

MASSEY-HARRIS REAPER/BINDER

TECHNICAL HISTORY

As grain harvesting methods became mechanised, the reaper was developed to cut the standing crop, ready for tying into "sheaves" which could then be stacked into "stooks" for further drying, then threshing. The Reaper-Binder combined some of these activities and mechanised them, so improving the productivity of the farmer and allowing greater acreages to be farmed.

The development of the machine progressed through wire tying of the sheaves to the use of twine, a far less hazardous tying medium for both farmers and livestock. In Australia, the Reaper-Binder was used in the "wetter" areas where Strippers did not work well in damper straw, and for harvesting crops that were to be used for hay.

Essentially, this horse drawn machine consisted of a bull-wheel in contact with the ground with gearing to distribute the power to the various moving parts of the machine. A cutter driven by a pitman from a crank, fingers to hold the crop while it is cut, a large rotating reel to sweep the cut crop onto a platform (perhaps one of the most prominent features of the machine), an elevator or endless belt of canvas to carry the cut crop to the packing platform, and a binder to tie the packed bundles of crop.

In practice, the machine is advanced into the crop. The reel pushes the standing crop towards the cutter bar and backing platform, so that as the crop is cut, it lies in the same direction with ears of grain to the back of the platform and stalk near the cutter bar. The platform is covered by the elevator, which picks up the crop and moves it sideways, elevating it over the bull wheel, and depositing it on the top of a sloping deck. The crop then slides down this deck and is compressed by packer arms until the amount of compressed crop trips the binding mechanism. The bound sheaves are then swept to the ground where they were manually stacked into stooks for further drying, then threshing or storage in the haystack.

The Massey-Harris machine was made in Canada and was one of several manufacturers who sold large numbers of these machines into Australia.

WORKING HISTORY

The late Mr. Ted Sheehan, a former very active member, donated this machine to the Adelaide Hills Motor Restorers Club. It remains in good original working condition.

Ted purchased the Reaper-Binder at the clearing sale of the Nitschke farm at Littlehampton, where the machine spent all its working life. While it is now driven by Power takeoff (PTO), it was originally a ground driven machine. The late Roy Nitschke remembered using it as a boy, and converting it to PTO drive in later life.