

# Leave it to Ludwig

By Ian M. Johnston, The Tractor Historian

**In 1955 I was invited to join the newly established Lanz Australia Pty. Ltd. as a Field Representative. The job involved assisting our country based dealers to market Lanz Bulldog tractors, organise displays at country agricultural shows and stage field days — while keeping a watchful eye on the opposition.**

**Accordingly, most of my time was spent in the field either with farmers or dealers. Every few weeks I returned to Sydney head office for a few days 'spell' and to brief the firm's Managing Director Herr Hans Tronser of developments occurring in the farming sector. I also took these opportunities to discuss technical developments with Ludwig Simon — the Chief Engineer.**

**The following is an account of an eventful two days which occurred in October 1955.**

## A CRISIS

I was enjoying my lamb's fry and bacon breakfast, for which the Globe Hotel at Cootamundra was noted, when word came that there was a phone call for me and would I take it in the foyer? The call was from an uncharacteristically stressed John Ross-Reid who was my Lanz agent based at Leeton, some 160 miles west of Cootamundra. He was clearly agitated and urged me to 'drop everything' and proceed to Leeton with all haste as he had a crisis on his hands!

It appeared Mr Bossley, a prominent



farmer in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, was about to purchase two tractors for his share farmer. He had narrowed the field down and decided he would buy either the new Fordson Diesel Major or the Lanz Bulldog D3606.

John Ross-Reid explained that a comparative on-site demonstration of the two opposition tractors had taken place the previous day at Mr Bossley's farm. Everyone, including Mr Bossley, had anticipated the German tractor would have decidedly out-performed the Fordson. But not so! The Fordson Major had pulled Mr Bossley's scarifier a gear faster than the Lanz.

John explained that he had persuaded Mr Bossley to delay signing an order for the Fordsons until an 'expert' had checked out the Lanz. He had been given 24 hours to 'fix it' and prove the Lanz was the more able tractor — or Mr Bossley would purchase two Fordsons.

## DESPERATION

The villages of Coolamon, Matong, Grong Grong and the town of Narrandera flashed by in a blur as I urged the not yet run-in Morris Isis to the hitherto unexplored top end of the speedometer, whilst we powered on towards Leeton. It was unthinkable that a Lanz D3606 had been outdone by a Fordson.

In my capacity with Lanz, I was not supposed to be a technical type but in truth I had a fair mechanical knowledge of the product range. I also did most of the demonstrating, so there was no doubt in my mind that I would be able to rectify the problem and retrieve the sale for John Ross-Reid.

I charged the locust splattered Morris Isis into Mr. Bossley's yard and came to a skidding halt, creating an unappreciated cloud of dust. There they were, impatiently awaiting my arrival. John, Mr Bossley, his share farmer, a smug looking Fordson dealer plus half a dozen assorted types who had drifted in to watch the fun. The Lanz was already hitched to the trailed McCormick 10 foot scarifier, so it remained for me to climb on board and hit the starter.

As soon as I notched the tractor into gear and moved off, I knew there was a problem. To put it crudely and in unscientific terms, the tractor was *gutless*!

An hour later, having checked the atomiser, fuel pump, the fuel itself, the governor controls, etc, the tractor remained gutless. Mr Bossley was not amused. John Ross-Reid looked grim. My reputation had gone into a decline. Only the Fordson dealer found joy in the proceedings and had his order book at the ready.

I sensed Mr Bossley secretly wanted the Lanz to out-gun the Fordson. He therefore raised no objection when I requested I use the homestead telephone to call head office in Sydney.

## LUDWIG

Ludwig Simon was simply (and remains) the most brilliant tractor technician I have ever encountered in half a century of working with tractors. Ramrod straight and with

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## THE CONTENDERS



A Fordson Major Diesel, exactly the same as the unit demonstrated to Mr Bossley, photographed at the 1997 Ausplough Vintage ploughing competition. (Photo I.M.J.)



The Lanz Bulldog D3606 was also known in Australia as the Model Q. The unit pictured is owned by Allan Latimore of Comboyne, NSW. (Photo I.M.J.)

### 1955 FORDSON MAJOR DIESEL

Manufacturer:	Ford Motor Co. Ltd.
Country of origin:	England
Engine type:	4 cyl. compression ignition diesel
Max. r.p.m.:	1600
Bore and stroke:	3.937 x 4.528 inch
Displacement:	3.6 litres
Compression ratio:	16 to 1
Gearbox:	2 stage — 6 fwd., 2 rev.
Operating weight:	3.174 tons
Drawbar pull:	5313 lbs. at 1.73 mph
Belt h.p.:	39.4

### 1955 LANZ BULLDOG D3606

Manufacturer:	Heinrich Lanz AG
Country of origin:	Germany
Engine type:	1 cyl. 2 stroke valveless semi-diesel
Max. r.p.m.:	1050
Bore and stroke:	150 x 210 mm
Displacement:	3.7 litres
Compression ratio:	11 to 1
Gearbox:	2 stage — 6 fwd., 4 rev.
Operating weight:	3.2 tons
Drawbar pull:	6200 lbs. at 1.7 mph.
Belt h.p.:	36

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piercing Aryan eyes, he commanded respect in which ever place was honoured by his presence. In 1955, all that Ludwig had missing was a Wermacht Colonel's uniform.

"No! It is not possible," he bellowed down the phone to me, in his parade ground, heavily-accented voice.

"Ludwig, I can assure you this D3606 is gutless and," I reiterated "the Fordson is running rings around it."

There was a snort, followed by a pause.

"You will meet me off the tomorrow morning flight," he instructed.

Then more kindly, "You will not concern yourself. I shall rectify the problem." With that the line went dead.

The Butler Airways DC3 touched down at Narrandera airport promptly at 9.35 am. The rear door opened and the steps unfolded. The captain, followed by the second officer and hostess, alighted and together they formed a sort of guard of honour for the disembarking passengers

— a customary airline procedure in those graceful days. In this instance the sole passenger was Ludwig.

So there he was, arriving off what could have been mistaken as his personal flight and being saluted by the crew. In the manner of a true Teutonic aristocrat, he merely gave a curt nod in response and strode over to where I was waiting with the Morris Isis. He remained by the side of the car leaving me in no doubt that I was expected to open the rear door for him, in the manner of a driver ushering his colonel into a military staff car.

We swept into Mr Bossley's yard and the great Ludwig Simon emerged into the sunlight from the rear of the car. By now the word had spread around. Not only had everyone returned, who had been present the previous day, but it appeared the entire community had arrived to witness what had now developed into being an event of major significance — and certainly great entertainment!

I formally introduced Ludwig to the

assembly. He clicked his well polished heels and gave a slight bow — then frowned when nobody applauded. His frown turned to a withering stare when some stalwart sang out, "Good on yer mate."

As we approached the errant tractor I attempted to describe the problem, but Ludwig dismissed my comments with a wave of his hand.

"It is of no concern," he informed me.

John Ross-Reid grimaced as Ludwig placed his briefcase on the bonnet of his beautifully polished, scratch free Wolseley. Ludwig then proceeded to extract from the briefcase a pristine gleaming white starched dustcoat, which he put on over his suit.

Audibly from the gathering came exclamations including, "Strewth!", "Strike me pink!" and "Jeez, what next!"

Ludwig's gimlet eye flashed around the assembly seeking out the culprits. Silence reigned; order was restored.

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Ludwig produced a highly chromed spanner from a small leather case which he carried in his inside breast pocket. He then proceeded to make adjustments to the governor and the fuel pump, the covers having first been removed by John Ross-Reid. Nobody could precisely see what actual adjustments were made.

Ludwig signalled me to start the engine. He then delighted the fascinated and by now highly intrigued audience by producing and putting on a stethoscope, which gave him the appearance of a visiting brain surgeon. He sounded the engine with the stethoscope and nodded his head knowingly. Then abruptly, he removed the still immaculate dust coat and replaced it and the stethoscope into the briefcase.

He turned to me and announced, "Now we shall go."

I must have looked amazed.

"But Ludwig, until we test the tractor how do we know it is fixed?" I dared to ask.

Ludwig looked at me with disdain as if examining some lower form of pond life. He seemed to be considering if perpetual confinement to barracks was adequate punishment or should I simply be taken out and shot! However, he finally just shrugged and indicated that if I really thought it necessary I could test the tractor.

### THE CONCLUSION

There is little else to tell. Predictably, the Lanz Bulldog D3606 tore around the paddock like a young colt, dragging the scarifier behind. I could even notch it into fourth gear, which totally trounced the performance of the Fordson Major Diesel.

The show was over and Mr Bossley was pleased and relieved to have his initial confidence in the Lanz confirmed. John Ross-Reid unscrewed the cap of his fountain pen in preparation for the sign-

ing of the order. The Fordson dealer departed in a huff. Ludwig Simon and I adjourned to the Leeton Hydro Hotel for a round or two of schnapps followed by a leisurely lunch.

Yes these were great days, when the countryside was full of fascinating characters — and selling tractors was fun!

## IAN'S MYSTERY TRACTOR

**QUESTION:** Can you identify the tractor by the photo of its engine?

**CLUE:** These tractors were popular in Cuba.

**DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY:** Greatly increased by the cryptic clue!

**ANSWER:** See page 83.

