

## The Art of Ploughing

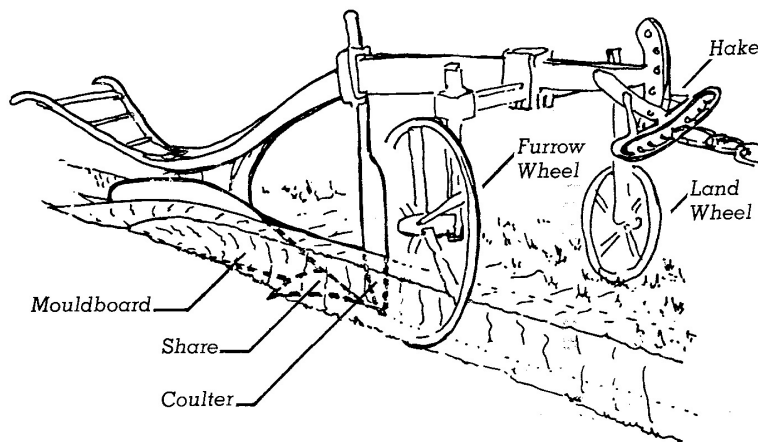
To understand the art of ploughing we need to know how the plough works and the adjustments the ploughman can make to get the maximum amount of work done for the minimum of effort.

The action of the plough is as follows. The coulter makes a vertical cut in the soil to there depth required. Immediately behind it comes the share which makes a horizontal cut below the ground of about 6” and immediately behind this is the mouldboard which is shaped to turn over the slice cut by the coulter and the share and lay it alongside to the right, parallel to the direction of the plough.

The ploughman ‘sets’ his plough so that when the horses pull it forward it should need little effort on the part of the ploughman to turn a consistent furrow. On a wheel plough the depth of the furrow can be determined by adjusting the smaller ‘land’ wheel and the larger ‘furrow’ wheel vertically, and the width of the furrow by adjusting the furrow wheel horizontally. If the horses tend to pull the plough to one side or the other of the line of ploughing this can be corrected by horizontal adjustment on the hake. Similarly if the horses tend to pull the plough into the ground or lift it out, an adjustment can be made on the vertical part of the hake.

To get a proper rectangular furrow slice the plough must rest flat on its sole plate. If it is set to lean over to the left, the burden on the horses is made easier but the furrows will not lie flat against each other.

So, if he has adjusted his plough correctly the ploughman will – according to Stephens’ “Book of the Farm” – produce furrow slices which are straight, parallel (which shows they are of uniform thickness), the same height (which shows they have been cut to a uniform width), the form and angle of the crests should be similar, they should lie flat upon each other, the crowns, or ridges, should be level with the rest of the ploughing and the last furrow slice should be the same width as the rest. Finally, it is essential that the ploughman has his horses under strict control.

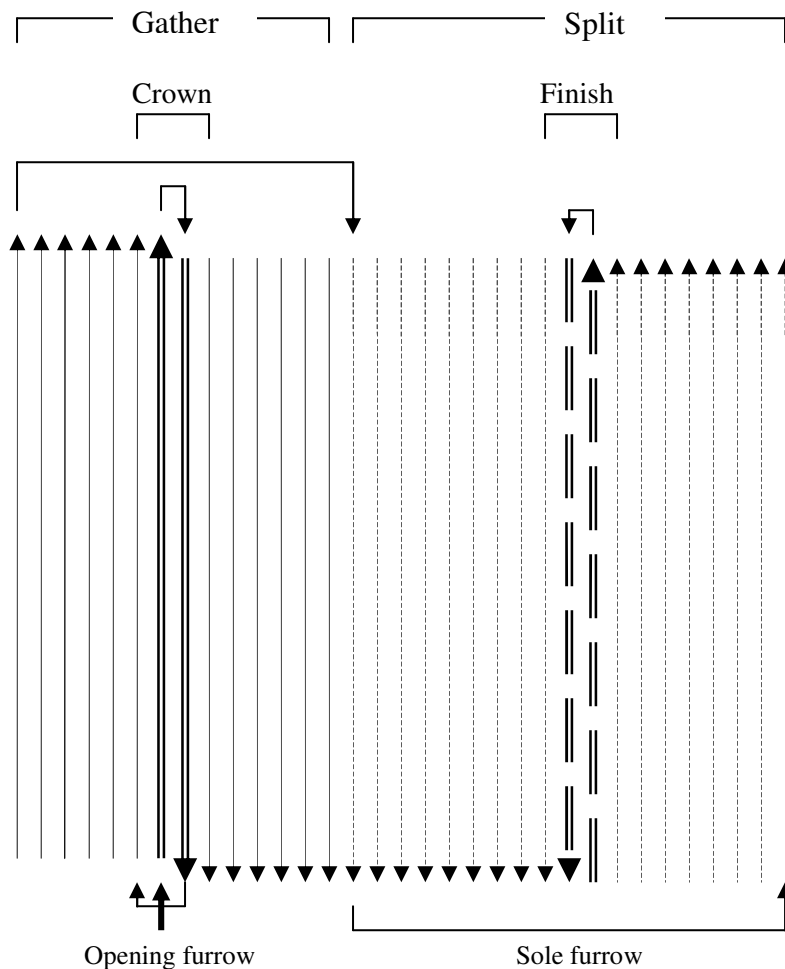


## Ploughing Matches

Points are awarded as follows, out of 100 points awarded, 10 go to the open split, 10 to the crown, 10 for general weed control (burial of all grass or stubble), 20 for seed bed, 10 for general appearance, 20 for the finish (- the last three furrows either side of the sole furrow), 10 for the ins and outs of the plough at the ends of the furrows and 10 for straightness.

Before he starts ploughing, the ploughman sets out a maximum of three marker stakes. He then sets his plough to create a shallow scratch furrow, following the line of the marker sticks. He repeats this in the opposite direction and is then ready to turn his first full furrow by setting his plough deeper and following the line of his scratch furrows and turning the furrow slices towards each other to form a ridge. When two more furrows are ploughed either side of the ridge, he has completed his 'crown'. After the judges have examined the crown the ploughman continues to gather his furrows round the crown until he has completed approximately half his plot. The rest of the plot, known as the 'split', is ploughed by working in the opposite direction – i.e. ploughing from the outside of the remaining plot towards the centre and turning the furrow outward each time so that, at the finish he is left with an open trench (the sole furrow). Great skill is required on the part of the ploughman in finishing so that the last furrow is just the correct width all the way up the plot.

The final look of the competition plots as viewed by the layman will depend very much on the soil conditions at the time of the match. If the soil is too light or too dry the hard and exacting work put in by the ploughmen will fail to show up.



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