

Press Release

05 May 2023

Vintage tractors – farming technology and progress

Vintage power and the progress of tractor technology will be on full display at the Royal Bath & West Show this year, with over 50 vintage and rare tractors making their way to the event from across the UK.

The revolutions of agriculture have undoubtedly changed the British landscape and food production. “Farm machinery innovation, and particularly tractors, have shaped the modern agricultural landscape and society,” explains Patrick Palmer, retired chief steward, tractor enthusiast, and 40-year Royal Bath & West Show veteran.

“Mechanisation of agriculture and the growth of productivity has freed populations to pursue other endeavours. The Bath & West Show’s vintage tractor entries offer the public an opportunity to see that progress up-close in the form of changing tractor technology.”

Perhaps one of the most important innovations in tractor technology was the move from tractor vaporising oil (TVO) to diesel in the late 1940s - easing operations and enhancing economic performance. “TVO was a very cheap form of petrol, but the big problem was that it wouldn’t ignite at low temperatures,” says Mr Palmer.

“Tractors had a small tank of high-quality petrol for starting them, and a second tank of TVO for running. Once the tractor was up to temperature the operator would need to switch to the TVO tank, but if they got it wrong and switched too soon – which frequently happened – the spark plugs would bung up with oil and stop firing.

“They would have to strip and clean the plugs and try again. It was a nightmare.”

Mr Palmer has one of the very early diesel tractors – a David Brown 30d - which led the parade to celebrate the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee at last year’s show, marking the significance of the anniversary as well as the importance of the shift to diesel.

Vintage steamers, tractors and heavy goods vehicles will be running demonstrations in their own arena throughout the show, and parading in the main arena on all three days.

Among the 50 tractor entries this year will be a 1947 David Brown, which will be the oldest entry this year, explains vintage tractor steward and Ferguson club area representative, Robin Hatcher. “We have a fascinating range of other vintage vehicles and implements, ranging from a 1948 Grey Ferguson to Fords, right up to a 1986 John Deere 3040 two-wheel-drive, and 1992 John Deere 4055.”

- The vintage tractor main ring parades take place on 1 June at 14:15, 2 June at 14:30, and 3 June at 16:55, as part of the grand parade.
- The Royal Bath & West Show takes place on 1-3 June 2023 at The Showground, Shepton Mallet, Somerset BA4 6QN.

- Competition entries can be made by visiting <https://www.bathandwest.com/royal-bath-and-west-show/competitions>
- Book show tickets here: <https://www.bathandwest.com/tickets>

Editors' notes.

About the Royal Bath & West of England Society

The Society was founded in 1777 in Bath by a group of philanthropists led by Edmund Rack. We are a registered charity organisation (Registered Charity Number 1039397). The Society was formed with the aims of encouraging agriculture, arts, manufacture, and commerce.

Our charitable activities provide:

- Agriculture, veterinary, educational and art scholarships
- Technical events and seminars
- Practical farming advice and conferences
- Countryside education
- Diversification advice for farmers
- Education for children
- A marketplace for countryside products

The Society continues to deliver a wonderful mix of established traditional exhibits through to the latest energy technology and contemporary entertainment.

The entertainment and features around the 240-acre site ensure enjoyment for every member of the family and include attractions that are spectacular to watch, educational, inspirational, "hands on" or just plain fun.

