

An old header characterises old adage

By KEN WILSON

IT'S an old adage, but it's true: They don't build 'em like they used to.

And the proof is at machinery dealer Hutton and Northey's Merredin branch.

It's an International Harvester 711 self-propelled combine harvester that was first sold in 1978 and PD'd (pre-delivery check) by a young John Trunfio, now group service manager.

It remained a distant memory for John until eight years ago when John fully re-conditioned it for the original buyer before it was traded for a 1620 model.

The 711 was on-sold to another farmer and last year was bought back by Hutton



□ The massive Case IH 7240, equipped with a 13.6m (45ft) front dwarfs the International Harvester 711 with a 6m (20ft) front.

and Northey, celebrating its 40th year in business.

Still in working order, the 711 was put through its pace

during the recent harvest alongside its modern brother, a Case IH 7240 to take off the Burracoppin Progress Association crop.

It quickly became the centre of attention as farmers wanted to try it out against the "new kid on the block".

According to John, the 711, at "flat out" speed in second gear (about 9 kilometres per hour), munched through the crop with a six metre (20ft) front on standard settings and produced a "perfect sample from an average crop".

Its two tonne bin was filled in less than 15 minutes – an impressive stat in 1978, considering today's headers are chockers in less than 10 minutes filling a nearly eight and a half tonne bin (the 7240's capacity is 11,100 litres or 8.5t).

"Farmers were amazed by the difference in technology between the headers," John said.

"But equally, were impressed by the 711's performance."

And John recalled in the late seventies, headers were railed from International Harvester's Dandenong, Victoria, factory to the Merredin marshalling yards where an overhead gantry was employed to lift the units off the rail beds.

"They arrived on blocks," John said.

"They had no wheels, no cab, no grain bin, no cleaning screen, no elevator and no feeder housing.

"All of that gear was in a big crate and we used to put

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the wheels on and convoy them to the dealership where we put everything else on."

John vividly remembers the assembly work, using a "podgy bar" (to align holes for bolts), an array of different-sized spanners, a crowbar and a sledgehammer.

"We would put them together in a week then line them up out the front (of the dealership) and before harvest,

farmers would drive by, drop in and buy one," he said.

"Based on current prices, you could have bought seven 711s for the price you now pay for a 40 foot header front."

Today it's a different story with farmers required to forward order because of the multiple options available.

"You still require spanners for the PD work but there's definitely no sledgehammers allowed," John said.

"It's a whole new ball game

these days.

"While today's machines are more productive, more technologically advanced and more comfortable, for the dealer, the costs of staff training are higher, along with the costs of specialised tools and diagnostic equipment."

Performance comparisons between the 711 and the 7240 are inevitable, but meaningless.

"We were gentle on the 711 because the accumulator

wasn't charged properly but for its capacity, it did really well," John said.

"It wasn't meant to be anything more than making the 711 part of our celebrations and we will use it again, probably at demo days and to exhibit at district shows.

"It was a good header in its day and it has been proven by its owners that if you look after equipment you can get a lot of work out of it."

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