

# The rise and fall of Manawatu Transport

BY BEN UNCLES



*Goldsack No 4, an elderly AACD180, with 80 plus wool bales on board. Tommy Goldsack was one of the carriers involved in the formation of MTL.*

The idea of a large conglomerate of carriers in the Feilding area was first talked about in early 1966. Most of the small out of town carriers were soon to be involved in the company's evolution.

It was to be some time in 1967 before the amalgamation of some transport companies took place and Manawatu Transport Ltd (MTL) was formed. Not much changed visually, as for some time, the carriers operated as per usual out of their own yards, until their individual liveries were lost to the new fleet colours.

Initially, some 100 trucks were involved, but this number was soon reduced to 50 or so, even though fleet numbers did not reflect this.

In Feilding, the new company operated from the old Feilding Transport yard in Haybittle Street. Heavily overcrowded, they persevered until 1969, when a new transport complex was completed on the outskirts of town.

Built by Feilding Transport Holdings, the new venue catered for three companies. Manawatu Transport, Tommy Cook and, of course, Road Freighters, who chose not to join forces. The first manager was Garry McNicholl.

The offices, workshop and storage were split into three sections, as was the yard, but all aspects seemed to operate successfully.

Bill Spruit, trading as G&S Transport also operated from the same site. Eventually, he sold out to Murray Cassey, but it was not a success. Under the instigation of Ian Johnston, Feilding Transport Holdings bought him out, to keep out of town rivals at bay. At the time Foleys and others were very interested.

Further changes were in the wind and, by the

*Below, from left: No 30, an International AA164 of the mid sixties, in the old Feilding Transport yard in Haybittle Street. Fleet number 60 was a late 1960s International AB180. Probably Perkins powered, in the old Haybittle Street yard.*







From left: in opposition to Dommetts, this Perkins powered ACO 180 spreader was operated in the 1960s. No 14 was a Bedford KM six-wheeler, and indicated a move to larger truck and trailer combinations



From left: A few years apart, these two Internationals, No.29 an early ACCO and No.30 an ACCO 1800, parked side by side. The TK Bedford cab indicates there may have been a major overhaul underway. John Openshaw operated as an owner driver for MTL with this Volvo F1223, photographed in the 1980s.



From the 1980s, a Volvo F1223, with No 27, an early Isuzu and No 31, a Volvo G88.



Gary Walker operated this FR Mack as an owner driver for MTL, August 1982.

**The operators that joined forces to create Manawatu Transport Ltd**

- Falkner and Johnston, Kairanga
- Ivan Deihl, Apiti
- Tommy Goldsack, Feilding
- Feilding Transport, Feilding
- Snow Line Transport, Rangī Wahia
- Malone Bros. Apiti
- Petigrews, Halcombe
- Ashurst Transport, Ashurst
- Wycherleys, Ashurst
- Nick Rowe, Rongatea
- Magee Transport, Shannon





From left: in 1976 Bill Spruit was operating two trucks from the yard: an early FR and an early Mack R600, both operating under the G&S banner.

Below: in 1982 Hargreaves trucks were the most dominant. However, in the background the blue of Tommy Cook still graces a T-Line International, while the new colours of HBF/Road Freighters are on another T-Line, also of Tommy Cook's. Tommy Cook was never part of MTL, but eventually sold to HBF/Roadfreighters, who inherited the Roadfreighters name.

early 1980s (May 1981), the Wairarapa company of Hargreaves had moved in and taken over MTL, still leaving Roadfreighters and Tommy Cook as independents. This lasted for some twelve years until May 1993, when Hawkes Bay Farmers (HBF), having already taken over Tommy Cook, moved in and rebranded the whole fleet into the name of Roadfreighters, but now in the HBF colours of red and white. This name and colours soon spread North Island wide with up to eight depots, including Hamilton.

Early this century, the Roadfreighters part of HBF was to join forces with Auckland's Rapid Transport, to become Rapid Roadfreighters. This

however, was to be short lived, as soon the name seemed to strike problems, and was to disappear from the transport scene forever.

A visit to Feilding today would see all trucks still in the old red and white, but bearing the name of Farmers Transport. A mix of Scania, Volvo and of course Kenworth, with the odd Japper. How times have changed!

Across the other side of town, in the yard that Foleys eventually opened, (to be swallowed up by the old MTL), one can still find a very strong Manawatu Transport Limited. Now however, it is part of the Barker/Freightlines group. So the area is still well catered for in road transport. □



Nos 456 and 465 are a pair of 112 Scania's, however the fleet was very mixed, with almost every make of the time featuring.







The green trucks of Hargreaves occupied most of the yard in August 1982, they took over MTL in May 1981.



From left: this International 3072, No221 was photographed not far from the yard in 1983. Hawkes Bay Farmers inherited the old Roadfreighters name, and it was soon to spread North Island wide, with about eight depots, including Hamilton. These two were photographed during a swap at Taupo's Stag Park in January 2003.



Above: Japanese Nissans and Isuzus were prominent trucks in the early 1990s. The odd green and black livery could still be seen for some time yet.

One or two MANs appeared in the fleet, this stock unit was shot at a Wanganui Meat Works yard in the 1990s.

