

Massey Harris 744 & 745 tractors.

Massey Harris as a company was one of the pioneering agricultural machinery companies with roots going back to 1847. It was then that Daniel Massey founded his company producing harvesting equipment in Ontario, Canada.

Similarly, and in completion with Massey, Alanson Harris started his business in 1857. Together with several other companies they merged in 1890 to form Massey Harris.

A shaky start was made with the manufacture of the Parret designed tractor in 1917, but MH tractor production finally took off in 1928 with the acquisition of the USA based Wallace Tractor Company.

A full range of modern tractors was developed and sold successfully across the globe from the '30's well into the '50's. Great Britain was one of several countries that had an M-H manufacturing plant; in Manchester.

In 1947 the UK Government was investing heavily in post war colonies, and a substantial project was undertaken to grow ground nuts in East Africa. For this project a batch of M-H model 44 frames were imported from North America and fitted with Perkins P6 diesel engines. Subsequent production continued at a new facility at Kilmarnock, Scotland. The 744 never achieved spectacular sales, particularly in the UK, and the majority were exported.

In 1953 the 744 was replaced by the 745, with a four cylinder L4 Perkins diesel engine, still very much based on the original M-H 44 design. Production of this model continued until 1958. From the number of survivors here it seems a high percentage of both 744's and 745's came to South Africa.

In the meantime, another significant merger had taken place between M-H and Ferguson in 1953. It was a very logical union, as M-H led and dominated the harvesting and implement market globally, and Ferguson had a world beating tractor. For a while both lines continued separately, but eventually the M-H tractor designs disappeared in favour of Ferguson designs, now badged Massey Ferguson.

The 745 was effectively replaced by the MF 65.

Thus the two Sandstone tractors represent an interesting Trans-Atlantic hybrid, and mark the end of the Wallis/Massey Harris era. Both are in good shape; as with all early Perkins engines starting on a cold morning takes a little skill and knowledge, but once running are capable of a good day's work.