

AGRICULTURE

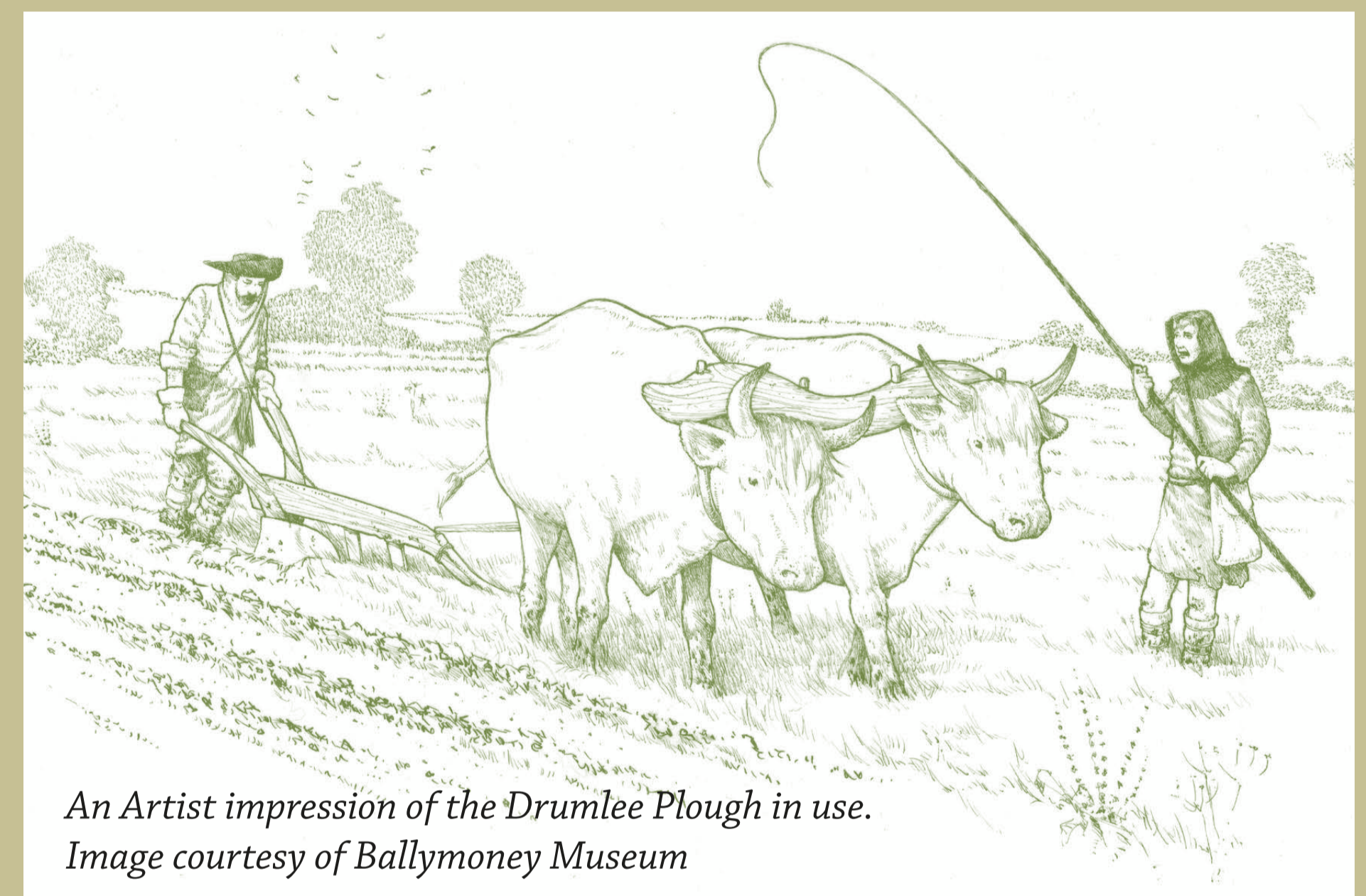
THE WORLD'S OLDEST INDUSTRY

“Agriculture is exactly that - culture - and a way of life.”

(Speech given by Prince Charles at the World Ploughing Contest, Ballykelly, 2004.)

Preparing the land for sowing is a fundamental farming activity. Nowadays we tend to take this for granted, with huge tractors making ploughing look effortless. However until recently it was less so, with the earliest implement used in ploughing being a crude pointed bent stick used to stir the soil surface into small ridges which corn could be sown in. But man continually strived to become more efficient and those hand held hoes soon developed into simple ploughs.

These primitive ploughs were eventually pulled by oxen, camels and even elephants until the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when the horse widely replaced the oxen and the daily output of the ploughman doubled. Nowadays ploughing is fully mechanised and a tractor can plough as much as 30 times as a man with a horse.



An Artist impression of the Drumlee Plough in use.
Image courtesy of Ballymoney Museum

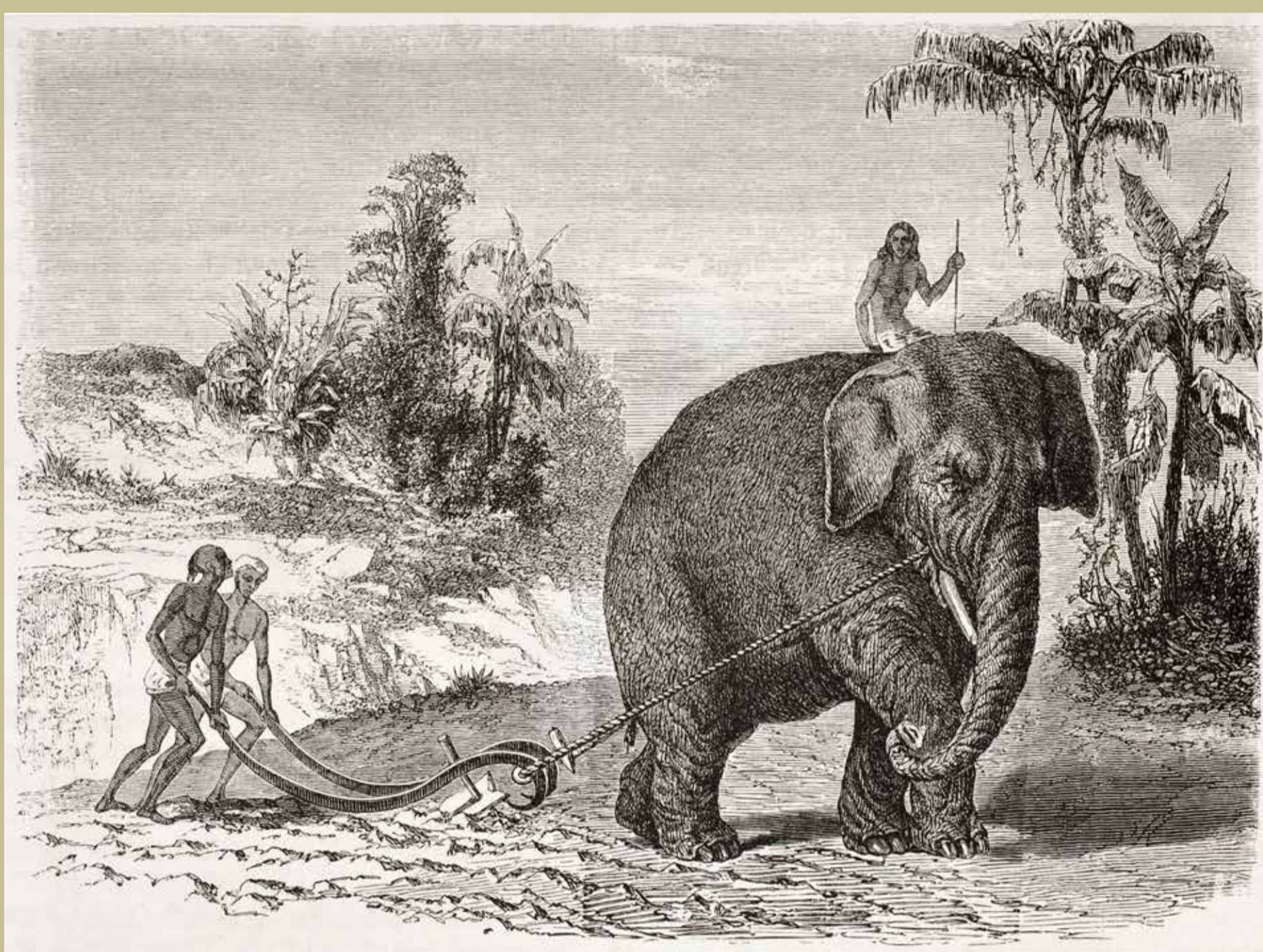


Illustration of an elephant ploughing in Sri Lanka

The process of ploughing allows a farmer to dig and turn the soil to create a seedbed for the germination and growth of new crop and typically takes place in the autumn or early spring months.



Photograph of Drumlee Plough, a medieval plough found in a bog outside Ballymoney in 1957. It is on permanent display at Ballymoney Museum and is one of the oldest wooden ploughs to be found in Ireland.
Image courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.

