BIG GEAR OPERATION

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GROWING CAREERS FROM THE GROUND UP

BAILEY FALCONER is a heavy machinery operator/plant operator with J. Swap, based at the Taotaoroa Quarries near Matamata.

It was the company's first hard rock quarry and is still their largest and busiest quarry.

"When I first started here, I was on a 20-ton dump truck for the first two, two and a half years, and then I got experience driving the big 50-ton dump trucks," Bailey says.

"We have product that comes out from under our screens that go into hoppers and once they are full, you can drive the small dump truck underneath. You load them by opening the doors under the hopper and then tip the truck into the stockpile and repeat the process until the hopper is empty."

Bailey (22) likes driving the bigger 50-ton trucks that go down in the pit and are loaded by large diggers. He recently also began operating the diggers, ranging from 10-tons to 90-tons.

"There is nothing quite like operating a big bit of gear. It is quite thrilling. It can get repetitive, but it is still very enjoyable. We have a very good crew to work with out here. Everyone knows what they are doing which makes everything easier every day."

Safety is the number one priority at all times working in the quarry.

"There is a little bit of everything involved with working here. There is danger but there are measures in place to keep everything safe. Commonsense is a big part of it and obviously training is a big thing too."

Bailey attended Morrinsville College, where he took English, Maths, PE, Woodwork and Metalwork in Year 12. He admits he had no idea what he wanted to do at that stage, but a random conversation turned out to be the turning point.

"I left school at 16 and did not have a full process of where I wanted to end up. Everything just kind of aligned. I met an older guy who was working for J. Swap, and he asked me if I would be interested in going into the quarrying division.

"I agreed to give it a go and have been here coming up five years now."

Bailey's hard work and tenacity have paid off. Long-term prospects with the company are looking good. Last year he started studying for his B Grade Quarry Manager CoC (Certificate of Competence).

He is preparing for the final interview now he has completed the paperwork.

"I still feel I have a decent way to go but for the time I have spent working here, I would say it has been rewarding. With the experience that comes with doing the job, it does get easier."

For school leavers, Bailey says there are plenty of jobs in the industry.

"The key things to succeed are having a good attitude, being a team player and having a hard work ethic.

"When I left school, I didn't have many of those attributes. Hands-on learning was my thing and you do get better as you continue on through the industry."

THE AGGREGATE & QUARRY ASSOCIATION OF NZ



"THERE IS NOTHING QUITE LIKE OPERATING A BIG BIT OF GEAR. IT IS QUITE THRILLING."
BAILEY FALCONER

KEY FACTS

- **BAILEY FALCONER** IS A **HEAVY MACHINERY OPERATOR/PLANT OPERATOR** WITH **J. SWAP**, BASED AT THE **TAOTAOROA QUARRIES** NEAR **MATAMATA**.
- A **CONVERSATION** WITH A **COMPANY EMPLOYEE** FIVE YEARS AGO PROMPTED **HIM** TO GIVE **QUARRYING** A GO.
- AS WELL AS **OPERATING DUMP TRUCKS AND DIGGERS**, **BAILEY** IS **STUDYING** FOR HIS **B GRADE QUARRY MANAGER CERTIFICATE OF COMPETENCE**.

ONLINE

For more information on ***career opportunities*** *in the* **aggregate and quarry industry**, *visit* ***www.aqa.org.nz***