



JFCL's favoured Hitachi ZX38U fitted with Doherty attachments

# STARTING SMALL, DREAMING BIG

**J**ake Fletcher's dreams came to fruition in early 2023 when his excavator was delivered and he was in business. Since then, drawing on his previous experience with BLH Contracting, Jake has been successfully running Jake Fletcher Contracting Limited (JFCL) – an owner-operator business based in Tararua, focused on delivering confined space earthworks – working with builders, plumbers, electricians – as well as servicing the public with requirements around their homes, lifestyle blocks, and farms. JFCL is found in cemeteries across the Tararua District as well, being the subcontractor entrusted with the sexton contract, or 'grave digging'.

Taking the plunge and going out on his own had always been Jake's dream, but the incredible relationship he had with previous employers Bruce and the late Lynn Hunt meant his loyalty surpassed the urge to take the leap any sooner.

"When Bruce sold BLH in January last



JFCL's prized possessions



Digging out a soak hole at a local school



Water tank placement for a new shed site on Umutaoroa Road, Dannevirke



JFCL fleet line-up from A&P show

year, I felt it was now or never," Jake recalls, "and the relationships I had built with the tradies over the years meant it was an easy decision to make."

Along with the five-and-a-half years of previous experience with BLH, it's those solid relationships, excellent reputation, and sound local knowledge that allow JFCL to stand out in the confined space market in Tararua – from Norsewood, out to the coast, and down to Eketāhuna. What has come as a challenge, however, has been the changes to health and safety and traffic management. Jake has found these adjustments difficult to overcome at times.

"Trying to translate to potential customers the costs related to site traffic management for 'a few signs on a quiet road' can sometimes price you out of those smaller jobs," Jake explains. Being "undercut by weekend warriors" is challenging for a small business doing things by the book.

JFCL currently runs a Mitsubishi Fighter, a Bomag roller, and a Hitachi four-tonne ZX38U excavator, which Jake swears can't be beaten.

"Everything I do is with the digger. Unless a particular project requires me to hire other machinery, the Zaxis 38 is the kingpin," Jake says.

Jake has been operating this machine since his days with BLH and it was back then, while speaking with a CablePrice mechanic, that Jake was convinced if he ever went into business, a hitch from Doherty Couplers and Attachments was going to be the only way forward.

"Having had some initial teething issues, the quick response and excellent service from Doherty's local rep has confirmed they were definitely the right choice," Jake says.

JFCL has added to their Doherty collection over time with a wide bucket, a ripper, a 300mm Powerdig trenching bucket, a smooth edge digging bucket used specifically for grave digging, and, more recently, a new Doherty tilt hitch fitted to a second-hand Zaxis 38u, which was added to their fleet in November.

Be it floor preparation for new builds, sewer trenching, shed demolition, water tank placement, or soak holes at local schools, Jake says quality gear is a priority to deliver great results, with the Doherty tilt hitch "being an absolute game-changer."

"It's our commitment to selecting quality gear, along with our knowledge and ability to form strong working relationships that's contributed to JFCL's strong reputation and continued growth," says Jake. ■

**For more information, contact Doherty Couplers and Attachments 07 574 3000, [nzsales@dohertydirect.net](mailto:nzsales@dohertydirect.net).**