

# AUCKLAND MANUFACTURERS

Only those who are asleep make no mistakes.

– Ingvar Kamrad, IKEA

## BD Tensioners compete with the Swiss on quality and service

If you look at the dual-branding around 4 Tait Place, just off Rosedale Road on Auckland's North Shore, you might be a little confused as to where you are and what they are about. But don't let that concern you.

All you need to know is that everything on site is 'Proudly New Zealand Made'; that you have the opportunity to 'Ask about our customised service'; and that the owner and boss is a gentle, softly-spoken lady – and I don't mean 'female' – who is quietly carving out a reputation for herself in New Zealand Manufacturing. Meet Sue Mill, a former nurse-turned-quality-manufacturer.

The site contains the operations of the well-established Belts & Drives New Zealand Limited, acquired by Mill back in 2007 from founder Paul Osborne, who still consults to the company, which is migrating across to become BD Tensioners, local designers and manufacturers of a wide range of tensioners, rollers, sprockets and chain guides to suit chain from 3/8" to 1". They also compete head-on with the Swiss giant which dominates the world market – but not New Zealand's.

As GM Jim Marsh notes: "Their imported products are good, and we make a good one too. It happens to be a niche product and the local market isn't big enough for them, so we are number one in tensioners.

"It also helps that if you get your order in before 4 PM, we will have it at your premises anywhere in New Zealand the next morning. Customers like the fact that we are Kiwis, independent, deliver what they tell us is a great service and our pricing is fair – two increases in five years, isn't bad."



Jim Marsh and Sue Mill stand high on a fabricated stairwell, with BD Tensioner products.

How have they achieved that? Mill takes up the challenge: "By constantly improving the product and gaining manufacturing productivity by systematically focussing on each and every aspect of it, including coatings, which we specialise in, to maintain our competitiveness.

"We also limit our exporting to Australia, so that we aren't distracted by small volumes going all over the place. We'd rather give our attention to customised solutions for our customers. We do, however, supply major manufacturers who effectively export our products worldwide."

Their customer total is even longer than their impressive distributor list, where I stopped counting when it got into the twenties. Marsh is obsessive about having parts in stock and 'confesses' to being short of a part for one 12-hour period once last year.

The A & S structural and steel fabricators sign which sits alongside the B & D one has been cleverly designed to have a strong 'family' core feel to it. And why not, they work side-by-side, albeit in discreet bays where necessary, sharing the decades of designing (a particular skill), manufacturing and fabricating specialist products.

It is here that Mill cut her 'manufacturing teeth', in a business which literally started out welding wheel-barrows. Today that has grown to include specialising in structural steel for large and complex structures.

Additional areas of expertise – under the payline 'taking the hassle out of steelwork', which encapsulates the pragmatism which permeates the operation -- include:

- Handrails and balustrades (see photograph).

- Gates and fences.
- General welding.
- Steel maintenance.
- Steel fabrication.
- On-site welding and installation.

They also have a full range of coatings systems from hot-dip galvanising to zinc metal spray-with-seal or epoxy over-coating, electroplating and more. And if you need more involved drawings, they can do workshop drawings in Autocad or 3D (Strucad, Autocad). It is the proverbial one-stop-shop, plus.

When next you're on the North Shore look out for the massive span of the Salvation Army HQ and chapel; any number of school facilities and an AUT unit, across the city; complexes for the elderly; award-winning architectural buildings; and many more from their purpose-built factory in Albany.

"Since our establishment in 1985, A&S Engineering has built a reputation for quality workmanship, accuracy and reliability. We offer a complete service from supplying free quotations to site-measuring, CAD drawing-facilities, preparation of shop-drawings, manufacture and on-site installation.

"We have been operating for 27-years with a very low staff turnover. We currently employ 12 staff with most having several years' service. We have apprenticeship-trained-tradesmen, qualified to weld under New Zealand Standards 4711," Mill says.

Marsh credits the outsourcing philosophy for dynamically transforming the B & D operation to enable it to continue competing with the world's best.

Expect more from the Mill and Marsh partnership.

**nextSTEP:**

[www.bdtensioners.co.nz](http://www.bdtensioners.co.nz)