrecker did more damage pulling the TK Bedford back on to the road.

Another mishap on the Punga after the aptly named “Bone Shaker” caught fire on its way to Te Aputa Station with a load of manure. The International ACCO had just had its brakes relined and instead of the driver using his engine brakes he allowed the brakes to overheat which in turn caused the tyres to catch alight.

Another mishap on the Punga after the aptly named “Bone Shaker” caught fire on its way to Te Aputa Station with a load of manure. The International ACCO had just had its brakes relined and instead of the driver using his engine brakes he allowed the brakes to overheat which in turn caused the tyres to catch alight.

Attempting to pull off the left hand side of the road was futile as this motorist was drawn like a magnet into one of the TK Bedfords on a metal contract.

This is what happens when the driver falls asleep. The Mercedes 1418 stock unit was returning from Waitara when the driver “nodded off” at the bottom of “Waterfall Hill” north of Mapiu.

Kevin Bell’s familiar “Punga Kart” was found away from its usual daily run to and from Turangi at the Piriaka overbridge after being stolen. The TK was a good reliable truck but damage done to the canopy and chassis caused it to be retired from active duty to be replaced with another T84.

- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11783).
- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11783).
- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11783).
- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11783).
- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 13512).
- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 13512).
All Noel Margan had when he started in the transport business during the mid 1920s was a horse and dray like those shown in this snapshot. The only person positively identified here is Noel himself—he’s the one leaning on his shovel behind the front dray. This was not his usual stance as he was known to be very active and a strong, hard working, well built individual who did not shirk his responsibilities and did what had to be done. The lady at centre and possibly her husband on the left are thought to be Lou and Mary Anne Margan, Noel’s parents.

From humble beginnings in Matiere

One of the biggest names in the transport and earthmoving industries was NOEL EUGENE MARGAN, known simply as “Baldy” to friends, business associates, and government officials. "Baldy" passed away in 1977 and along with the help of his wife June, niece JOSIE HARRIS, daughter AUDREY ROBINSON and former Matiere resident, ALEX FIFE, all have provided an insight into the life of a King Country character who became an entrepreneur and eventually a millionaire . . .

From humble beginnings in Matiere, Noel Margan’s career began in 1925 with a horse and cart to begin a local delivery service. According to stories passed down in the family Noel obtained enough cash, said to be earned by breaking in wild horses, to become a transport operator.

Alex Fife remembers Noel Margan (who will, from now on, be referred by his common name of Baldy) as having a horse and dray that he couldn’t really afford to keep on the road. "He started with no money, with absolutely nothing," exclaimed Alex. "I remember this because Baldy had told my father (Walter) that Jack O’Donnell, of Mahirakau, was buying chaff and oats for his horse to help him get started."

From the snapshots that have survived from the horse and wagon days, his main source of income came from shovelling road metal by hand for his local Ohura County Council, collecting wool bales after shearing and transporting them to the railway station.

Alex Fife and June Margan both agree that he purchased his first truck in 1928 which June says was at the age of 21. She said, from then on, Baldy built up a large carrying business

Baldy’s daughter Audrey believes, because of his rugby jersey and stature, that this handsome young fellow is her father. He is in charge of four horses and wagon load of wool bales which was one of the many jobs that kept him busy during the shearing season. The children on the bales have not been identified.
Operators demand more horsepower

The name Ross Todd Motors is instantly recognised as being one of the leaders in the development of the transport and construction industries after World War II. In 1946, NORM TODD, with his air force mate Jim Ross, formed Ross Todd Motors in Cambridge, a business that many King Country truckies became involved with when it was time to re-power or modify their vehicles to stay in business . . .

The names of many King Country truckies immediately came to mind when Norm Todd was asked if he remembered some of his Taumarunui customers.

“There’s Eric Deadman, Graham Ferris, Bob Woolston, Barry Sinton, and Trevor Masters, a real character from Ohura who was one of our very early guinea pigs.”

Norm went on to explain about re-powering Trevor’s 6x6 Mack in their Company’s 1996 50th Jubilee booklet. Trevor was their second attempt to fit a 6-71 GM diesel into a truck.

“This installation had so many mishaps, frustrations and tears that we nearly opted out,” wrote Norm. “With much perseverance and time we finally had a happy client. The lessons learned gave us confidence to try again.”

For the next ten years, from their Cambridge base, transport and its modifications became big business for Ross Todd Motors with clients reaching as far south as Haast and as far north as Auckland.

One of the jobs Norm remembers well was when they fitted a reconditioned 6-71 GM diesel motor into Eric Deadman’s R195 International.

“Because of the extra length of a GMC 6-71 over the existing Red Diamond petrol motor, the new radiator had to be moved forward six or eight inches. This meant a lengthened bonnet using piano hinges on each side,” laughed Norm.

He went on to explain that the mudguards were also lengthened the same amount being reinforced with No 8 wire to hold the same arc. The steering box was repositioned which meant lengthening the steering shaft, alter the drop and drag link adding that it would to a crime today to make these modifications.

To finish off, a new bumper was fitted plus locally made diesel step tanks for each side.

Eric Deadman was obviously happy with the work done as two more R195 Internationals were identically fitted out.

But all these heavy duty modifications came from small beginnings in Taumarunui where Norm Todd was born in 1920. His father, also Norman, was one of those extra friendly butchers who related well with children from the sawdust floors of firstly, Helling & Oddy and later Lanes Butchery, in the main street of Taumarunui.

Norm was the eldest and had three sisters:
In continuing the story of Jack Turner Ltd, JOHN ADAM begins from the change of ownership to the Adam Bros in 1961 and while the Turner name was retained, John, Rex and Brian Adam continued the traditions set by their predecessors...

John Adam says they were all keen to go early in 1961 with their newly acquired fleet consisting of two Internationals (AR and AS 162 models), three Bedfords (two A5 and one S-type) and a Fordson tractor with clamshell for manure but John remembers the first week being a disaster.

Brian Adam was only 18 and didn’t have his heavy traffic licence so had to wait a few months before he has able to sit the test which initially left them with five trucks and only four drivers.

The four included John Adam, Rex Adam, Tom Sheehan (who came with the purchase) and Jack Turner (who had offered to help out for the first month or so) but during that period, on one fateful day, three of the trucks had accidents.

One International broke an axle getting up to an airstrip, the S type Bedford rolled with a load of manure and to cap it all off the other International, driven by Jack Turner, was stuck fast in the mud on a steep farm track.

Getting the trucks back into earning an income meant working all night on the S Bedford as it had to pick up more manure from the rail to be delivered next morning.

“The roof had to be jacked out so that the doors would close. It was a pretty rough job, in fact so rough that a raincoat had to be worn if it was wet,” laughs John.

By the time Jack Turner left, Tom Sheehan’s brother Brian had joined the firm and Brian Adam had gained his heavy traffic licence. With only four drivers, it was decided to use the old Bedford as a spare truck for odd jobs.

Again, the type of work was a continuation of what Jack Turner had been doing although John said by 1963 they had expanded into more stock work with two truck loads a day (no trailers in those days) over the Waitaanga Saddle to the freezing works at Waitara.

Within a year, a second hand 7 ton 4-wheeler...
**TRUCK INDEX**

This index ONLY lists the trucks shown in photographs although there may be some anomalies with identifying the exact model. Every effort has been made to find the correct information but in many cases the owner could not remember or our resource material was not detailed enough. It would be very much appreciated to receive feedback on any corrections or from readers who can provide additional information. The text also contains details of other makes of vehicles not mentioned in this photo index. The lists of trucks provided by most of the operators will also create discussion material was not detailed enough. It would be very much appreciated to receive corrections or from readers who can provide additional information.

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