

# CONTENTS

## Getting started was biggest hurdle . . . . . 9

*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 . . .*

## The key that unlocked the door. . . . . 11

*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 . . .*

## Horses dominated transport . . . . . 12

*The district's first "general carriers", as we know them today, were undoubtedly the men involved with the construction of the Main Trunk Railway although packhorses were being used from the 1880s to bring supplies into Alexander Bell's small store which he had established to serve the needs of the small kainga at Taumarunui . . .*

## Competition hobbled by railways . . . . . 15

*Several books could be written on the trials and tribulations of motoring regulations and it is not the intention of this publication to go into too much historic detail but to give the reader some idea of the controls faced over the years by the hard working and dedicated transport operator . . .*

## Confessions of a vehicle inspector . . . . . 19

*Taumarunui and its truck operators will always hold fond memories for ALEX CAWLEY and after the Road Transport Reunion of October 1987 he jotted down some of the compromises he felt were necessary to justify his "vehicle inspector duties" of the mid 1950s . . .*

## Another vehicle inspector and more confessions. . . . . 20

*IAN PILKINTON, a retired vehicle inspector, recalls some of his experiences while based in Taumarunui from 1957 until 1988 . . .*

## DEADMAN: Long career in logging native timber . . . . . 25

*The importance of recording family history or interviewing people while they are still alive cannot be stressed too much as it is often too late after they have gone. This coverage on the transport operations of ERIC DEADMAN has come from a number of sources, particularly from interviews published in Roll Back the Years during the 1980s, newspaper articles, old photographs and memories of other truckies plus valuable input from Eric's sons, Ray and Bob, who were able to fill many of the gaps . . .*

## DOIDGE & Co arrive at Manunui . . . . . 42

*JILL DOIDGE, daughter-in-law of Trevor & Jocelyn Doidge, sought the assistance of many people to provide information about the short foray into the central King Country by the well-known Tokoroa based trucking firm of T Doidge Ltd . . .*

## EDKINS: All I wanted to be was a driver . . . . . 46

*BRUCE EDKINS first started driving when he was 11 years old after being taught the fundamentals in 1941 by his father Fred, a Tokaanu baker. His father had two trucks, a 1930 Dodge and a 1938 Ford V8 ute . . .*

## ENDEANS: A graveyard where old trucks go to die . . . . . 53

*Laurie Little, a former National Park entrepreneur of the transport industry, always believed there was a special heaven for all truckies but it appears that some of their old trucks are left to their own devices . . .*





73

**GENERAL FOODS: Delivering ice creams . . . . .54**

The origins of ice cream can be traced back to at least the 4th century BC and closer to home Google says the first ice cream parlor in America opened in New York City in 1776. RICHARD COOKE, a former branch manager of General Foods Corporation in Taumarunui, only intends to go as far back as 1956 to the days when Tip Top delivery vans and trucks became a common sight around the King Country . . .

**GRAY: When the truck went in the ditch . . . . .58**

The biggest fear of any truck driver is being in an accident and not living to tell the tale. RUSSELL GRAY and his brother-in-law, IAN OTTAWAY had a guardian angel on their side in 1963 when they cheated death. Their story begins with the purchase of a 7 ton Austin FFK 100 . . .

**GRUBNER: A life of differing views. . . . .62**

DAVID GRUBNER'S life in the transport industry was a typical father and son situation where disagreements with each other were a way of life. David's father Stan had a dream that one day he would take his son into his business but David had other ideas. He wanted to make his own mistakes and to experience life without too many commitments . . .



81

**KELLAND & BIRRELL: An easily remembered name . . . . .66**

The two men, JOHN BIRRELL and KEITH KELLAND, who originally formed the well-known trucking business, KB Transport Ltd, have both sadly passed on. As a result, the bulk of their history has been gleaned from interviews published in Roll Back the Years (in 1987) and from KEN ANDERSON. Also included are the memories of BRUCE EDKINS who later purchased the company, and Keith's wife Fay . . .

**KBTRANSPORT: New era begins for Bruce Edkins . . . . .74**

A new era began for BRUCE EDKINS in November 1969 when he purchased KB Transport, a carrying business that had been formed by Keith Kelland and John Birrell in 1960. Bruce had little idea of what he was taking on but talks freely about the trials and tribulations of owning and operating the largest trucking business in the central King Country . . .

**MANSON: Restoration is not for the faint hearted. . . . .86**

Two former Taumarunui men, GRAHAM MANSON and BOB DEADMAN, proudly show off their immaculately restored 1927 International S26 two-ton truck in the town's Xmas Parade on 4 December 2010 . . .



89

**MARGAN: From humble beginnings in Matiere . . . . .91**

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 . . .

**MARRINER: Loggers had great respect for Punga . . . . .100**

Logging operators like JOHN MARRINER have always had great respect for the long and treacherous "Punga" road as a brake failure anywhere on this 16 mile stretch could easily mean death. Take a look at the photos showing a miraculous escape . . .

**OLIPHANT: Change of direction to grow their business . . 101**

LINDSEY OLIPHANT talks about the "truckie" life of her husband Birnie after he changed direction from working in sawmills and driving for other truck operators to the more uncertain life of being a local owner/operator . . .

**RANSLEY: Charlie started with a horse and cart . . . . .104**

CHARLIE RANSLEY had one of the early transport businesses in Taumarunui and while information about his operation has been difficult to find, this contribution from his grandson, RAY McLAUGHLAN of Taupo, connects up a few dots . . .

**ROSS TODD: Operators demand more horsepower. . . . . 106**

*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 . . .*



**SINTON: Navy, marriage, family and trucks . . . . . 109**

*After spending nine years in the RNZ Navy and ending up semi-retired in Taumarunui, WARREN SINTON now talks about his introduction into the transport industry, then taking the bold step of purchasing a one-truck operation in 1959 up to the time he sold out in 1981 . . .*

**SMITH: On the running boards with Toot Miley. . . . . 118**

*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 . . .*



**TOPLESS: There was no loafing on this job. . . . . 127**

*It all started with a milk delivery round and ended up after 28 years with a huge bread liner that delivered over 31 million loaves of bread. ROBYN and ROGER TOPLESS take a nostalgic look back at the busy lives they led between 1971 and 1999 . . .*

**TURNER: Driver remembers his former boss . . . . . 132**

*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 . . .*

**TURNER (ADAM): Jack Turner's name lives on . . . . . 137**

*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 . . .*



**WALLACE: There was something wrong . . . . . 148**

*After taking a fall from a ladder, a specialist told BARRY WALLACE that he should have been dead! Barry tells his unbelievable story from the comfort of his mobile scooter in a sunny corner of the dining room at the Avonlea Rest Home in Taumarunui on 17 June 2009 . . .*

**WENSOR: Keith was itching to drive trucks . . . . . 151**

*After a lifetime of owning and driving trucks KEITH WENSOR reflects on life behind the wheel . . .*

**People Index . . . . . 154**

*Every name appearing in the text is listed regardless of importance or significance. Subjects (or topics) and place names are basically not listed although there are headings for Businesses, Freezing Works, Sawmills and Transport Operators . . .*

**Truck Index . . . . . 158**

*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).



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.

- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11783).



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.

- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 11785).



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: 11784).

## 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."



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.

- photo courtesy Edkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 13511).



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.

- 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.

- photo courtesy Josie Harris, Auckland (ref. 13071).

## 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 . . .

**F**rom 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.

- photo courtesy Audrey Robinson, Hamilton (ref. 13200).



*Eric Deadman's R195 International had its bonnet extended by Ross Todd Motors to fit a new 6-71 GM diesel motor with the body modifications being of such high standard that it is almost impossible to detect any changes. Eric was so happy that he had two more trucks fitted out by Ross Todd.*

*-photo courtesy Hopkins collection, Taumarunui (ref: 12435).*

## **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 . . .*

**T**he 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 50<sup>th</sup> 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.



*Taumarunui born Norm Todd was a mine of information about the logging industry of the Taumarunui district also touching briefly on the input Ross Todd Motors had New Zealand wide in the transport industry.*

*-photo courtesy Todd collection, Cambridge (ref: 12398).*

“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:



Most of the stock trucks in a modern fleet are 8-wheelers and this brand new Mitsubishi with its 4-deck crates made "a very flash unit," said a very proud John Adam. "We decided to try a new style of crate in 1998 which was made from moulded plastic with internal decks made from aluminum." The drivers were Rodney Cribb and Harold Spooner. The unit was sold to Ongarue Transport in 2001.

- photo courtesy John Adam collection, Matiere (ref: 13464).

## Jack Turner's name lives on

*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 . . .*

**J**ohn 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 was 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



*"Look Mum, I'm going to be a truck driver!" Karl Adam was three months old in 1961 when his father John, and uncles Rex and Brian, took over Jack Turner Ltd and a month later his mother Lorraine marked the occasion for the family photo album.*

- photo courtesy John Adam collection, Matiere (ref: 13902).

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 but again may not be 100% accurate.*

- A**
- ALBION  
Reiver ..... 70, 74, 76
- AUSTIN  
3 ton ..... 56  
FFK 100 ..... 58, 60  
K4 ..... 48, 151  
Lodestar ..... 67
- B**
- BEDFORD  
A5 ..... 133, 135, 138  
British ..... 26, 132  
Bus ..... 125  
J2 series ..... 128  
J5 series ..... 56, 57  
KH ..... 138, 140, 141  
M ..... 140  
ML ..... 132, 135  
OLB ..... 47, 132, 133, 134  
RL ..... 140  
S ..... 135, 137, 139  
SPH ..... 142  
SPZ ..... 143, 146  
TK ..... 54, 57, 64, 76  
..... 79, 82, 101, 102  
WLG ..... 95, 98  
WT ..... 96
- C**
- CHEVROLET  
6 ..... 46  
1927 C cab ..... 105  
1939 tipper ..... 97  
1946 ..... 132, 135  
Loadmaster ..... 48
- COMMER  
3 ton ..... 74, 76  
7 ton petrol ... 21, 68, 69, 71  
..... 74, 149, 150, 152  
1956 3 ton ..... 79, 84  
Hyline ..... 63, 79, 114, 115  
Maxiload ..... 139  
Mk V ..... 148  
TS3 .. 50, 62, 109, 111, 114
- D**
- DODGE  
KEW ..... 111  
Unknown ..... 23
- E**
- ERF  
250 ..... 141, 145  
Unknown ..... 40
- F**
- FARGO  
1948 ..... 132  
FD-4-36 ..... 122  
KF 33 ..... 124
- FODEN  
Twin-steer ..... 142, 144
- FORD  
30 cwt ..... 121  
D300 ..... 129  
D1010 ..... 103  
D1314 ..... 103  
D2014 ..... 103  
Jailbar V8 ..... 53, 100  
Model 51 ..... 98, 122  
Model A ..... 98  
Model AA ..... 9, 94, 96, 98  
Model T ..... 93  
N1317 ..... 103  
Thames ..... 60  
V8 ..... 90, 133, 134  
WF ..... 120
- G**
- GENERAL MOTORS  
1930 ..... 98  
T series ..... 95
- GMC  
ex-Army CCKW ..... 108
- I**
- INTERNATIONAL  
1934 ..... 26  
2050 ..... 64, 65  
2150 ..... 62  
3070 ..... 153  
AB ..... 74  
ACCO ..... 74, 82, 109, 111  
ACF 174 ..... 158  
AR162 ..... 135, 138  
AS162 ..... 135  
ex-Army M ..... 107  
F1800 ..... 51  
KS6 ..... 71  
L190 ... 32, 33, 67, 118, 119  
R162 ..... 68  
R190 ..... 24, 74, 90  
R195 ... 25, 34-40, 106, 158  
RF195 ..... 44, 65  
S26 ..... 85, 86  
S160 ..... 49  
SF 174 ..... 42, 43  
T2670 ..... 144, 145
- ISUZU  
Elf ..... 103  
EXR 300 ..... 127, 131  
EXR 350 ..... 131  
SPH ..... 142, 143, 145  
SPZ ..... 142  
VPR 240 ..... 129
- K**
- KARRIER  
S15 ..... 116
- KENWORTH  
K144 ..... 78
- T908 ..... 18  
TTA ..... 80  
Unknown ..... 40
- L**
- LEYLAND  
Beaver ..... 73  
Comet ..... 125  
Cub ..... 28, 29, 30  
Hippo ..... 19, 158
- M**
- MACK  
ex-Army ..... 22, 72
- MERCEDES  
1418 ..... 51, 52, 74, 76  
..... 79, 82, 109, 112-115  
1924 ..... 79, 115  
V8 ..... 75, 76, 77, 79, 81  
V10 ..... 77, 79, 114, 115
- MITSUBISHI  
D2014 ..... 102  
FM 215 ..... 102  
Not known ..... 137, 142  
..... 143, 145, 146
- MORRIS  
Bus ..... 125  
Commercial ..... 74  
FGK ..... 128  
FHK ..... 60, 61, 151
- N**
- NISSAN  
Diesel ..... 103
- P**
- PACIFIC  
P9 ..... 40, 41
- R**
- REO  
Unknown ..... 31, 32
- REPUBLIC  
Bus ..... 125
- S**
- SCANIA  
2001 ..... 136, 142, 144
- T**
- THAMES  
Trader ..... 53
- THORNEYCROFT  
Unknown ..... 119
- W**
- WHITE  
704 ..... 95  
2064 ..... 45  
Unknown ..... 36, 40

