

# THE BIRTH OF TRACTOR PLOUGHING

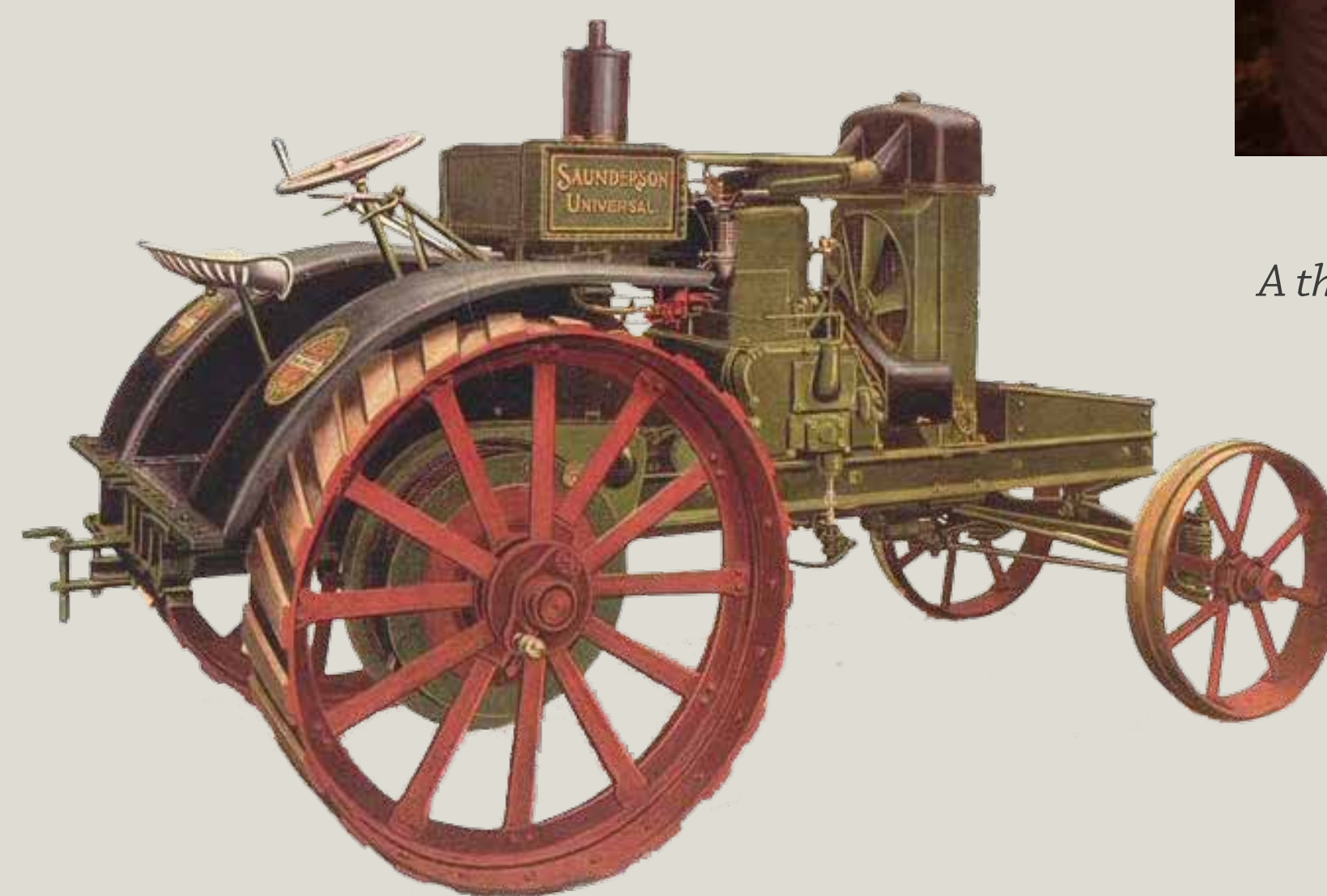
*“every part of agriculture might be performed by steam.”*

Trevithick, 1812

During the 19th Century the majority of equipment used on farms was developed. This equipment was primarily horse-drawn or hand-held and during the early 20th Century the horse was the main source of power with an estimated 1 million horses working on farms in 1913. When war commenced in 1914, the need for horses to go to the front meant that thousands of farming families had to say goodbye to their work horses and ponies, which were sent to endure a life on the front line. The loss of these horses on the farm meant that farmers had to adapt and find alternative sources of power.



Four Horses pulling farming machinery. Image Courtesy of Coleraine Museum.



A three-horse double furrow plough team at The World Ploughing Championships held in Armoyn in 1959. Image courtesy of Ballymoney Museum.

Sanderson Model G tractor. All tractors were on iron wheels with cleats for rough ground, if they were used on the road, a band was placed around the wheels. The tractors would have to be cranked by hand to start.

Farmers began to use three-horse double furrow ploughs instead of a two-horse single furrow to increase the area of land they could plough a day. Advancements were then made in mechanical cultivation in which steam engines were used for ploughing. Farmers used an indirect method with a plough attached to a cable powered by the steam engine. It was not suitable to use a large steam engine for direct ploughing and cultivating as the machine was too heavy and could not work effectively in the fields. By 1917, almost half of steam-ploughing sets were lying idle due to the loss of farm workers to the war.

With the coming of the internal combustion engine a few British firms experimented with farm tractors, but the motor tractor was still in its infancy and it's unlikely that there were more than a thousand in operation pre-war. It was not until numbers were imported during WWI that tractor ploughing as it is known today became popular. The majority of models used on farms were US models including the Titan later the Fordson. British models included the Ivel and the Sanderson tractor.

*In 1914 farmers could plough 1 Acre a day using a two-horse single furrow plough or a three-horse double furrow plough. Now, farmers can plough 1 acre in less than 15 minutes with a high horse-power tractor and large plough.*

Image showing the use of a steam engine. The power available enabled very deep ploughing to be carried out even in the heaviest land.

