

Terrific TIPPER

Katelyn Arundale, a truck driver for Agnew Transport in Hastings, shares her story of life on the road

WORDS, IMAGES, AND VIDEO BY VIVIENNE HALDANE

Katelyn says she couldn't be happier. With a range of work to challenge her, plus a brand-new Isuzu to drive, it's a dream come true for the 29-year-old Welsh woman.

Agnew Transport is based in Hawke's Bay's horticultural epicentre and contracts for big companies such as the Mr. Apple group, Heinz Watties, and a range of other long-term clients, which keeps their wheels turning day after day.

There's no typical week. When *DOW* spoke to her, Katelyn had carted river metal, fertiliser, and compost.

"I might be jackknife tipping one day and spreading metal the next; it's forever changing," she says.

"At the height of harvest season, I cart bulk onions straight from the harvester to the packhouse, and at this time of year (winter), we do heaps of other work such as orchard track work and carting metal and lime and topsoil. We also load excavators



SEE THE VIDEO AT
DEALS ON WHEELS
.CO.NZ



Katelyn Arundale



Road-ready in her comfortable cab

on the transport trailer to take them from job to job as well as driving them, which I'm keen on, too," she says.

Multi-tasking has given her the opportunity to broaden her skills. "I've learned so much in the time I've been here compared to what I did back in the UK and, to be fair, with line haul, you don't get the chance to do other things because you are away all week. Here, I get the chance to try my hand at anything and that's massive."

Notching up experience

Although she's a self-confessed petrol head—"fast V8 cars and supercars"—Katelyn didn't realise she wanted to be a truck driver until she met Hawke's Bay driver Amy Edmonds (DOW 271) while working on a dairy farm in New Zealand.

"I thought, 'if she can do it, so can I'." Amy egged her on, too, challenging her to sit her licence tests and give it a go.

What's interesting is that Katelyn has a trendsetting grandmother who drove a small truck for the family business—quite unusual for the time.

Katelyn went back to the UK to gain all her licences. Her first job was driving line haul where she first got a taste for the open road.



Katelyn has this 18-speed road ranger well under control

"Driving from the top of Scotland to the bottom of England meant I got to see country many others wouldn't. I really enjoyed that.

"Often I'd have to sleep in the truck, sometimes up to five nights a week. I also gained experience with flat deck,

curtain side, walking floors. However, New Zealand was where I wanted to be, so in 2015 I returned."

She worked during the maize and silage season in the Waikato but wanted to be in Hawke's Bay, so two years ago, applied for and got the job at Agnew Transport.

"I began on curtainsiders carting apples, then during winter, I went onto the tractors and did a lot of groundwork such as tree planting in orchards using Trimble GPS. Then they put me onto the bulk tipper and that's where I've been ever since," she says.

Different places, different paces

Katelyn says the opportunity to gain a multitude of experiences is one of the things she likes most about working in New Zealand. She reckons it has advanced her skill level hugely.

"In the UK, for example, I hadn't seen chains on the tailgate used to spread metal. I also had to get used to reversing a truck and trailer after driving solely automatic," she says.

"Consequently, I had to change my driving style when I came here; I had to learn how to drive an 18-speed Road Ranger gearbox and reverse a trailer. Amy taught me some of it, and after that, I had to learn by doing it.

"The roads in New Zealand are so different too. The terrain makes them more challenging; people at home have no idea. The motorway makes it easy. On the hills here, you use every gear in the range and if you muck up, you are stuffed."

New gear

Katelyn is rapt with her brand-new Isuzu. "Being a six-wheeler, it can go a lot more places, especially at this time of year when it's wet," she says.

"It's a lot lighter so you can get more on, so your payload is more. It's great at turning circles and getting into a narrower space, whereas the eight-wheeler might not. As for tyres, I have super singles on the front to enable the truck to take more weight. The alloy bins are lightweight giving a lesser tare weight."

Future plans

Now she's come this far, Katelyn sees herself tackling more challenges. "I've been helping out with some of the dispatching at Agnews over the last few months and I'd like to do more in future. I also have my Class 2 Pilot's licence for moving wide loads, so that's in my sights to do, too," she says.

Industry challenges

On being a woman in a male-dominated industry, Katelyn says, "The women truck drivers I know are all amazing operators.

"I'll admit you have to be strong to survive, especially when you first start and nobody knows who you are. But you have to stand your ground and once you get a good name for yourself, you are just another one of the team." ■



The new Isuzu

Agnew Transport

Agnew Transport—operating since 1984—services mostly the rural sector in Hawke's Bay and some line haul.

It carries fresh produce, aggregate, fertiliser, silage, compost, maize, stock food, and general bulk freight.

The company also runs an earthworks division, which carries out work in rural and commercial sites and redevelopment work in the pip fruit and viticulture sectors in Hawke's Bay.

Agnew Transport's current fleet includes tipper, flat deck, and curtainsider units. They operate up to 40 vehicles during the harvest season.

For more details, visit agnewtransport.co.nz.



Easy-to-operate tipper controls

Katelyn's truck

18 Isuzu 460
Eighteen-speed road ranger
Alloy tipper
Six-wheeler



Katelyn's truck driving career began in the UK, but New Zealand is now home