

The History of Nuffield and Leyland Tractors - Tractors for the '80's, the 'Final' chapter for Bathgate, the Marshall Years and beyond!

In 1979 the 154 was deleted from Bathgate production and replaced with the 235 built by BMC Sanayi Turkey for overseas markets. The 235 had a Leyland 1.8 ltr 28 hp engine. The 'tin work' was revised to identify the new model and fall in line with the 'Leyland' shape. The 2100 also became an 'export only' model.

So in 1979 the complete model range was as follows:-

235 Not UK Market
245
262/462
272/472
282/482
285
2100 Not UK Market

In Finland the noise legislation changed to a maximum of 85 dBA at the driver ear. Since the Leyland 'Q' cab, quiet as it was, couldn't be certified below this level a new cab had to be sourced, the one chosen was produced in Denmark by the Sekura Cab Company. This excellent cab was also used by David Brown and had the advantage of a roof 'Escape Hatch' required by the Finnish market.

At the mention of David Brown Tractors of Huddersfield it must be mentioned that in the mid '70's there was an investigation as to whether or not it would be viable to purchase or merge Leyland Tractors with David Brown. This investigation was denied but Leyland executives were spotted at Huddersfield on more than one occasion. One of the advantages of working in the Agricultural Industry was the camaraderie and exchange of help and information between 'competing' companies.

Also at some point in the '70's an investigation was begun to see if Allis-Chalmers tractors could be imported and sold as Leyland. Two tractors were brought in from the USA but they were never seen and no more was heard of the project! Which models to be used is unknown.

Tractor Marketing and Engineering felt that for the 1980's a new image should be brought to Leyland Tractors since it was generally recognised that the tractor range was becoming less competitive with that offered by other manufacturers. A confidential 'workshop' was conducted to choose a new colour scheme. A number of tractors were re-sprayed a range of different contrasting colours. The objective was to choose a colour scheme that no one else was using and one which identified 'Leyland' and make it stand out in the 'Field'. After much debate 'Golden Harvest' and 'Black' were selected. (The black was not full gloss but 60% gloss) An appropriate decal change to blend with the new colour scheme finished the new identity.

So, at Smithfield 1980 the new tractor range was launched. The 500, 600, 700 and 800 ranges. I.E. ;

Old Model range	New model range
245	502
262/462	602/604
272/472	702/704
282/482	802/804

It should be noted that the 285 and 2100 models were discontinued at this time, none were built in the new colours.

With the introduction of the new model range in 1980 the opportunity was taken to revise the specification as follows:-

- Fully live engine driven twin chamber hydraulic pump, each chamber had a max capacity of 6.05 gall/min. The output could be combined for auxiliary services. Either one or two 'Kontak' spool valves were fitted, depending on model.
- Oil immersed multi plate disc brakes, 4 plate on the 502 & 602, and 6 plate on all others.
- Two speed PTO either standard or optional, except 502.
- Heavy Duty linkage and improved levelling box either with or without assistor ram, except 502.
- Improved lift case and top cover on all models not already so equipped.
- Assistor ram available as an option on models not already equipped, not 502.
- Heavy Duty clutch, either HD plate or Cerametalic depending on model.
- Improved Leyland 'QM' cab with sound level down to 85 dBA.
- Danish 'Sekura' deluxe cab, designated as the 'Explorer Cab', either standard or optional depending on model, not 502.

The 235 tractor, built in Turkey, was revamped and reintroduced in the UK as the 302. It received an up-rated steering box, front axle, brakes and hydraulics. The bonnet opening was revised to allow the fitment of a 'Verock' 'Q' Cab for the UK market.

This line up represented the 'Pinnacle' of the Leyland Tractor era, but although the future looked bright it was not to last. Sir Michael Edwardes, who was, at that time, the Chief Executive of British Leyland, sold the Leyland Tractor business to Charles Nickerson, who owned Marshall Tractors at Gainsborough, and all production of Leyland Tractors at Bathgate ceased on the 15th of January 1982. On the 29th of January the sale was completed and Marshall Sons & Co Ltd bought the design and manufacturing rights to Leyland tractors. The 302 however continued to be built in Turkey and subsequently was 'Badged' as a Marshall.

It must be said however that labour relations between management and the production workers was at an all-time low during 1981 and production of Tractors and Trucks was frequently interrupted, there is no doubt that this hastened the end of tractor production.

In parliament, in June 1982, the matter of, "Leyland Vehicles Ltd. Bathgate: disposal of tractor assembly line", was raised. This scrutinised matters arising from the sale by Leyland Vehicles, part of publicly-owned British Leyland (BL), of its agricultural tractor business to Marshall's. An enquiry followed expressions of concern both in and outside Parliament about improper activities surrounding the sale which might be damaging to public interest, and focused on questions relating to closures and the disposal of assets. It criticised the Government for failure to secure sufficient information about economic and political implications of closure and recommended changes in practice to ensure adequate reviews occur in future, but concluded that there was no firm evidence to substantiate charges of impropriety!

It was always felt that there was something 'Odd' about the sale. £6 million pounds, which included 600 tractors plus many spare parts, seemed rather cheap. The loss of tractor production was a mortal blow to Bathgate, truck production staggered on until 1985 when the factory finally closed for good. This put an end to the availability of the 98 series engine. A plan to build Land Rovers at Bathgate failed to materialise.

It was envisaged that Marshall would build about 2000 tractors a year. These tractors received a number of improvements including, depending on model, ZF gearboxes, Perkins engines and larger clutches. However by September 1985 Marshall's had only assembled about a 1000 tractors, they ran out of money and the receivers were called in. It is known that a number of Bathgate built tractors were re-badged as Marshall's. Apart from models inherited from Leyland, Marshall Tractors produced the 904XL, 100, 752/754, 852/854 & 954.

A few Marshall 302 tractors were produced and 'Registered' as 'Nickerson's' for use in 'Ground Care', they were coloured white with a red radiator grill and black cab and had included in the specification an attached mower and grassland tyres. At least one has been restored and reverted back to a Marshall 302 while another is known to exist in its original condition.

After Marshall Tractors called in the receivers Theakston's bought the Marshall Tractor business and transferred production to a former British Steel site at Scunthorpe. Not much is known about this enterprise and after a short period of time the Marshall business was transferred again, this time to Bentall-Simplex.

Production remained at Scunthorpe and all sorts of specialist tractors were either produced or imported, including a number of Marshall based tractors, Massey Ferguson based Yugoslavian IMT's, & Ferraris as Marshall's, Chinese Neng mini tractors and Piaggio ATVs.

Again not much is known about this era, but in 1989 a new company called Marshall Daimler Ltd marketed Steyr tractors in Marshall livery for two years. Models offered were the S-542/544, S-642/644 & the S-744. In 1989 five IMT 5106 tractors were imported. They were re-sprayed Golden Harvest and re-badged as Nuffield 126's. Destined for Nigeria the deal fell through, so, since they didn't comply with UK legislation, they were exported to the Republic of Ireland.

Meanwhile John Charnley and Sons of Brindle, near Chorley, Lancashire, who had been Leyland / Marshall dealers for many years, had been purchasing spare parts whenever and from wherever they could. A huge stock was accumulated, so, in 1992, successfully bought the production rights to the Marshall design. With the deal came the remaining stock of cabs, engines, gearboxes and other components.

The Marshall name couldn't be used because Theakston's had re-purchased the parts business and the Marshall name, so, the Charnley tractors were called 'JWD Field Master' and turned out in Red and Black. The JWD comes from the initials of John and his two sons William and David. After a period of reflection and design change the first JWD Field Master was built in 1993, between then and 2005 about 50 tractors were built. Models produced were designated 274/474, 284/484 & 294/494, they all used Perkins engines.

Whether any more will ever be built is in question. Sadly in October 2006 John Charnley died. His two sons now run the business.

Charnley's are in possession of all the 'drawings', on microfilm, for every Nuffield, Leyland and Marshall ever built. Therefore any unobtainable parts can be made to order.

Marshall Tractors Ltd, Theakston Trading Co Ltd & Bentall-Simplex Ltd have, as trading companies, all been dissolved. This fact is registered at Companies House. Information came to hand in 2008 that Marshall Daimler Ltd had, after a number years of being a dormant company, been dissolved. So, apart from Charnley's, all the 'Old' companies no longer exist.

Is this the end of the Nuffield / Leyland / Marshall era? Who knows!

Postscript; In early 2008 information came to hand in the form of photographic evidence that at some time the following tractor models were 'produced'.

1. Marshall 154 in Golden Harvest - shown in an official looking Marshall Brochure
2. Pratap 154 in Leyland blue - produced by Ashok Leyland of India and shown in a brochure
3. Austin Leyland 302 in Golden Harvest - probably produced in Turkey - shown as an actual tractor

No other information is available, but again who knows?