The Guardian
SECOND SECTION Charlottetown, PAGE 1-A

TOP PLOWMEN of all Canada will be plowing straightest furrows they can tomorrow and Wednesday for the Canadian Plowing championships at Brudenell Park.

First Island match held back in 1839

By NEIL MATHESON
Provincial Farm Editor

The history of competitive plowing goes back for at least 125 years in this province, as I have found that a match was held in early October 1839 under the direction of the Central Agricultural Society at Nance Villa, property of Charles Braddock.

Eight plowmen were in competition but The Colonial Herald of that time said it was also an occasion for "the gentry" to parade their finery. The Lieutenant - Governor — they called him. "His Excellency" then — "and several gentlemen on horseback" were present at the beginning and the end of the match: presumably they went for a ride while the plowing was in progress.

Amount of the prize money is not given, but 40 shillings was given to Chester Woolner of Rustico for winning the match in October 1848. Each competitor plowed one - half acre in approximately four hours, said The Islander newspaper which complained that practically nobody from Charlottetown attended though the site "is within a short distance".

Livestock shows were added to the plowing matches and the 1849 competition became a two - day event with the plowmen performing the first day, and the livestock showing the second, a class for previous non - winners was provided for plowmen, which indicates that there were many former winners in the area at the time. Matches were held close to Charlottetown, but contestants came from long distances.

Only paid up members of the Royal Agricultural Society which had taken over the annual events, were able to enter, through a son, or a servant, of a subscribing member was eligible.

There were eleven plowing contestants in the 1850 match which was held in the Charlottetown Royalty, just outside the city. One Lauchlin McNeill, Princetown Road was given a copy of Pessendeh's "Complete Farmer", and John MacLauchlan, a young man with only one hand, was given the same prize for his unusually good work accomplished under difficulties.

There was evidence of improved equipment, some of it imported from England in the Queens County match at Marshfield in 1868.

"Seven plows started in the men's class and four in the lads". Names of former winners like John Ferguson, Alex MacBeath and George Scott appeared in the list of officials.

The plow used by the first-prize winner, Donald MacDonald of the Stock Farm — it's the land known as Fairwood Farm now — was a Howard that came from Bedford, England.

"Three other plows of the same make were used and though in the hands of inexperienced men", the story said, "there was that about their work which proved that for well - cultivated level land they can hardly be surpassed. The dynamometer showed the draft of the winner's plow, turning a furrow six inches by nine inches, to be about 1400 pounds."

The story noted that 'several well-made Island plows were in the field. Frederick Horne, Malpeque Road, winner of the second prize, used one made by Stewart of Southport. Donald MacKinnon of Malpeque Road, winner of the third prize in the Lad's class, used a very good iron plow, made by White, Malpeque Road and Donald MacMillan, Covehead, second prize winner in the Lad's class used a composite plow made by Robinson, Charlottetown."

"George Essery, Union Road won the Lad's class and made most excellent work". The news story chided the contestants who still persisted in using "the old - fashioned wooden plows, an excellent useful implement in its way, but not just the thing for a plowing match." The paper also regretted that "many really excellent workmen abstain from trying their skill at plowing matches 'from want of confidence as to their success.'"

"The Islander" looked forward to a Maritime match and suggested "provision might very judiciously be made for payment of the expenses of representative plowmen and their teams from the adjoining provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick who might feel disposed to try conclusions with the Islanders at an Intercolonial plowing match".

There must have been an open fall in the year 1871 because the plowing match at New Perth was held on November 20 as it had to be postponed from an earlier date owing to bad weather.

"It soon became evident", said an Island paper, "that in cutting and laying over a furrow six inches by nine inches, the iron plows were getting the better of their wooden rivals".

One of the iron plows praised had come from Scotland, but the other was made by Mr. Stewart (first name is not given) of Southport. The wooden plow furrows were "not so smooth nor so evenly laid as those by the iron plows", the old story said.

A plowing match "of improved implements" occupied a whole day at the Provincial Exhibition at Summerside, October 10, 1878 and a plow used by George Essery, Milton — he was the winner — was termed "the best modeled and most highly finished ever made on the Island".

The implement drew even warmer praise because it had never been used previously and the two horses used to haul the plow had not previously been used together, which brought the plowman in for extra commendation.

Many details of former Island plowing matches are missing but it was a Dundas wartime group Carry On Canada Corps, that revived competitions in this province back in 1941.

The local group was one of thousands organized across Canada to raise money for war purposes, and spark interest in performing many of the wartime tasks that were deemed necessary on the home front. All contributed their services and all of the profits were turned over to war work.

Leslie Hunter of Bridgetown, now of Strathcona, was chosen as the first chairman of the group and he has headed the Plowing Match organiation in that community ever since.

The early matches featured many horse - drawn plows and and the tractor plows were such a novelty that the people swarmed around the plowing area to see the mechanical monsters work.

Albert Acorn, Primrose, who has been the match secretary now for many years, won the first tractor class. One of the first walking plow winners was the veteran Albert Curran of Summerville with his team in a truck wagon which carried the plow.

Tractor classes quickly increased in popularity with 27 entries in a single class at the peak of interest.

The association introduced a Practical Field plowing class several years ago to be plowed at field speed and this has helped in some measure to curb the sharpness of the practical farmers' criticism that competitive plowing does not begin to represent the practical plowing that must be done on a farm, because of the great deal of time allowed contestants to fix and arrange their furrows and sods, and the slow measured pace of the plowman, with frequent stops to adjust furrow widths, depths, etc.

The first match drew an estimated 500 people — it was held on Frank Clay's farm in Bridgetown — but interest developed rapidly and the match became known as a place to go to see your friends.

Many hundreds of people remained near the central headquarters throughout the day to greet and talk with old friends. Many former Islanders living in other provinces, and in the United States, timed their holidays to include the plowing dates. There are a number of people who have never missed a match through the years.

Frank Clay of Bridgetown was the first man to represent the province in the international match in Ontario — that was 15 years ago — but many others have plowed in the Canadian champions hip match since then and last year, for the first time, an Island man, Stanley Willis, Cornwall, brought home the Canadian title.

Stanley's son, Carl Willis, Ph. D., a Research Officer at the Experimental Farm here, is competing in this year's Canadian match and is rated one of the favorites for a top position, on the basis of his performance in world competition at Armoy, Northern Ireland in 1959 when he placed third, behind A. Laurence MacMillan of Northern Ireland and Charles Bonney of Ontario, Canada.

The Morrissey family from Cherry Valley are the other outstanding plowing family from this province. Glen Morrissey won the provincial title four times and represented the Island three times at canadian championship meets. His brother Beverley is a former junior and senior provincial champion and another brother Clayton, is also a former junior provincial champion. Glen was a mere slip of a boy when he first took the provincial title. He was still a very young man when he won it for the fourth time.

The first plowing match at Dundas had a horse show as a side attraction. To be eligible the horses had to have drawn plows in one or more of the regular classes and they had to be in the possession of the owner for at least 10 days prior to the show. An entry of 50 cents was charged.

The horse show has become a regular feature of the fair at Dundas and it still attracts a

Continued on page 2

TIME TABLE

Tuesday, September 15th

9:30 a.m.—Visitors' Class
10:00 a.m.—P. E. I. Junior Championship
1:00 p.m.—Maritime Championship
1:30 p.m.—P. E. I. Senior Utility
2:00 p.m.—OFFICIAL OPENING

Wednesday, September 16th

9:00 a.m.—Canadian Plowing Contest—Stubble Plowing
12:30 p.m.—Canadian Plowing Contest—Sod Plowing
5:00 p.m.—Canadian Plowing Contest—Announcement of results and presentation of trophy—Official Platform
7:30 p.m.—Prize Presentation Banquet—Montague Regional High School

Canadian plow title at stake at Brudenell

Many Prince Edward Islanders will have a first - ever look this week at a Canadian Plowing Championship competition in action as 16 of Canada's top plowmen, representing eight of the 10 provinces ve for supremacy in this country, and the right to represent Canada in world competition in Austria in 1965.

The championship meet will be held in beautiful Brudenell Park, where a hard - working group of men has been active for several weeks making the necessary arrangements for feeding and greeting the visitors who are expected.

Farm newspapermen from across the country are expected, in addition to people who will be backing their favorites in the big Championship match on Wednesday.

The stubble competition is held in the forenoon and the sod plowing test comes in the afternoon.

Judging will be done by selected people from each province represented in the championship event. In this case men are competing from British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunwick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Jack Andrews, a tall poultry farmer who is 57 years of age, and Tom Hickman, 44, a large dairy farmer, are representing British Columbia. Andrews was runner - up for the provincial title on three occasions and he was the champion in 1962. He's president of the Chilliwack Plowing Society.

Hickman also comes from Chilliwack, an important agricultural section in British Columbia. A plowman of experience, he represented Canada in world competition in Holland in 1962.

Trip manager for the Andrews - Hickman combination is Bill Cyble, Sardis, who is a former champion with the horse - drawn walking plows.

The B.C. team was the first on the grounds as they arrived in mid - week and got in some practice competition on Friday of last week after watching the provincial match at Dundas on Thursday.

Representing Manitoba are E. R "Mickey" Denman, 31, from High Bluff, who is a grain grower on 660 acres, and W. O. "Bim" Smith, cottage la Prairie, who wins his brot raises grain and beef cattle on two sections of land.

A former winner with horse-drawn equipment as a youngster, Smith won the Manitoba tractor title in 1960 and he took it again last year.

Denman was a member of Canada's team in world competition back in 1956 and this will be his fourth crack at the Canadian title. Previous attempts were in 1955, 1962 and 1963, placing third each time.

New Brunswick's team comprises Allison Murchie Briggs, 27, of Plaster Rock, New Brunswick and James Taylor, 48, Norton RR2. Briggs and his Dad raise beef and grow potatoes on a 450 - acre farm. He has been competing in plowing since he was 13 years of age. He was provincial champion in 1960 and has participated in the Canadian match on two previous occasions. He's vice - president of the N.B. Plowmen's Association.

Mr. Taylor has been a provincial champion on four occasions.

Donald Dunkeld, 30, Clermont RR 2, and Douglas Reid, 27 of Brampton represent Ontario.

A dairy farmer, Don has been interested in match plowing since he was 13. He was provincial champion in 1960 and again last year.

Reid, who is also a dairy farmer, has been a contestant in plowing for 20 years, and has been a consistent winner in open classes at the International match for 10 years. He won as Esso trip to England in 1952.

Prince Edward Island's team comprises Edwin Mills, 36, of Bay Fortune, who operates a mixed farm, and Carl Willis, 26, who is a research officer at the Experimental Farm here.

Edwin won the Kings County title several times and was runner up in the provincial match a year ago.

Carl won the provincial title last year which he has previously taken in 1958. He placed third in world competition in 1959 and is rated as one of the men to watch in the big one Wednesday, because of his past experience, though he'll be up against a tremendous backlog of experience and skill in the visiting teams. He was third in the Canadian match in 1958.

Representing Quebec are Ange - Aime Leduc, 26, of St. Clet, Soulanges County, and Romeo Besner, 48, of the same place. Leduc was provincial champion in 1963.

Besner is a beef cattle raiser. He has been runner-up to the provincial champion on four occasions and competed in the Canadian match each time.

Details are not available on the Nova Scotia team but they are Aubrey Smith and Roy Hoeg, Athol, Cumberland County.

Obligation not option

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CP)—The general council of the United Church of Canada was told Friday night that Christian unity "is not an option but an obligation."

Rt. Rev. Duncan Fraser of Glasgow, moderator of the Church of Scotland, told the 600 delegates to the 21st general council union must come but he saw "no possibility of a comprehensive church union in the near future."

Dr. Fraser said the challenge now facing Christianity is to "heal the wounds in the church which is the body of Christ. I doubt if even the youngest among us here will see union complete and the church restored."

UK DAIRY QUEEN, Miss Christine Ann Hewett, will grace the national plowing championship matches at Brudenell Park tomorrow and Wednesday. Miss Hewett, recently chosen dairy queen of England and Wales, arrived on the Island on Sunday.

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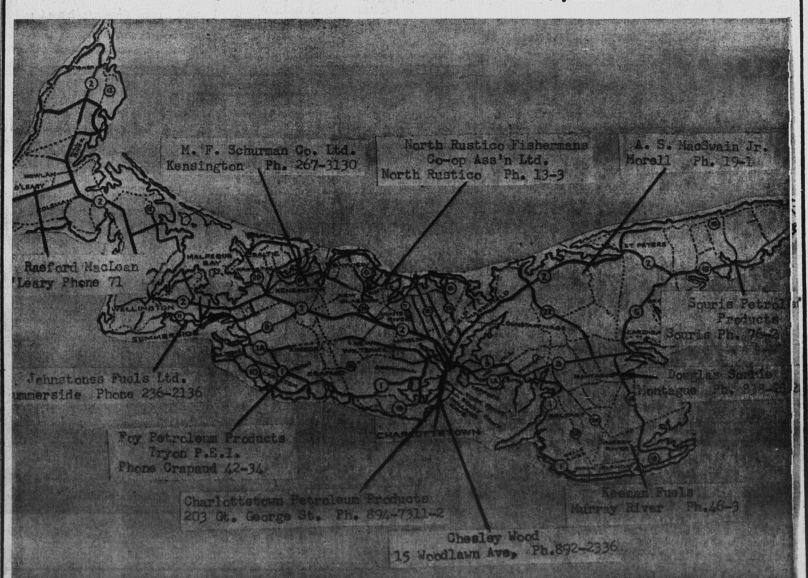

Visit The TEXACO Booth At The Canadian Championship Plowing Contest
Brudenell Park, P.E.I. — Sept. 15th-16th, 1964