

Britain's best-selling truck magazine SEPTEMBER 2009 £2.70

A REED BUSINESS PUBLICATION

# Truck & Driver

100%  
FOR  
DRIVERS



100 YEARS OF  
TRUCK ADVERTS



WHINE & DINE  
We explore  
your eating  
options

...AND IN  
THE NEWS  
Alconbury  
resurrected

GLOBETROTTER'S  
30th BIRTHDAY



## PRINCE OF WALES

Evans above! What a tipper



**BIG MAN ON  
THE MOVE**  
Allelys 680hp  
6x4 TGX



**EDITOR'S  
CHOICE**  
Movie magic  
with MAN



**MACK'S  
POWER**  
Snow going  
in the USA



**Truck & Driver**

# EDITOR'S CHOICE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY TOM CUNNINGHAM





'excellence through effort'

**JAMES REMOVALS**  
.com

London 020 8856 5100

Kent 020 8460 8990

'excellence through effort'

**JAMES REMOVALS**  
.com

London 020 8856 5100

Kent 020 8460 8990

### FACT FOCUS

- Model: MAN 18.400 TGX XXL
- Engine: D20, 10.5-litre, Euro 4, EGR
- Gearbox: MAN Tipmatic 12-speed automated
- Power: 400hp @ 1900rpm
- Torque: 1900Nm @ 1000 to 1400rpm
- Operator: James Removals, London



EDITOR'S CHOICE





## ON THE MOVE

**Forget thoughts of Mr Shifter's 'do you know the piano's on my foot?'; James Removals is the epitome of professional moving. Tom Cunningham checks out the London firm's flagship MAN TGX**

**A** detailed description of the occupation 'removal man' in the *Oxford English Dictionary* would be along the lines of the following: 'A person physically fit enough to sustain hours of lumping heavy furniture up and down tight staircases without damage; someone with an uncanny ability to get long, heavy vehicles into places they normally shouldn't go.' There's no getting away from the fact that it's a hard life in this job, a fact James Removals' owner James De-Machen (pictured above with eldest daughter Charlotte Louise) knows only too well.

'It's probably at its hardest when you're moving someone a mile down the road,' he says. 'No sooner have you loaded the van with an entire house and the whole lot's back off again! But when you're moving over greater distances, you can at least get a decent rest from a two- or three-hour drive.'



## Youth policy

**On leaving** school at 16, Billy Wells (pictured right) embarked on his calling in the removals industry as one of James's porters. Brother Jamie already worked for the company so it must have seemed like a pretty sound career choice. At 17 he'd passed his test and was given charge of a Ford Transit with a Luton body.

'When he reached 18 it was decided to enrol the company into the Young Driver Scheme,' says James. 'Billy moved up to a 7.5-tonner and then on to a much larger, 12m-long, 18-tonne Daf 1900.

'A year later he was rewarded with the company's then flagship, a Scania P-series. At 21 he went on to pass his C+E test with flying colours!

When the new MAN TGX arrived towards the latter part of last year, Billy was at the top of the list. This isn't the only time James has employed younger people as the firm currently has three LGV drivers all under 25.

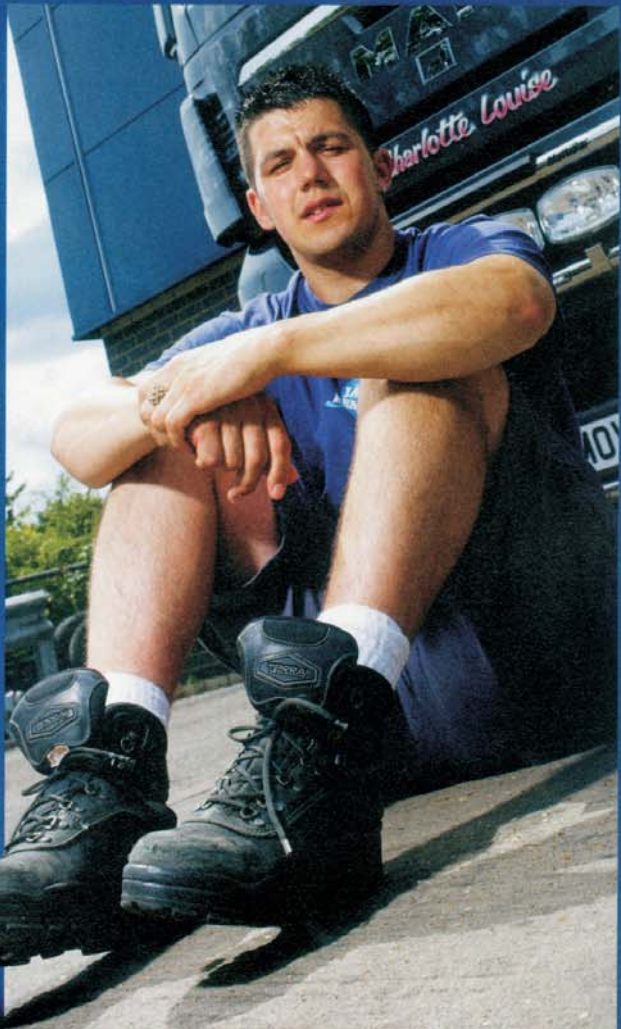
'And they all came to me without licences,' says James. 'One put himself through his test and we took care of the other two.'

James reports no issues with extra insurance costs as a result, in fact quite the contrary.

'We've had no claims so there are no issues,' he reports. 'At the end of the day I still think it's better to hand-rear younger guys rather than take older drivers from other companies.

'In fact (bitter) experience has proved the point on more than one occasion,' James concludes.

When the new MAN TGX arrived towards the end of last year, Billy was at the top of the list



### TOOK OFF IN A TRANSIT

It was back in 1995 when he and another James, partner James Goodwin, started the removals company which would go on to employ a staff of 25 from a purpose-built depository just off the A2.

'Initially we bought a Ford Transit Luton to take a bit of work away from my father, who at the time had more than he could handle. On top of his contracts we also had some Spanish work lined up so it made perfect sense to take the plunge.'

Another early addition to the company was James Goodwin's father Barry, who, having previously run his own light-haulage business, proved invaluable in the office. 'In fact, he's still with us now,' James adds.

Today, James Removals operates a fleet of six Transits, two MANs, two

Mercedes-Benz and one Daf. There's also a Transit minibus, which was bought for the company's five-a-side football team.

Until recently the pride of the fleet was a Scania P-series rigid. But with a general fleet update required, it was decided to go for something different.

'We looked around at various (new) replacement options, mainly owing to London's LEZ requirements. We had a lovely old Daf 1900 (my first LGV), but of course [former mayor] Ken Livingstone's policies put paid to any thoughts of keeping it on the books.

### SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS

'MAN looked favourable with regards to build quality and residuals, and there was also the desired spec to consider. We wanted two vehicles, an 18-tonne prime mover with front-end air sus-

pension (important for access issues) and a 10-tonne rigid with rear air suspension. There was also a requirement that both should have EGR [thus no AdBlue], which left us solely with MAN's TGL and TGX,' James says.

In every form, the MAN TGX 18.400 XXL is an imposing lump, especially when coupled to the firm's 16-tonne trailer. Despite its overly bulky appearance, the chassis height has been lowered with Michelin 315/60R22.5 ultra-low-profile tyres, giving the maximum possible internal dimensions and a vehicle capable of carrying eight standard removal crates.

Front and rear air suspension not only helps to keep breakables unbroken, it also helps to greatly increase and decrease loading height. James also had the truck specced with a high-power alternator and batteries (to run

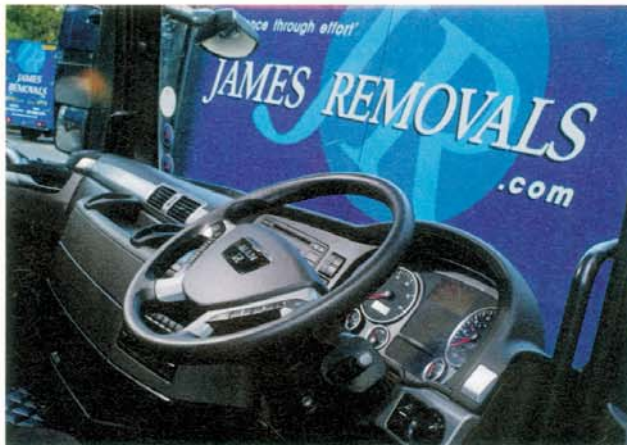
## Family values

**Names on** the vehicles are of James De-Machen's daughters. The eldest, 12-year-old Charlotte Louise, has her name emblazoned across the front of the MAN TGX, nine-year-old Chloe Jay is represented on the front of the 10-tonne MAN TGL and seven-year-old Louise Anne on a Merc 1523.

'One-year-old Sophie May will have her name on the next new lorry. The only one really missing is James junior, but of course his name's on the side of every one of our trucks!'

James is pretty certain some of his children will continue the family business long after he's decided to hang up his traps and blankets.

'I'm sure Charlotte will be in the office in the near future as she's a James Removals person through and through; she always relishes the chance to come down to the yard and help out. Three-year-old James junior is another budding prodigy. The little fellow is truck-mad - I'll think he'll be driving by the time he's five!'







internal lights on dark nights), exterior shunting lights, three reversing cameras linked to a 7in flat screen and an air-operated tow hitch.

The air kit may look familiar, but it's actually a bespoke design manufactured by Warrington-based bodybuilder UVB. 'The standard TGX air kit is really designed to run with unit and trailer combinations; as a result it's over a foot larger than we actually need with our type of drawbar set-up.'

James says the combo can carry eight standard (7ft x 7ft x 5ft) wooden removal crates, although you could spec a drawbar to carry nine. 'But we decided our configuration was a better option as the prime mover and trailer are exactly the same length. With the additional height we've a better loose-loading capacity and the option of storing

equipment alongside the crates.'

Despite taking more than 18 months to reach fruition, the new TGX has proved a worthwhile investment. 'From day one it's turned heads. You get people in cars taking pictures of it on their mobile phones. Customers are always impressed too – when we roll up, the clients' children always want to climb up and sit in the cab,' James enthuses.

#### COLOURFUL LIFE

As you'd imagine, the removal man's life is often a colourful one, especially when it comes loading and unloading. 'I once used the Scania to move a customer from London over to Ireland – without seeing the access width at the other end. But the guy assured me all would be well, and that a skip lorry had already been to the premises.

'We happily met the agent in the nearest town who drove us up to the property in his 4x4. As we wound our way down this narrow track I remember the porter and I looking at each other almost in disbelief – the driver of the skip loader must have been either incredibly brave or at the wheel of an extremely battle-scarred vehicle!'

The solution, it seemed, was the arrival of a van to transship the client's goods and chattels for the remaining mile or so. 'But when they opened the door of this thing we were almost bowled over by the smell. Then I saw a fibreglass floor with a drain hole in the middle of it. Yep, you've guessed it, the van was normally used to carry fresh fish! We finally finished at 1am, with the smell of raw seafood and a burnt-out clutch still hanging heavy in the air.' ■

**Left: The firm's fleet, past and present, has been depicted on the flagship MAN by airbrush artists Tom & Andy Scott**

**Above: Suspension by air for striking TGX is important for access, helps keep breakables unbroken and also assists in adjusting the load height**