

ON TEST

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JBS FIELDS NEW FRENCH FANCY



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THE EIGHT-WHEELER REVIVAL



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Welcome to TRUCKING

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Scania fans are in for a real treat this issue. On the cover is the new 590S which has recently joined the fleet of well-known haulier, David G Davies. Its driver, Paul Gratton, is thrilled to bits with it – and it's easy to see why! Check it out in all its glory in Me & My Truck, starting page 42.

Elsewhere, Pip's been busy testing the Swedish manufacturer's latest SUPER 460R on a day and night out on the road. This is already proving a popular fleet-spec tractor unit here in Britain, but how does the new driveline compare to the old version? Find out in our in-depth Driven, starting page 30.

What's more, one lucky reader can bag themselves a superb Scania 770S radio-controlled model kit from our friends at top RC model maker, Tamiya! For your chance to win, head straight to page 28.

Of course, we've plenty more eye-catching lorries to pore over this month. Also of note is ITS Transport's new MAN TGX 26.640. This top-power beast is the operator's first MAN, and it's fair to say the new truck is proving a massive hit with its driver. Read the full story, starting page 44.

But not to be outdone, JBS Haulage Contractors has put a brand-new Renault Range T High on the road and it's been turning heads wherever it goes. Decked out in a striking metallic blue livery, it's quite the looker – and you can read the full story in The Big Deal, starting page 36.

Finally, we'd like to wish all our readers a very Happy New Year and all the best for 2023!

Andy Stewart

Andy Stewart, editor

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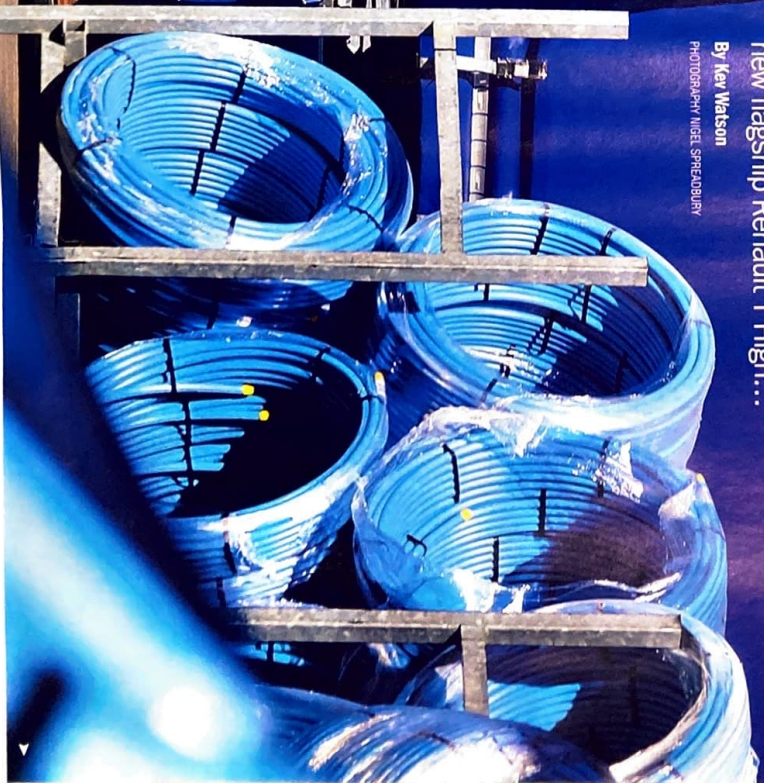
THE BIG DEAL > JBS HAULAGE CONTRACTORS RENAULT RANGE T HIGH

JOB WELL DONE

The saying 'if a job's worth doing, it's worth doing well' is the golden thread that runs through JBS Haulage Contractors' 35 years in business. *Trucking* heads to Kent to find out more about the firm and its stunning new flagship Renault T High...

By Kev Watson

PHOTOGRAPHY: NIGEL SPREADBURY



▶ **T**he shallow, tidal inlet that runs north-east from Sittingbourne to join the Swale at Elmley Reach, Milton Creek has been an important industrial area since the 19th Century. Brick and cement manufacturers were the first to change the landscape here, creating busy wharfs with barges travelling to and from the capital and beyond. Of these, Smeed Dean – a name synonymous with the traditional London Yellow Stock bricks that are still in production in Sittingbourne today – was the most well-known.

Today, this area of Kent remains a thriving industrial centre and it is our destination today, to visit JBS Haulage Contractors Ltd at its HQ on the Eurolink Business Park, sited on the south side of the creek. We're here to meet founder and managing director Jason Whent, and compliance manager John Jennings.

A self-starter from the off, Jason set up on his own straight out of school in 1987, joining the road haulage business as JW Transport with a 3.5-tonne Iveco panel van, transporting glass panelling and

green houses across the UK for Halls at Paddock Wood.

"Dad and Mum were both very supportive. My Dad has always been a driver and I used to go out with him in his Ford D Series, with none of today's mod cons – no sleeper cab, no night heaters. We used to sleep under the tarpaulin, even in snow, which keeps you surprisingly warm as long as you're dry!" he says.

Diesel in the blood

Jason's grandfather was also a driver, and according to family folklore was Alan Firmin's first driver; clearly diesel was very much in the blood, along with a determined can-do attitude.

"One of Dad's customers was Seymours, which worked with Halls Greenhouses, so I picked up work with them, delivering panes of glass across the country, spending nights out in the van sleeping across the seats in a sleeping bag with duvet and pillow. When you started out at 17, you don't have too many cares; you just get on with it," says Jason.

At 21, he got his HGV licence and traded up to a used Volvo F7 16-tonne



ABOVE MD Jason Whent joined the road haulage business straight out of school



ABOVE Jason lets drivers choose accessories and bring their own personality to the truck

“When you start out at 17, you don't have too many cares – you just get on with it.”



ABOVE Driver's choice: Tony Pessell (Boo) selected his Renault Trucks T520 High

rigid. He started working for FloPlast, manufacturer and supplier of plastic building and plumbing systems to the UK construction sector, delivering plastic pipes and guttering. It's a relationship that continues today – testament to Jason's commitment to do the job right, every time.

"Delivering plastic pipes and guttering to builders' merchants means products have to come off the lorry and be passed to the customer in the correct amounts. I always made sure to do it the right way, counting carefully, never cutting corners. FloPlast appreciated that and always asked for me."

For JW Transport, business soon started growing; and when in 1995 FloPlast asked Jason to put more lorries in, he had to make a decision. "I'd just bought my first house, so financially the timing was not ideal. But I spoke to my Dad, Bob, who had a Ford Cargo, and his business partner Sid Evens, who had a Leyland Roadrunner; they both remortgaged their houses and JBS Haulage Contractors Ltd was formed."

Fleet count

Today, JBS Haulage still counts FloPlast as its biggest customer, with 12 rigids and around 30 artics working on the contract, with 10-15

The stunning 13-litre T520 High is the first Renault on the JBS fleet, with a further four on order



artic loads a day. "We're still looking after them, and we're still doing it right," says Jason. Both companies are now located on the same industrial estate, following JBS Haulage's decision to relocate its HQ to a three-acre site in Bonham Drive to be closer to its customer, always ready to load.

As well as its HQ in Kent, JBS Haulage now has a remote site up in Holmfirth, Yorkshire. "This started off with Sid Evens' son Colin moving north and settling down there. He wanted to drive for us and was based up there with one lorry. People saw it parked up and kept asking if it would drive down to Kent." Now five artics operate out of the Holmfirth site,

mainly bringing loads to Kent and back up to Yorkshire.

Currently there are 50 vehicles on the JBS Haulage fleet: 15 rigid, 35 6x2 artics (the majority with mid-lifts), plus a 7.5-tonner and van for the harder-to-access drops the artics can't reach. Predominantly pulling curtainsiders, all the artics have sleeper cabs and are spec'd for being

Science of compliance

JBS compliance manager, John Jennings, started off his transport career delivering parts to UniPart. "I realised I liked driving, did my Class 1 and joined Scania down in Maidstone, working on the MoT lane. I joined JBS Haulage about six months ago; my previous employer operated in the same office as JBS, so I've known Lee and Jason for a few years. We're similar-minded people; this is an honest business to work for and we're all passionate about the industry.

"I've been employed to take the business to the next level, responsible for the overall performance and compliance of the transport operation required to deliver our contracts. It's about upping the game, introducing procedures for drivers, ensuring fleet compliance and training across the company. For example, we're applying for FORS next year to get there before it's demanded, which will help us improve safety, fuel efficiency and also look at vehicle emissions. It's about implementing industry-leading best practice that demonstrates our commitment to quality and performance to our customers, and drives the business forwards."





ABOVE Optional extras chosen by the driver include Kelsa lightbars

out 3-5 nights a week. "On FloPlast we're carrying plastic. Weight is no problem, so the drivers can have a large cab on an 18-tonner. There's a fuel consumption advantage of pulling plastic weighing 3-4 tonnes, so fuel economy is generally good: we're getting around 13-14 mpg."

Deliberately, Jason has followed a mixed-fleet policy and is using it to his advantage to attract and retain the best drivers. "Finding good drivers is a real challenge," he notes. "They're coming into the industry without knowing what it is, not realising or appreciating it's not a 9-5 job. To help attract them, we try to buy good-looking trucks and ensure that not

every truck on the fleet looks exactly the same. Although they are all clearly branded 'JBS Haulage', they're part of the family, but not identical.

"I let those drivers who have been with us a long time choose their own accessories to add their own personality to their truck. I'm happy to spend a bit of money on lightbars etc; and yes, the truck may not be quite as fuel efficient, but what you lose in fuel you gain in a driver taking pride in their work, looking after their truck and driving sensibly – and that might get an extra year out of the vehicle."

New flagship

While vehicle selection used to be down to the convenience of the dealer, nowadays it's more about driver preference and giving them the choice. The latest driver to select their truck is Tony Pessell, JBS Haulage's longest serving driver and also Jason's cousin, known to all as 'Boo'.

"Boo was my first driver. Back in 2001 we bought him a Renault Magnum Mack 470; he loved it and

had it for five or six years. Last year I asked him what truck he would like and he said another Magnum, but the next best thing is the T High. He loves it, and as it's our first T High on the fleet, it has got quite a bit of attention. Several other drivers have taken it for a spin around the yard and asked if they could have one too, so we have another four on order."

Supplied by local dealer Renault Truck Commercials, the 13-litre T520 High 6x2 pusher is striking in JBS Haulage Contractors' metallic Royal Blue colour with matching door sills, bumper corners, centre and steps. The Optidriver AT 2612F gearbox and automatic clutch provides a maximum torque of 2550 Nm, and the vehicle comes packed with a host of optional extras including Alcoa Dura-Bright aluminium wheels, Kelsa lightbars, fixed roof deflector, air-suspended heated driver's seat, auto lighting, multimedia screen, 40-litre 'quiet' fridge, microwave, luxury insulated cab curtains, Adaptive Cruise Control (ACC) linked to Advanced Emergency



JBS's 35 6x2 artics are spec'd for 3-5 nights out



The T520 High is stunning in metallic Royal Blue with matching door sills, bumper corners and steps

Braking System (AEBS), ROADPAD+ and ECO cruise control with Optiroll.

Trucks are generally purchased on a five-year Hire Purchase, says Jason. Unusually, as JBS Haulage mainly does its own servicing and maintenance in-house at its own workshop, the latest truck is on a five-year R&M contract through Renault Trucks Financial Services. This is for a couple of reasons, explains Jason: "The Renault is a new product to us and Renault Trucks Commercials offered us excellent value for the R&M as the T High runs around Kent, so it's not racking up the mileage."

Fixing things up

JBS Haulage's workshop has been growing steadily with manager Lee Morris at the helm. "Just before Covid, we took over a big workshop on our site. Covid hit and I thought 'what have I done?', but Lee's reputation is excellent and word quickly spread when people found out he was taking on more jobs."

“The most rewarding thing is supporting youngsters who really want a career in this industry.”

Now the fully equipped five-bay workshop with brake test rollers, lifts and hoists looks after JBS Haulage's own trucks and trailers, as well as other companies' including local neighbour, Dargate Transport. Keeping it in the family, Jason's son, Charlie, is also one of the six-strong team of technicians. Charlie joined Lee in the workshop when he left school, undertook his apprenticeship and has now been working at JBS Haulage for four years.

Asked what he felt the most rewarding part of his career, Jason answers without hesitation: "It's certainly not the money! For me, the most rewarding thing is supporting those youngsters who really want a career in this industry. We start them off in the van, like I did, pay for them to go up to a rigid, and then for their Class 1 and put them in an HGV. It's really satisfying to see them develop a

passion for the job and we do all we can to support that.

"There are four or five that we've done this with and they're all still with us, trained in the JBS way. We give them the work and let them get on with us, with no micromanaging. It's the best way to get the best out of people."

What's next for JBS Haulage? "We're a pretty good size now. I'm not sure I want to take it so big that I don't know all the drivers' names! But we do want to take things to the next level, and bringing John (Jennings) in as compliance manager is a key part of that to introduce new procedures for drivers and to up the game.

"I'm gradually trying to let John, Calvin (Friedman) and Gary (Cadwallader) run the business day to day, but I always want to make sure we stay true to JBS Haulage and keep it personal." ■