

SEVENTY YEARS OF TRANSPORT IN THE WAIRARAPA

Hargreaves Transport began in 1921 in Dannevirke when Mr W. Hargreaves, the father of the present Chairman of the Board, bought his first truck and went into business, providing stock and general transport services to local farms and businesses. Records of the early days are scarce, but the company has a photograph of that first truck, a solid-tyred Thornycroft with oil side lamps, a crank handle permanently in place, and no doors on the cab.

The firm weathered the difficulties of the Depression of the early thirties, and of the war, and grew as farming in the southern Hawke's Bay and northern Wairarapa developed. In the early 1950s, Mr W. A. (Bill) Hargreaves, the son of the founder, took over the reins and the firm began a long steady period of expansion. The industry was heavily regulated, and one of the best ways to grow was to buy out other carriers who already had the licences. Acquisitions included the

Eketahuna Carrying Company Ltd, Transport (Wairarapa) Ltd, and part of the interests of Manawatu Transport Ltd. The two names still used today are Hargreaves Transport and Transport (Wairarapa) Ltd. Bill Hargreaves also expanded into new fields, such as vehicle servicing, fertiliser spreading, and cartage for the rapidly growing aerial top-dressing industry. Another activity was an agency for the Atlantic Oil Company. Old trucks were wrecked for parts, and this grew into a flourishing subsidiary, Haulage Parts Ltd of Palmerston North.

While some of the activities the firm undertook in those days have ceased, the core business was well established. The Atlantic agency has developed into a full Mobil Distributorship for the whole Wairarapa District, and the company now has three tanker trucks constantly on the move delivering fuel and lubricants to farms, businesses and garages throughout the area.

Some 200,000 kilometres per year are travelled to make around 10,000 deliveries!

Stock transport remains the biggest aspect of the company's activities. Fifty trucks and almost the same number of trailers are devoted exclusively to stock transport. The trucks are spread among the four branches at Masterton, Eketahuna, Dannevirke, and Feilding, and effectively serve the whole of the lower half of the North Island, and occasionally travel further north.

The "front line" of the fleet consists of 8-wheeled trucks—Ford, Hino, International, Isuzu, and Nissan are all represented—of approximately 350 horsepower. These vehicles have consistently proved to be the most suitable for large loads and long distances, helping the firm provide a quality service at an economic price. They can haul three or four axle trailers, and can be rated to a gross

HARGREAVES TRANSPORT LTD.



1921-1991

For seventy years, providing transport services to the rural sector:

- *Stock cartage specialists—50 trucks in the fleet*
- *General farm freight—machinery, timber, fencing, etc.*
- *Fertiliser cartage*
- *Spreading and sowing with new computer-controlled spreader giving very accurate results*
- *Metal for farm drives and roads*
- *Fueline Distributors—Mobil products for the farm*

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Branches at Dannevirke, Eketahuna, and Feilding also
Transport Services Division of Transport (Wairarapa) Ltd

combination load of 44 tonnes once the drawgear, crate tiedowns, and brakes have been certified by the Ministry of Transport.

The "second rank" of the fleet contains slightly smaller trucks, typically 6-wheelers with an engine of 260 to 300 horsepower. They are suitable for smaller loads and shorter distances, and are more manoeuvrable on narrow winding country roads.

The company also has a number of smaller vehicles for small pickups and deliveries such as the occasional bull or a few animals where it would be clearly uneconomic to despatch a large truck.

Hargreaves Transport also operates a general freight service to the rural sector, carrying a lot of wool, machinery, fencing materials, and other products used or produced from farms. In addition, daily freight runs are made linking Wellington, Masterton, Dannevirke, and Palmerston North, naturally including all towns in between. The company can also arrange the delivery of metal for farm roads and drives.

A specialist service is available for the spreading of fertiliser or seed. In late 1990 the company took delivery of a new Isuzu 4 x 4 truck equipped with the latest computer-controlled spreader. Spreading rates can be achieved very accurately to the customers' specification so that the best value for money is achieved from the valuable fertiliser or seed being applied.

The company is also contracted to operate a number of mail runs in the Wairarapa, and the Bideford School bus. These runs provide an excellent contact between the company and its rural clients, and are very much in line with Bill Hargreaves' commitment to service the rural community. This commitment is a tradition in the firm, and is shared by all who work there.

Just as deregulation in the economy has affected farmers, the rural transport industry has also felt the winds of change. Hargreaves' Transport has always been affected by the fortunes of the farming sector, and the recent years' of change have been no exception. A modern truck and trailer unit, fitted with stock crates, costs around \$200,000. Amortised over 10 years at 18% p.a., the truck must earn \$43,240 p.a. just to cover its capital and interest costs. A drop in interest rates to 12% would reduce this amount to \$34,430 p.a., which would certainly make life easier for company and customer alike. Ten years is actually a long period, and seven or eight would probably be a better, more conservative figure to use. These days there can be no question of a "cost plus" mentality to pricing, because customers and the opposition will simply not permit it! The truck must be intensively used, and the pricing decisions must be right. Hargreaves Transport is making an increasing use of computers to identify and monitor the key parameters of its operations.

Marketing and quality control are also now key aspects of the management of a transport company. It is essential to know the market thoroughly, and to have a deep commitment to customer service, so that each customer knows that they have received the best "value for money".

Overall, deregulation is leading to lower transport costs for customers, better utilisation of equipment by the transport firms, and much more sophisticated management within the industry. It is a good deal for New Zealand, as productivity of both capital and labour is rising. Hargreaves Transport is coping with the changes, and looking forward to the future with optimism.



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