



PAST-MASTER

On the Sunday morning of the record attempt, Andrew Pollock took shelter from the heavy rain to chat with Wilfred Mole of Sandstone Estates Heritage Trust, organiser of the first official vintage tractor world record back in 1999.

In 1999, South African heritage enthusiast Wilfred Mole decided to create a world record around working vintage tractors. While similar events had previously been held in this part of the world involving Ferguson tractors, these were not recognised by the Guinness Book organisation and so Wilfred's number of 103 became the first official worldwide record. Known as the 'Great Working 100', this event was to create a ripple that spread all over the globe, culminating in this Cooley 2007 record attempt.

AP: *So Wilfred, have you always had an interest in vintage tractors?*

WM: I grew up on a dairy farm in Swaziland and my dad had Masseys; I was actually more into classic cars, and I've still got the [MG] TC I used in university in '62, but I always had my dad's tractors that he bought new, a little classic 35X, a Fergie 135 and a 65. I was attracted by the Field Marshall as a machine, and I bought one in about

'85, a Series II, and joined the local tractor club. Then I got into the older stuff and I got a lock onto steel-wheel, and wherever there was a steel-wheel tractor I was very interested. I like the really early stuff, which there wasn't that much of because we used oxen much later than in most places. In South Africa we have a wonderful diversity of tractors because we were buying Australian, British, Italian, French, German and American; stuff you wouldn't believe like Fairbanks-Morse tractors that were only made for 2 or 3 years. It was a big country so these big prairie-busters were what they were looking for.

AP: *So it wasn't long before the collection began to grow?*

WM: In '95 we got back into farming in a big way, big arable farming, and the main farm we bought had about 35 tractors on it which were original to that family since new; I bought both the land and the tractors, and so I got an instant collection! It was mostly Lanz Bulldogs and Marshalls; in fact one of

Text & Photos Andrew Pollock



Wilfred aboard his 4-wheel-drive Holder in the Cooley mud.