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ACROSS THE ISLAND

6-Horse Hitch Used In Old Plowing Match

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I TALKED this week with Duncan MacPhail, Cornwall who 50 years ago won a plowing match in Govan, Saskatchewan that featured six-horse teams hitched to two-bottom riding plows that turned 28 inches with the two furrows.

People who watched the county, provincial and Canadian plowing matches here the past week or so saw plowmen work with lands that were very short. But Mr. MacPhail and his opponents ploughed lands that were up to one mile long. Some of the competitions were at one-half mile lengths.

Could you really keep your furrow straight over such a tremendous distance? I asked Mr. MacPhail, and the answer was an unqualified "Yes, I got the prize for the straightest furrow", said Mr. MacPhail who observed his lead team of Fanny and Nell, would go for the three flags "as straight as an arrow. I scarcely ever had to touch the reins," he told me.

Four of the horses travelled abreast of each other. The other lead pair were in front of the two horses on the right side of the four-horse hitch. The team belonged to Martin Miller, an Ontario stonemason who went west to homestead, but Duncan did the plowing.

The mile-long furrows meant that MacPhail and his team made four rounds, or eight miles in the forenoon, and the same number in the afternoon, he told me. The plough-wise horses would turn at the end of the long round themselves, as so many old time horsemen remember their teams would do here when they farmed with horses.

They plowed around five acres a day with the six-horse hitch and the wide-cutting two bottom plow, Mr. MacPhail told me. Govan was about 60 miles north of Regina.

Producer of Plowing Champions

SO CORNWALL has long been a producer of plowing champions. Stanley Willis of Cornwall leaves today for Austria to compete in world plowing competition after winning the Canadian championship a year ago.

Barry Wilson and Harold Godfrey, both of Cornwall, are the provincial champion and the runner up this year.

A blacksmith as a lad at Cornwall - he was born in New Haven but moved to Cornwall with his family in 1898 - Duncan went to Boston as a young man to shoe horses during one winter.

"WHAT DID you get for wages there?" asked our mutual friend, Daniel Gass who tipped me off to this story in the first place. And what do you suppose the answer was?

"I received \$1.50 per week and my board" said Mr. MacPhail who added that he had

received the total of \$25 and board for the year in which he put in his first work as an apprentice.

The price for a "remove" - taking shoes off, reshaping them, renewing the corks and replacing them - was 40 cents in those days when he learned his trade in Cornwall. It was 80 cents for a new set of shoes. In my young days, and Mr. Gass agrees with me, the price was 60 cents for a "remove" and \$1.00 for four new shoes.

Four horses handled an eight-foot binder in the West when Mr. MacPhail was there and the daily cut was 20 acres, he told me.

Carl Willis's Progress Watched

THIS WAS written before the results of the Canadian Plowing Match at Brudenell were known, but another Cornwall man, Carl Willis - the son of Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Willis - he lives now in Charlottetown - won the Maritime championship class Tuesday afternoon with a five-point margin on the field, and he was one of the favorites yesterday to take the Canadian title, though he faced heavy competition, particularly from two Ontario men who had top scores in the visitors' class earlier Tuesday.

Those who were betting on Carl to come through with top honors were looking to his performance under pressure in the world match in Northern Ireland in 1959 when he placed third against the best plowmen in the world.

Many of the plowmen at Brudenell were interested in the plow that Allison Briggs, Plaster Rock, N. B. was using. A mounted plow has not been considered in a class with trailer plows in the past for the detailed work of match plowing. But the New Brunswick man was using the same make of mounted plow that was used by world champion Ingve Mansson of Sweden when he won the crown in 1963.

Mounted Plow Attracts Attention

THE KVERNELANDS plow, a "Hydrene special", was just about the slickest thing on the field for handling, and Stan Willis was high on the implement, though he won the Canadian title a year ago with a Ransome plow and will use exactly the same type of plow in Austria in the world match this year, as the machinery company is making one available to him.

Mr. Briggs is New Brunswick distributor for the European-built Kvernelands, and he's high on its operation, though he was no higher than fourth in the Maritime match Tuesday.

Clark Young, Unionvale, Ontario who was one of the judges in the Canadian match this week, reiterated what Edwin Mills, Bay Fortune told me last week at Dundas. "They're not building trailer plows anymore, it's becoming increasingly difficult to get such plows for match competition."

Mr. Young told me, too, that mounted plows have won the world title in the past two years, so that pretty well removes the stigma from the mounted type.

Incidentally Stanley Willis and Hugh Bonny of Ontario were the first men to bring Ransome plows to Canada, Stan told me this week. Bonny and Carl Willis used the plows in the match in Northern Ireland in '59.

Judging Method In World Plowing

MR. YOUNG has judged several times in the world match where every country that has a plowman entered has a man on the judging panel. I talked to him this week about the task it must be to sort out the point totals turned in by so many people - as many as 15 men judge in world competition, eight men were judging in the big one at Brudenell.

They have a system that tosses out the judge's high point total and the low one. That prevents an unbalanced result that might result from a judge from any given country putting an unwarranted high total on his own man, and at the same time guards against anyone or more judges downgrading a man from another country he might fear was a threat for the title.

The rest of the points assessed on the judges scoring cards are averaged out and the winner and lesser prize winners are placed in that manner.

NORMALLY, of course, the judges do a completely honest job. For example, the Ontario judge was the first man to tell Stanley Willis last year he had won the Canadian title. And he told him long before the result was announced officially. The Ontario man told Willis "you are so far ahead, you have no possible worries." And he was that with a 20-point margin on the nearest competitor.

Wilson Is Consistent Plowman

I STARTED this with a story on Cornwall plowmen. How about this boy Barry Wilson. As far as I can recall this young man has won every class in which he has competed this year and that includes the Queens County and Prince Edward Island Plowing title matches. He was called up three times to receive first-place awards at Pownal. This 21-year old lad appears to have a bright future in the competitive plowmen's world.