

# PLOUGHING MATCHES

*“Properly performed, ploughing was and still is a gentle art.”*

Ploughing matches have been a feature of the life of the countryside for a very long time. For just how long we do not really know, as essentially they were local affairs of the parishes, but it is believed that ploughmen matched their skill against one another over two hundred years ago.



Mr. E. Wright (Skelton, Cumberland), winner of the individual championship at the International ploughing match at Corsehall, Limavady, 1938.  
Image courtesy of Ian Mark

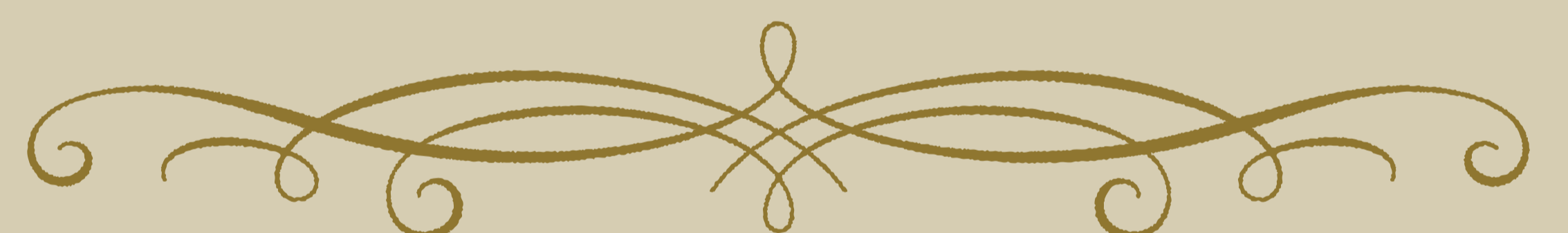
The skill of a ploughman was not only measured in his ploughing but also in his horses and the design of his plough. Well trained horses knew how to pull a plough steadily and smoothly; they knew how to pull out and turn with effortless motion requiring little or no guidance from the ploughman and the minimum physical effort from him in positioning the plough for the next furrow.



Ploughing team horses with head ornaments  
Image courtesy of Coleraine Museum



Inter-county ploughing championships organised by The Ferguson Dealers at Dogleap, Limavady. Pictured is Mr. Torrens receiving the County Championship trophy from Mrs. Nutt. also in picture are Mr. Andrews (left) and Mr. Barr (the judges). Image courtesy of Audrey Calvert.



*An early British law required every ploughman to make his own plough and that no one should guide a plough until he was able to make one.*



The adoption of the motor tractor as the motive power in place of the horse-team was a rapid process. When the need came to put more land under the plough in the drive to grow more food, more ploughmen were needed to man the fast growing supply of tractors with their multifurrow ploughs. Many of these ploughmen were new to the job but quickly learned how to drive tractors and plough. Even experienced horse plough makers were experimenting with, and even guessing, the design for their new type mass produced tractor ploughs. The fact remains that good ploughing is still the most fundamental job on the farm.



Crowd of spectators at Limavady ploughing match.  
Image courtesy of Ian Mark