



Certainly one of the most imposing machines taking part was Wilfred's 1911 Emerson Brantingham Big 4-20.

the guys here with me was the original owner of the farm, and one of his tractors is here. We brought it nostalgically, because it means a lot to us that this Field Marshall has been in his family since new. He's beside himself because that's his granddad's tractor he's got here. His family has been on that farm since 1865, and all their machinery, old combines, everything, is still there, so we've an instant working museum because they had never modernised, they'd just kept working.

AP: *How many tractors do you currently own?*

WM: We've got about 500 vintage tractors on the farm, of which 200 are running, and the rest are in storage. Because there's no national government-sponsored preservation programme in South Africa, in a way I'm it. We actually are a preservation centre; we've got military vehicles, narrow-gauge and wide-gauge locomotives, tractors, traction engines,

portable engines, threshing machines, combine harvesters, steam rollers, we are broadly based. One guy who retired last year gave me 65 tractors because he had nowhere to put them, and there's another guy who wants to move to Australia and he's going to give me 35 tractors, so they're coming by themselves. I don't like to think of us as having 500; I mean, they're ours in that they were given to us, but I'd like to think of it more that other people have parked their tractors there. We've stopped restoring tractors because it's pointless, as we've got so many already and we get upset when they're not maintained properly, so that's why it's fantastic to take some to Ireland, to pull them out and get them ready, because the stimulus is there. So, yeah we've got lots and we just don't count them but I would estimate that if you take them all we must have about 500 tractors or so.

AP: *So where did you get the idea for the world record attempt in the first place?*

WM: I had joined the local tractor club in South Africa, who only had one meeting a year, so every year I used to drive for six hours with this tractor on the back of a small truck, and park it in a field. I thought 'why don't we do something with it, let's do anything, let's plough.' There was a bit of reluctance, and this went on for about five years. I've got some marketing experience, so I said 'we've got this farm, I'm going to put an event together.' I thought a clever thing to do would be to break some sort of record, so I thought up a record; actual number of tractors in one field at one time, ploughing together with an implement, etc. Anyway, not one single member of the tractor fraternity turned up, but I had quite a lot of tractors so I scraped together what I had and phoned some farmers, who were not tractor collectors, and said 'haven't you got an old tractor', and I just cobbled together a hundred-odd. I'm a good marketing guy so I told the media about it, and a couple of thousand people turned up and had



The Landini 25 was having some trouble with a front tyre, but luckily it was repaired in time for Gerhard Wille to drive in the main event.



The High-Crop 60 is an extremely rare 'All-Fuel' factory version, of which only half-a-dozen or so were made.



Although dwarfed somewhat by the big Emerson-Brantingham, the 1917 General Ordnance is a large machine in its own right.

a ball! We loved it, and we had a lot of people saying 'I'm so sorry I wasn't there' and 'I'm coming to the next one.' Even people from the public were saying 'I've gone out and bought a tractor', so this is a significant point; it had a quantum influence on the number of collectors, because then people wanted a tractor to take to one of these things and be part of the fun, so effectively we gave a tremendous shot to the arm. I'm not looking for any personal credit, I'm just saying that we gave things a shake up and we suddenly found that it resonated with other countries.

AP: *Did you ever think that the whole thing would get so huge?*

WM: The answer's no. I did it for local reasons, and I was quite taken aback when I got the call from Australia to say that they were going to have a go. There is tremendous sporting rivalry between us and Australia, big time, so the Aussies locked onto it too. They got around 230 vintage tractors and broke the record, so in 2002 we had a big event called the 'Great 400 Working'. We stuck to the rules and kept it vintage, with a cut-off date of 1960; we tried for 400 and we got about 800, so it was hugely successful. I had people there who had travelled 2,000 miles, and we had 20,000 people pitch up on the farm. I couldn't believe it Andrew; I mean we had grown men in tears, because when they fired up the tractors the whole sky went dark for about a minute. Some of them were on their dad's tractors, and they hadn't been run for ten years. 800 tractors sounded a lot on the day, and people said they couldn't believe that you could assemble 800 tractors in one place; well, we can see what is possible here..!

AP: *Indeed, so what do you think of this event so far?*

WM: It's fabulous; I mean I've seen four makes of tractor here that I didn't know existed! And I know a reasonable amount about it! John Hanlon is to be complimented; their registration has been superb. We're lucky because we've got land that goes on for miles so space didn't matter, we could go over the horizon if we wanted to, and so organisationally it's a much bigger challenge here than for us. John asked me to come and see him last year to see what I thought, and I said that he should have a go, and that if he stuck to the original rules I'd bring tractors from South Africa. I picked the Emerson Brantingham, the GO and the John Deere High-Crop 60 because they are so rare, and last time the Aussies had a ball because lots of guys, like today, were looking at them saying 'I've never seen one of these, can you start it for us?' I mean, one guy said to me that there will never be another opportunity in his lifetime to see so many good tractors in one place; to see all of these tractors, he'd have to travel tens of thousands of miles.



The South-African contingent had their previous record proudly displayed on their machines. Their 'Great Working 400' event of 2002 actually resulted in a record of 755 vintage tractors!

There's some incredible stuff appearing here, and without a doubt there are many sub-records taking place; if you really analysed the numbers to see how many Internationals are here, how many Fergusons are here, how many hot-bulb tractors are here, I mean, you guys could break the world low-bed record! I'm just so impressed with the hundreds of low-beds here.

What I like here is how so many tractors have been left au naturale; I'm very against the 'super paintjob'. Two Fergies went past me yesterday covered in thick moss, and they went beautifully! My mate asked me how they get that moss on it, and I said they just left it outside; in Ireland it grows by itself! I love the attitude here.

AP: *You mentioned the tractors that you've brought from South Africa for the event; can you tell us a little about them?*

WM: My high-crop is a John Deere High-Crop 60 All-fuel. They made 117 High-Crop 60s; fifteen LPG gas ones, just half a dozen all-fuel for export only, and the rest were petrol. I've two Emerson Brantinghams, and the 1911 one I have here is by far the smaller one. The other one is three-times as big; it has ten-foot wheels! They had them in South Africa, I've got photographs of them working; I won't import a tractor that wasn't there, I have to have archive proof. I stumbled across one in the States a long time ago so I said 'let's get that'. I've got the original plough for my big Emerson, and it's a nine-furrow which is huge for that age. I've got two big tractors; my Rumely Oil-Pull 30-60 which pulls an eight-furrow, and the Emerson on nine-furrows, both are the original ploughs which is something pretty special.

AP: *So which tractor are you going to drive in the record run today?*

WM: I think actually I'm going to drive the Holder, my little Swiss four-wheel-drive, mostly because my guys have a yearn to drive the other tractors.

AP: *There has been some speculation that this is going to be an international record as opposed to an Irish record, because of the amount of support from abroad.*

WM: No-one's going to disqualify the Irish because they had three-hundred foreign tractors here; it's on Irish soil, and that's good.

AP: *The feeling on the ground here over the weekend is that this record is going to stand for a very long time. Would you agree with that?*

WM: I think it will go for quite a while, but it will eat away at other countries like an insect. I disagree with the guys who say that this will be the last one; I mean, in a perfect world the Americans would now have a go. Remember, at a big show you're going to get 2,000 tractors anyway, but they've never shown any interest. In fact, I've said the Americans could beat even this record today with just one make; John Deeres, easy, Internationals, easy, there's that many of them.

The only snag with doing it so demonstrably is that it might be like a heavy knock-out blow; no one's going to get in the ring with that guy again, and you're very lucky here with your high interest in tractors, your close proximity to each other and your tremendous feeling of nationalism. I don't think I've ever seen such unity; the Irish could beat their own record again, if they wanted to.

AP: *Wilfred, thank you very much.*