

H & H Travel Lines

H & H was an Invercargill-based company whose history dated back to the inter-war period. Its primary business was running bus and coach services connecting its home town to regional Southland and parts of Central Otago. Its involvement in composites was brief, but spectacular. Two self-bodied Ford R1114's were completed in 1979 and 1981 for use in its traditional area of operation.

In 1983, H & H purchased most of larger Midland Coachlines' fleet, a move that more than doubled the size of the company. At the time, with little indication of the severe economic and industry turbulence lying ahead, the move probably looked like a good one.

While most of the acquired vehicles were tour coaches, six of the county's most impressive composites were also included – two Domino Tourmasters, two AEC Reliances and two Seddon Pennines – all employed on the Christchurch to Dunedin Starliner service.

The coach industry was deregulated soon afterwards, and H & H quickly set about extending the Starliner service south to Invercargill and north to Picton, creating the country's longest continuous coach route in the process. The extensions necessitated purchasing more vehicles, and H & H bodied three large new Hino BG300

composites in 1986 – the last new conventional composites to enter service in New Zealand.

No doubt stretched by the consequences of too rapid expansion, high interest rates, increased competition, deregulation, and an unexpected downturn in inbound tourist numbers, in 1986 H & H was taken over by the stronger, largely government-owned, Mount Cook Group (see pages 23-25). The H & H identity was sadly soon lost.

Below. H & H's first composite was No. 60, a 1979 self-bodied Ford R1114, seen some distance from its usual sphere of operation, on a charter in Christchurch's Cathedral Square. Dudley Kirker.

Bottom. The company's, and the country's last-ever new-built conventional composite, 1986 Hino BG300 No. 291, pictured, soon after delivery. Phil Coward.

