

100 YEARS OF PLOWING

By Bill Gladding
From the files of Eric Howard

This year, 2021, marks the 100th anniversary since the International Plowing Match was held in Oxford County. According to Plowing Match historian Eric Howard of Woodstock, The (Woodstock) Sentinel Review newspaper of October 25, 1922 (a year later) reported that "W. O. Grenzebach of East Zorra, who last year (1921) held the Ontario championship for the best plower of stubble in the province, was present at the West Oxford match winning the highest honours in four events: First in stubble plowing, open to all; best crown in stubble; he won the sod competition and best crown in sod plowing."

The first recorded plowing match held by East Zorra Plowmen's Association was on November 11, 1915, on the farm of William Smith, about three miles north of Woodstock. The Tavistock Gazette reported "Splendid weather favoured the Association and a goodly number of competitors and spectators were in attendance." This was reported to be the first plowing match held since 1875 when it was hosted by John Strong on a farm about two miles east of the Smith farm (Lot 11, Conc. 14, east side).

Oxford County has hosted three International Plowing Matches over the past 100 years – in 1921 on the Ontario Hospital grounds north of Woodstock; at the John R. Hargreaves farm and neighbouring properties in 1951; and at the Clare Hartley farm in 1980, next to the current location of the Outdoor Farm Show.

The East Zorra Plowmen's Association continued for some thirty years (1915-1945) before it was disbanded. Minutes of the final meeting of the group which was held in the office of the Department of Agriculture, Woodstock on December 12, 1945 stated that they "decided to disband ... and to contribute the funds remaining in the treasury to the Oxford County Plowmen's Association, to be used to purchase a trophy (see photo), to be competed for annually at the Oxford County Plowing Match. This trophy is to be awarded for the best plowed land in Oxford County, team or tractor." The document was signed by Frank Corp, secretary-treasurer; Chas. Rowe, Fred Goble and W. H. Grenzebach.

According to Mr. Howard, the trophy was first awarded in 1946, but interest in plowing matches dropped off after the high of the 1951 International Plowing Match. The Oxford Blenheim match drew more attention and names on the plaque are blank for years 1952, 1954, 1955, 1957. "There was a poor turnout of contestants in 1952; no match in 1954 due to Hurricane Hazel; and only 12 contestants braved the rain at Jackson Bros. farm (The Oxford School site on Hwy. 59) in 1955. There was no match in 1957 as contestants could go to the IPM in adjacent Norfolk County," he said. "Some years Cecil Wells was the only entry in the horse



ERIC HOWARD / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

plowing but was proud to show his beloved Belgians for the horse show and people loved turning out to see them. He won the East Zorra Memorial trophy six times."

1964 is the last year that the East Zorra Trophy was awarded to Mr. Wells at the Wray Leach farm, located 4 miles east of Hickson.

Another piece of local plowing match trivia notes that on October 17th, 1963 the Blenheim Township Plowing Match was hosted at the farm of Glenn Cruickshank,

RR 2, Princeton. Glenn is the grandfather of Gazette columnist Michael Cruickshank. At that show, a special class for Oxford County Councillors was held. Peter McDonald, Warden of Oxford County competed, but was beaten by Stan Gehring, Deputy Reeve of South Norwich (1st), Geo. Hogg, Reeve of East Nissouri (2nd), and Percy Wettlaufer of East Zorra (3rd).

"Whether we have any plowing matches in 2021, county or provincial, remains to be seen," Mr. Howard said; "but we want to keep it in the public mind."

EAST ZORRA PLOWMEN'S MEMORIAL TROPHY WINNERS

1946 - Fred Howard
1947 - H.B. Blackman
1948 - Albert Roberts
1949 - Roscoe Buck
1950 - Albert Roberts
1951 - Albert Roberts
1952
1953 - George Shearer
1954
1955
1956 - Cecil Wells
1957
1958 - Jack Hargreaves
1959 - Robert Mitchell
1960 - Cecil Wells
1961 - Cecil Wells
1962 - Cecil Wells
1963 - Cecil Wells
1964 - Cecil Wells

20/21 INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH MOVING FORWARD



PHOTO COURTESY OF IPM 2019 / CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The 2019 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo put a spotlight on West Nipissing's agricultural sector at the fifth-generation Daniel Olivier, Ferme Longvallon Inc. farm in Verner, Ontario.

According to a recent press release, directors and staff of the Ontario Plowmen's Association are proud to announce that they will be "Moving Forward" with plans for the 20/21 International Plowing Match (IPM) and Rural Expo. While continuing to honour and respect the health situation and health regulations caused by Covid-19, the organizers will be simultaneously planning both the traditional IPM and a re-envisioned IPM.

Local and Provincial volunteers look forward to welcoming visitors to the

Municipality of Kawartha Lakes from Wednesday, October 13th to Saturday, October 16th. As planned, the IPM will be hosted on the Lindsay Fairgrounds and neighbouring farms.

The traditional IPM features such as the BMO Plowing Competition, the Hydro One Education and the Queen of the Furrow Competition presented by Ontario Mutuals may look a little different this year but you can be assured they will be just as exciting and memorable.

Alternate designs for both the Tented City and the RV Park are being

developed. The revised designs will protect our exhibitors, volunteers and visitors with additional health protocols.

"Our provincial and local volunteers will be ramping up their committee planning with conference calls and video calls. And, we really look forward to the in-person committee and community meetings that we will be held just as soon as the provincial health situation allows", said Don Priest, vice-president of the Ontario Plowmen's Association.

As part of their commit-

ment to the community, and through the generosity of the Celebrate Ontario grant programme, the Ontario Plowmen's Association was pleased to partner with the Lindsay Agricultural Society to present the "Merry and Bright Festival". The IPM display highlighted some of the features you will be able to see in-person at the 20/21 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo. Visitors and volunteers are urged to check additional plans and progress by visiting the IPM 20/21 website.