

Hanomag R545 Agricultural Tractor.

Chris Wilson reports.

Way back in the late 1970's when I started my career in the tractor industry at Malcomess in Pietermaritzburg I was fascinated to see somewhat ancient Hanomag tractors still being serviced and repaired in the workshop. These simple massively constructed old tractors were considered "bullet proof" and just seemed to keep on going. Most were R545's, rated at 59HP, but with considerable torque reserves, and had been first commissioned as far as I can ascertain in the late 50's through to early 60's. Their biggest shortcoming was the absence of any 3 point hydraulic lift.

Hanomag as a company dates back to 1835, building first steam locomotives (Sandstone's NGG13 No: 49 being an example) and then farm equipment in Hanover, Germany. They experimented with petrol cars as early as 1912, but this venture eventually led to financial trouble, and in the 1920's the Loco division was sold to Henschel. A more successful car line up and diesel tractors put them back into profitability, but the market crash of 1929 once again threatened the company which had to be re-structured and bailed out by the Hannover City authorities.

Production during WWII naturally turned to military vehicles; Hanomag being best known then for half-track troop carriers. Some 15 000 of these were built for the army, as well as many smaller 4x4 vehicles in a joint venture with BMW.

Hanomag is truly a brand for Sandstone with deep roots in Steam Locomotion, Agriculture and Military. In the late 60's Massey Ferguson were looking to increase their construction line up, and purchased Hanomag for this purpose. Agricultural tractor production ceased soon after. The truck division was taken over by Daimler Benz.

Sandstone has several Hanomags. An R545 is currently undergoing restoration. This tractor, complete, but obviously out of commission for many years, was eventually started with a lot of attention to the fuel, cooling system and lube system. The clutch was found to be totally worn out – probably the reason it was set aside.



OM10304 after years of safe storage at Sandstone, about to enter a new phase of operation.

Splitting the tractor revealed a massive flywheel an unusual pressure plate assembly, and a very worn lining. It was taken to the same Pietermaritzburg company that used to recondition clutches for Malcomess in the seventies – and immediately recognized by the workshop manager there. Relined, set up and skimmed, the whole has been re-assembled and the tractor thoroughly tested.

Brakes were the next issue, and again, from the photos, it can be seen that Hanomag designers meant their tractors to last!



A well-engineered brake hub

Once the glow plugs were wired correctly and clean fuel used the engine started – very roughly at first, but now the big 4 cylinder has settled down to a smooth rumble, idling so slowly one can almost count the beats. Oil pressure is good, and there are no signs of overheating.



Several generations of wiring, mostly nonfunctional to be sorted & replaced, after the cavity has been cleaned & decades of filth removed.

Much re-wiring remains to do – and a lot of repairing, cleaning and preparing, before the old girl can trundle powerfully around the Free State again (The last registration, OM, denotes Kroonstad), but the effort will be well worth it.



All pictures by Chris Wilson.