



1926

By Ian M. Johnston

By 1926 World War One, the war to end all wars, was well and truly in the past. The Nation had learned to live with the fact that the cream of Australia's manhood had been decimated on the fields of Flanders and in the deserts of Arabia. The Great Depression had not yet raised its ugly head. Australian farmers were enjoying reasonable seasons and crop returns were uncharacteristically acceptable.

In the expanding world of tractors, design engineers were becoming more confident and boldly experimented with imaginative innovations. Accordingly, in 1926 a number of these new concept tractors found their way into Australia. Some were basically still in their development stage, as overseas manufacturers often considered Australian farms as ideal test beds for their products. If a tractor could cope with the rigours of the unyielding soils and heat of the western plains, then it would undoubtedly be suitable for most other farming regions around the world.

In this article, three of the 1926 imports are examined.

THE BENZ SENDLING MODEL S7

Manufactured at the Daimler Benz works at Mannheim, Germany, was one of the most remarkable tractors to come to Australia. It was unique, being the world's first ever production agricultural tractor powered by a full compression ignition diesel engine.

The vertical two cylinder four stroke engine of 5.73 litre capacity, developed 32 bhp at a mere 800 rpm. Final drive was by a sprocket and chain to the single rear wheel.

Starting the engine from cold could prove a nightmare. Each of the two cylinders had to be primed with a lit glowing ignition paper. Then with the individual

single plunger type fuel pumps set at full "throttle", the operator was faced with the daunting task of cranking the big beast into life. This frequently proved an almost impossible task. Following several attempts at this physically demanding exertion, it was not unusual for the operator to walk away in disgust.

Indeed it was a common practice for Benz Sendling owners to leave the engines running for weeks on end during the ploughing and harvesting seasons. This was the preferred alternative to having to endeavour to fire up the engine each morning.

One of the reasons for the difficulty in starting the Benz Sendling engine, was the fact that its compression ratio was a mere 15 to one. With further developments of the diesel engine principles, it was discovered that ideally the compression ratio of a full compression ignition should not be less than 15.5 to one.

This was particularly the case with indirect injection systems having pre-combustion chambers, such as favoured by most German diesel engine designers, including Benz Sendling.

The three wheel configuration of the Benz Sendling resulted in serious stability problems. Coupled to the narrow front axle wheelbase, the tractor's high centre of gravity rendered the 2.6 tonne machine prone to a sideways roll, if working on the side of an incline. A purchaser therefore, in the in-

NOTABLE EVENTS OF 1926

- Anna Pavlova, the Russian Prima Ballerina, brought her own ballet company to Australia for the first time.
- Yarralumla was purchased by the Federal Government, to be used as the Governor General's residence.
- Alfred Hitchcock's "The Lodger" starring Ivor Novello, was shown on the silent screen to terrified audiences.
- Yellow Express commenced business and became Australia's largest freight company.
- The Girl Guides Association of Australia was formed in Victoria.
- Adolf Hitler assumed the title of Fuhrer of the Nazi Party.
- Scotsman, John Logie Baird demonstrated infra-red television on December 23.
- Eight people died in bushfires in Central Western NSW.



This Benz Sendling is one of the finest remaining examples of these rare tractors. It is one of the many fascinating exhibits at the Booleroo Steam and Tractor Preservation Society in South Australia. Note the guard covering the final drive chain and the outrigger stability wheels. (Photo IMJ)



The two cylinder diesel engine can be clearly seen in this view of the off side of the Benz Sendling. (Photo IMJ)



In 1926 the Twin City 27-44 was indeed a heavyweight powerful tractor. The photo shows a 27-44 on display at the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement Village with Master Restorer Newton Williams at the wheel. (Photo IMJ)



Pictured is Newton Williams pointing out the twin camshafts of the 16 valve four cylinder engine as fitted to the Twin City 27-44. (Photo IMJ)

terest of safety, would have been wise to order the optional outrigger stability wheels.

It appears likely that the first Benz Sendling to be delivered to an Australian farmer was sold in 1926 by Messrs. E Schrapel and Son, a South Australian dealer based in Tanunda.

The cost of the tractor was £725 (at a time when a Fordson could be purchased for £180). The farmer, to whom the tractor was sold, purchased his machine on a crop payment basis, but failed to honour the first payment upon the due date. An argument ensued, resulting in the dealer journeying to the farm and removing the cylinder heads from the engine. This successfully prevented the tractor from being used until the payment was met.

A four wheeled version of the S7, designated the BK, soon followed, and effectively put an end to the hazardous stability problems, associated with the original model.

Only a small number (unknown) of Benz Sendling tractors were sold in Australia.

THE TWIN CITY 27-44

From the US, was a technically interesting tractor that also arrived in Australia in 1926. A product of The Minneapolis Steel and Machinery Company, Twin City tractors had been sold in Australia for over a decade and had earned a reputation for engineering integrity.

The 27-44 was, in fact, an update of the earlier 20-35. The Holly carburettor of the former had been replaced by a Schebler and a few more revs had been coaxed from the engine. The bore and stroke remained the same at 5.5 x 6.75 inches.

The four cylinder engine of the 27-44 was possibly the most advanced design of any farm tractor of the period. Remarkably it featured 16 valves and twin camshafts. These are performance related elements generally associated with modern high tech engines. Yet Twin City introduced them to its tractor line back in 1919!

A Twin City 27-44 was submitted to

the University of Nebraska Agricultural Engineering Department for testing in May 1926. Kerosene fuel was used during the 38 hours of the test. A maximum drawbar pull of 5640 pounds was achieved at 2.3 mph. In 1926 this represented an outstanding figure, which few tractors could equate.

But a whopping 4.69 gallons of fuel were consumed per hour. The maximum brake horse power achieved was 49.05 at 1000 rpm.

The Twin City 27-44 was certainly one of the most powerful tractors to be sold in Australia in 1926, albeit with a voracious thirst for fuel. Its only negative factors were, the limitation of two forward gears and the considerable effort required to hand crank the big motor.

THE AUSTIN TRACTOR

This was the result of an endeavour, by British car magnate Sir Herbert Austin, to counter the volume sales of the American

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An Austin tractor owned by well known Canadian collector Stan Kick. Note the cast seat and cast front wheels. (Photo J Kick)

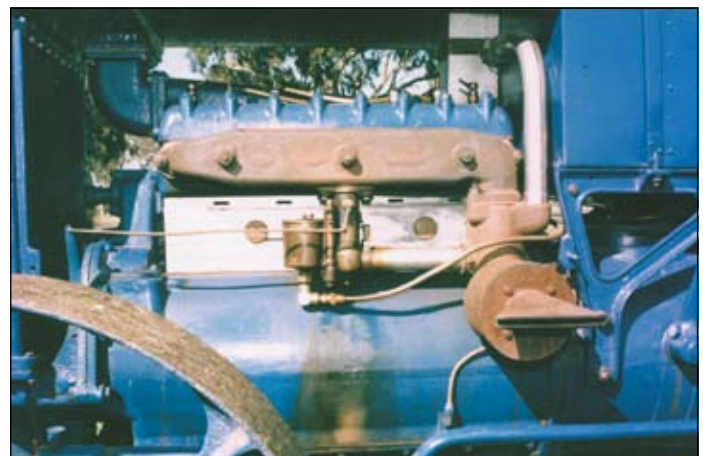


Photo shows the engine of an Austin tractor restored by Alex and Ron Grosser. This unit is on display at the Gunnedah Rural Museum, NSW. (Photo IMJ)

Fordsons that were pouring into Great Britain and her Colonies, in the early 1920s.

A special tractor manufacturing facility was built in Birmingham, in the English Midlands. In order to contain the development costs of the new tractor, the well proven Austin Twenty car engine was utilised as the power unit. This was a relatively bland four cylinder side valve affair having a bore and stroke of 3.125 x five inches.

The two tonne tractor was provided with only two forward gears which, particularly in a lightweight unit, severely restricted its potential performance. But the Austin's biggest handicap was its price. In Australia it sold for £350. The less sophisticated but highly successful Fordson, with three forward gears, retailed for £180.

Despite its outstanding track record for reliability, neither the British or Australian farmers were particularly enamoured with the Austin, mainly due to its price disadvantage. But curiously, the French farmers loved it. The majority of the Birmingham produced tractors were shipped across the Channel to France.

In 1926 Austin car sales were booming.

IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR QUIZ

QUESTION: Ok — so I am sitting on a Massey Ferguson. But can you identify which model?

CLUE: It is not a British made Massey Ferguson.

DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY: Trickier than you might think.

ANSWER: See page 64.



Britain's top selling vehicle was the tiny but affordable Austin Seven. Not surprisingly, Sir Herbert felt his tractor manufacturing plant in Birmingham would be better utilised in the production of cars. With his customary decisive action, he transferred his tractor plant to a new facility near Calais in France. The French Austin tractors started to arrive in Australia towards the end 1926.

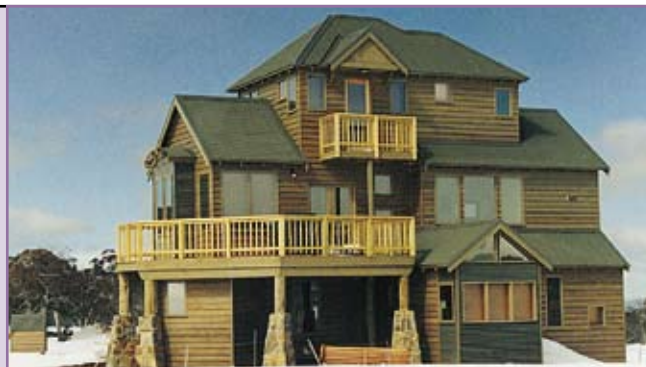
Ironically, 1926 also saw a decline in the sale of Austin tractors in France. Perversely, British farmers decided that after all, the Austin was not a bad tractor! So

once again Sir Herbert's tractors were being shipped across the Channel, but this time from France to Britain!

Australian farmers also discovered hitherto unseen merits in the Austins. For a brief period from 1926, the Australian factory representative Mr R N Wallis, whose office was located in The Manchester Unity building in Sydney, enjoyed a slight increase in his tractor sales.

But Sir Herbert's dream of outselling the Fordson in British and Colonial markets was never realised. The production of Austin tractors was discontinued in 1930. 🍀

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