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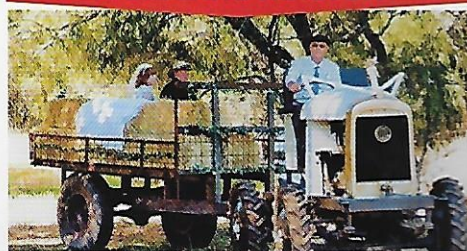
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CLASSICS IN ACTION

The Sandstone Experience

WORDS AND PICTURES Peter Love

Besides a ten-day heritage festival, the farm is made to work as an efficient unit with large scale mechanised and automated farming, to ensure economic viability and the only way to produce food for a growing world population.

Farming science

Sandstone grows the following crops: soya, sunflowers, sugar beans, white and yellow maize and wheat on a large scale, and Cosmos to a lesser degree. With science being an essential component of the modern farming enterprise, Sandstone's extensive studies of weather patterns via Accuweather, the South African Weather Service and US-based NOAA gave them advance warning of the El Nino system in 2015/2016 which led them to cut back planting to only 500ha.

While this may be bad news commercially, the upside enabled them to fallow large areas of land for regeneration, so yields are higher with returning normal rainfall patterns. Sandstone also selects cultivars to suit climatic conditions and environments and conduct trials on behalf of seed producers with new cultivars. To further organic development, Sandstone has a cooperative agreement with Lower Pertwood Organic Farm in Wiltshire, England.

Famous

Sandstone Estates is famous for its herd of pedigree Afrikaner Oxen that have been bred, trained, and actually earn their keep by pulling wagons and ploughing the land during events. Sandstone also says they have systematically eradicated all trace of disease on the farm, "Our staff also benefit by having the opportunity to have



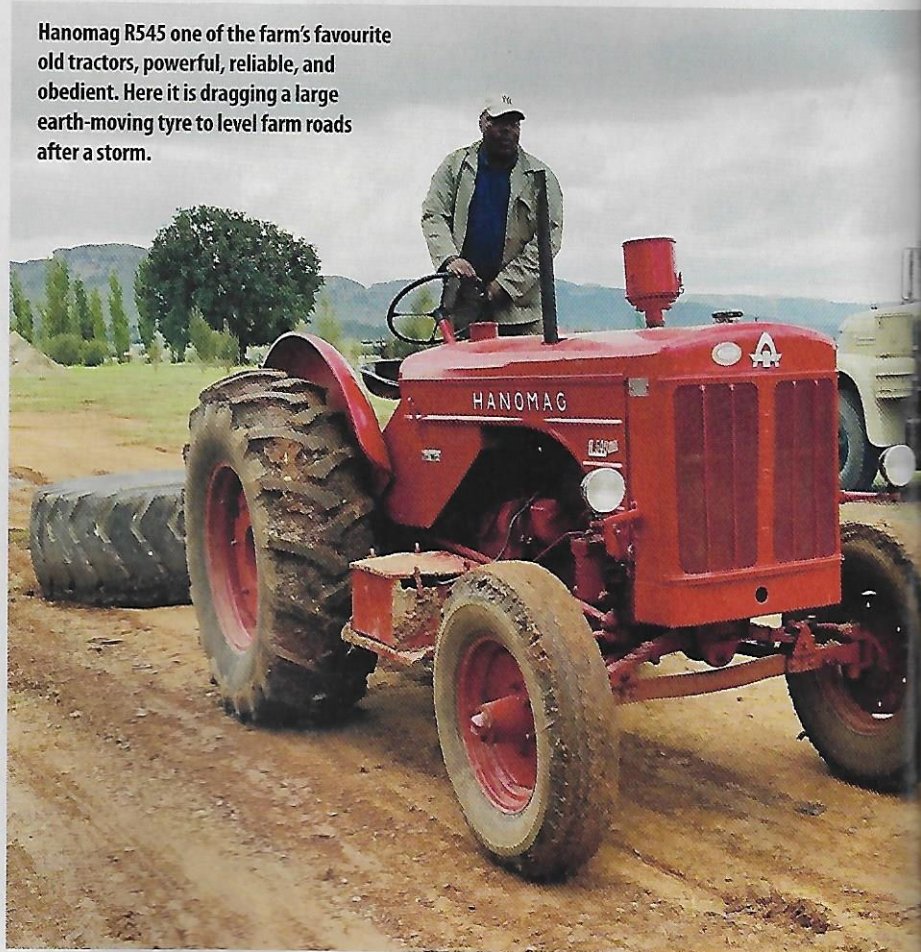
A tremendous picture of the oxen at Sandstone taken by Geoffe Cook.

We carry on our tour of the Sandstone Estates in Eastern Free State, South Africa with images kindly supplied by owner Wilfred Mole.

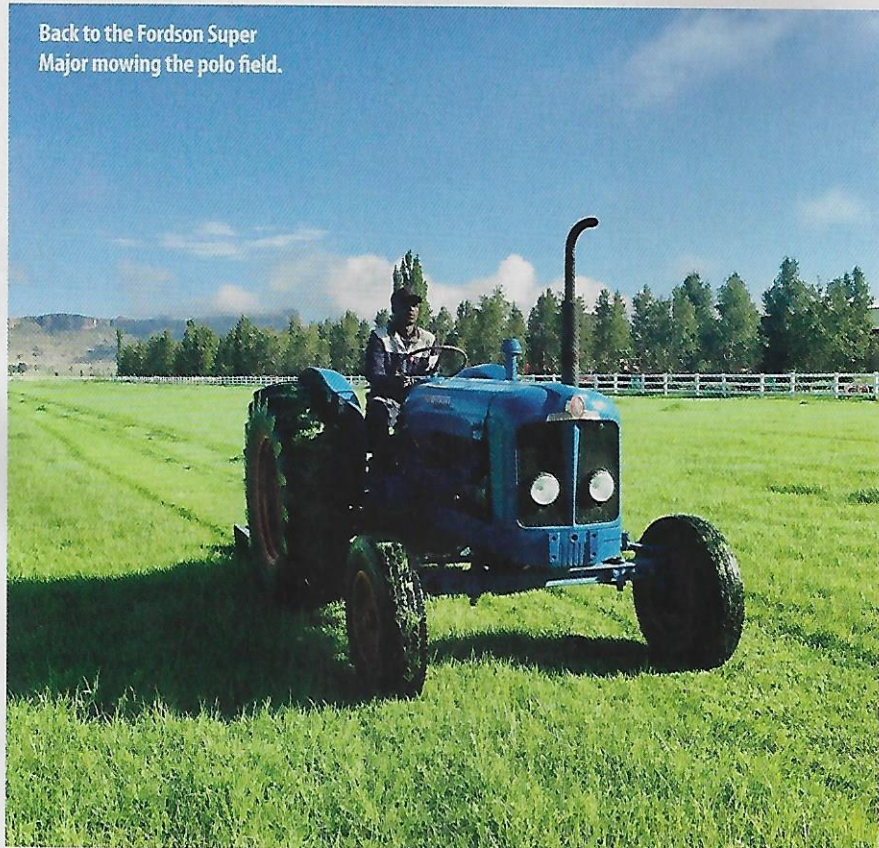
**PART
TWO**

their own livestock graze, breed and be managed on the Estate, along with our own herd," said Wilfred Mole the man who has made it all happen here today. The modern machinery is mostly John Deere features 15 x modern tractors, six combines, five x planters, six x 12-ton, two x 30-ton grain trailers, three x trucks, two x 30-ton low bed trailers, one x 30-ton tri-axle trailer, two x 30-ton grain trailers plus various cultivators, offsets, rippers, balers, slashers, rakes, chaser bins, manure, and fertiliser spreaders and many more.

Hanomag R545 one of the farm's favourite old tractors, powerful, reliable, and obedient. Here it is dragging a large earth-moving tyre to level farm roads after a storm.



Back to the Fordson Super
Major mowing the polo field.



Afrikaner cattle

The history of Afrikaner cattle in South Africa is interesting and is closely associated with the history of the country's people. These typical *Bos Indicus* animals are the most important of the indigenous breeds and were the first cattle encountered by Jan van Riebeeck shortly after he had arrived at the Cape. Little is known about the origins of the breed. The most likely theory is that, in its most primitive state, it originated on the steppes of Asia from the wild cattle of that time. Since then, it had descended from the lateral-horned Zebu with no infusion of foreign blood.

About 2000 years ago it crossed into Africa from Aden and gradually migrated southwards during successive centuries, with only the animals best adapted to arid desert conditions, extreme heat, tropical diseases and both internal and external parasites finally reaching the southern tip of the continent. As long ago as the 15th century, Portuguese sailors reported that the Hottentots in the south-western region of the country already owned herds of these cattle. ➤

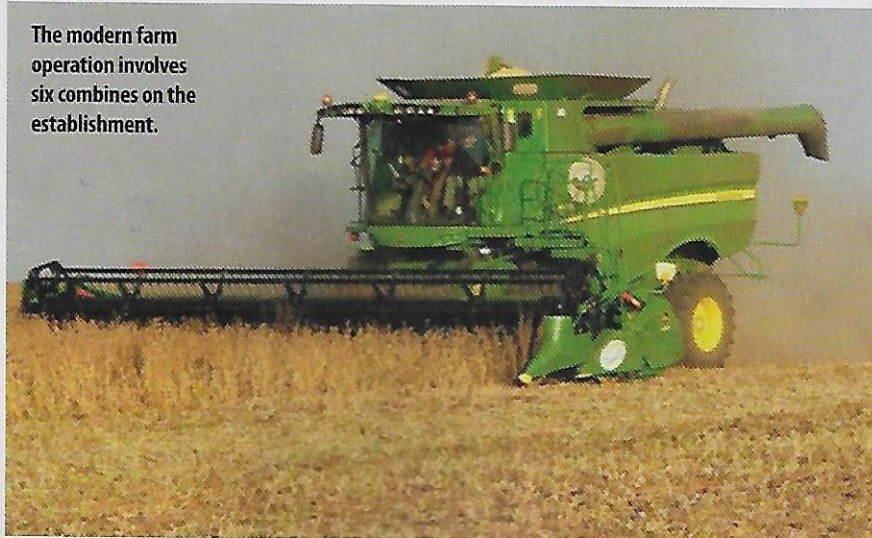


The Massey Ferguson 35 driving an old fire fighting pump unit being used to hose down a Marshall MP6 that has been out working.



Marshall MP6 that was restored by Chris Wilson, South Africa had several rare tractors in working times.

The modern farm operation involves six combines on the establishment.



However, South African cattle farmers began to appreciate the Afrikaner's outstanding qualities only in about 1912. Then, largely because of the efforts of Alex Holm, director of the Potchefstroom College of Agriculture and a champion of the breed. A studbook was formed, so that planned breeding could take place for controlling the breed's development into the Afrikaner we know today.

Few people know that, some years earlier, the breed was almost exterminated when huge numbers died of rinderpest or were destroyed during the Boer War. As a direct result, various exotic breeds were imported, mainly from Britain and Europe, to build up the country's depleted cattle numbers.

Breeding herd

Sandstone Estates maintains a 200-animal breeding herd and seeks to acquire bulls with the right characteristics from time to time to maintain the genetic vitality required. The current project of some importance is to breed Bont Afrikaner oxen. The Bont Afrikaner was the original animal that developed into the current Afrikaner beef animal. They were characterised by interesting colours being largely brown and white, but with every animal having a completely different mix.

During the last century, competitive pressure from British beef breeds, in particular: Hereford, Sussex and Aberdeen Angus, caused the Afrikaner breeders to breed their animals by natural selection towards a situation where they were a consistent red colour throughout. However, very few Afrikaners today do not display a tiny speck of white on them somewhere, which is a clear indication of their origin.

The breeders who were looking for a strong presence in the beef industry worked towards breeding polled Afrikaners, i.e., animals that are born without horns. This meant that the availability of animals with the potential to grow big horns, which was a strong characteristic for the breed in years gone by, became more difficult. However, the project has been a great success with animals that are true to type. They have the temperament and the draught animal instincts that would have been prevalent after many hundreds of years of breeding and using these animals as the primary source of transportation in southern Africa, almost since the arrival of the Dutch in 1652.



That Super Major does lots of different tasks on the farm in this area, Majors were common in the late Fifties here.

Another record

Sandstone can now in-span 36 trained Afrikaner oxen in one team, which is probably something that cannot be emulated anywhere else in the world. Detailed research into the number of oxen in-spanned clearly shows that during the Anglo-Boer War the British deployed 34 oxen at a river crossing to pull wagons over a river. More recently it has been

discovered that a team of 44 oxen were used in the early 1800s in Botswana to pull wagons through swampy ground. In 2022, Sandstone is to go for a world record of 44 oxen in harness in one span - that will be something to see!

Alongside the work done in developing an original draught animal, the Sandstone Heritage Trust has collected original examples of most of the ox-wagons that



With lots of classic plant working in the background, the Sandstone oxen come to join what's going on.



The Afrikaner wagons are very much part of Sandstone, which has a full collection here all in good working order.

were used during the century before last and well into the 20th century. In addition, the jukka (yokes) and riempies (leather thongs) which were part of the in-spanning operation have been located from original sources or more lately have been manufactured on the farm to the original specifications

Different dimension

While Sandstone has an impressive collection of vintage tractors and other items, these animals bring a completely different dimension to our heritage since every animal has a name and a personality well known by the men who work with



Sandstone Estates has a raft of Field Marshall tractors on their sites including Series 1, 2, 3 and 3A examples. This example is in the workshop for repair and needs some period front tyres.



Those were the days! This pattern is sadly not available now the nearest comes from Millar Tyres, Wauseon, Ohio, US in a Firestone pattern.



The original marking style and horns are very much part of the Sandstone Oxen.

them. Most of the instructions to the oxen are by voice commands.

These are wonderful animals to see working and the modern tractor fleet is supplemented by a vast array of over 500 vintage, veteran and classic tractors that work on the farm when needed. Peter Love would like to thank Joanne West, Wilfred Mole and his various photographers and journalists for making this article very possible.

