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## 2019 National Shire Horse Show

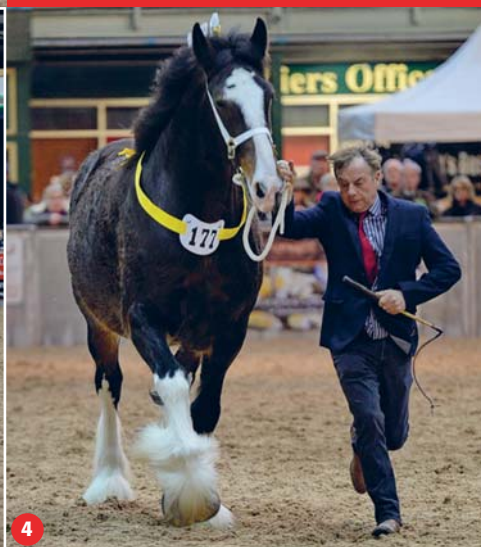


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(1) Champion stallion was William Bedford's Landcliffe Charlie who won the King George V trophy for the second year running, shown by Walt Bedford: he was first in the senior stallions. (2) WA & MG King's Cotebrook Ben Alder took the gelding championship and topped the senior gelding class. (3) Morag Snow was the ridden champion and British Ridden Heavy Horse of the Year qualifier on Gautby Arclid Flashman, sold by John Anderson at the show. (4) The female championship went to Paul Bedford's Fellthorpe Esther Jane, first in the senior mares.



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William Castle ends his two-part series on the technical skill of horse ploughing

# Learning to plough – Part 2

**A**lthough ploughing looks simple, it is a complicated business with many variables. Luckily, some of these skills can be learnt one at a time. For anyone just starting out, learning horse skills must be the highest priority. You can also learn about ploughs and adjusting them by watching and talking to ploughmen, but the only way to learn how to guide the plough and to use the feel of the plough to tell you how to adjust it, is by ploughing.

## Putting it all together

Unless you are lucky enough to work on a horse powered farm, probably the best way to learn is on a ploughing course. Here, everything will be explained and demonstrated, the horses will be well trained, the plough will function correctly and, at least at first, you will be able to steer the plough without having to think about the horses. In addition, you will be able to step back and rest your muscles and brain while someone else has a go, learn from their mistakes, and benefit from the questions they ask.

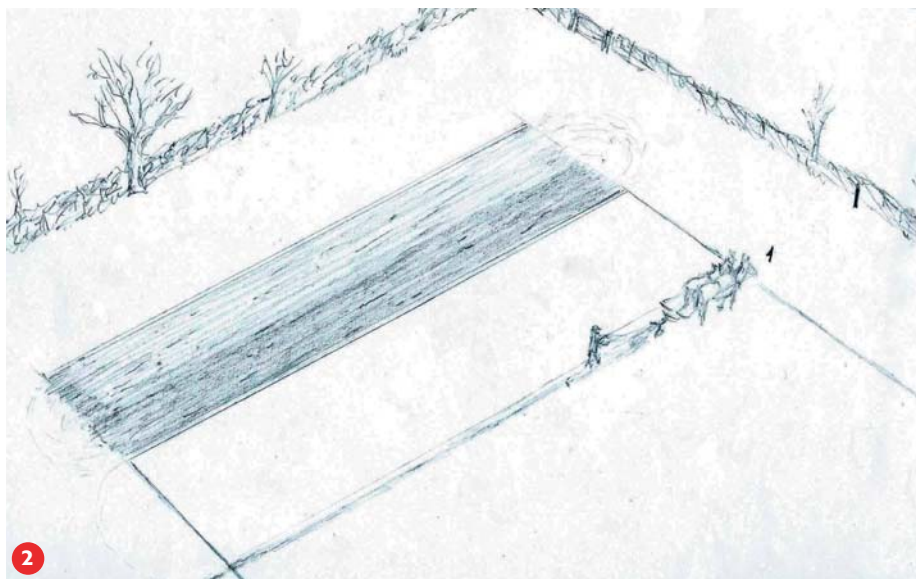
Another option is to apprentice yourself to a knowledgeable ploughman, though some may be more interested in doing the ploughing themselves, rather than teaching a beginner. Nonetheless, if you find a ploughman who is a good teacher, who lives nearby and is happy for you to gain experience over months, this could be an ideal situation.

A less ideal situation is at a working day, because there is often too much happening, with other horses being driven at a trot or ridden at a canter while your horses are expected to walk. Nonetheless, if you have a ploughman whose horses are used to this situation, this can be a good opportunity to have a go.

There will, however, be some people who want to give it a go on their own. If you already have good horses that are used to land work, but you use a tractor to plough, then you stand a reasonable chance. First leave an open furrow from your tractor plough (or from your horse plough on a long chain behind the tractor), and teach your furrow horse to walk along it. Then attach the horses to the plough, put the furrow wheel in front of the share and the hake all the way to the left so the horses will just drag the plough down the open furrow without cutting new ground. When you have all



(1) Learning to steer the plough, with someone else driving the horses, and in this case, experienced ploughman Mike Bingham giving advice. (2) The ploughman starting the second rigg. The horses have just reached the scratch furrow which marks the headland, with a marker in front of them and a stick in the hedge to aim at.



got used to that, reset the furrow wheel and move the hake back to the middle and let the plough work.

Having someone experienced drive the horses will make all the difference while you concentrate on the plough. At the bare minimum, have someone who is confident around horses to stand at the horses' heads, or do anything else necessary. Nonetheless, you will be on a steep learning curve. No matter how you start, spending lots of time driving horses and ploughing without having to set out a field will make the next part easier.

## Dividing the field

Most land today is ploughed with a reversible plough, which is in effect a right-handed plough with a left-handed plough on top, the whole lot being

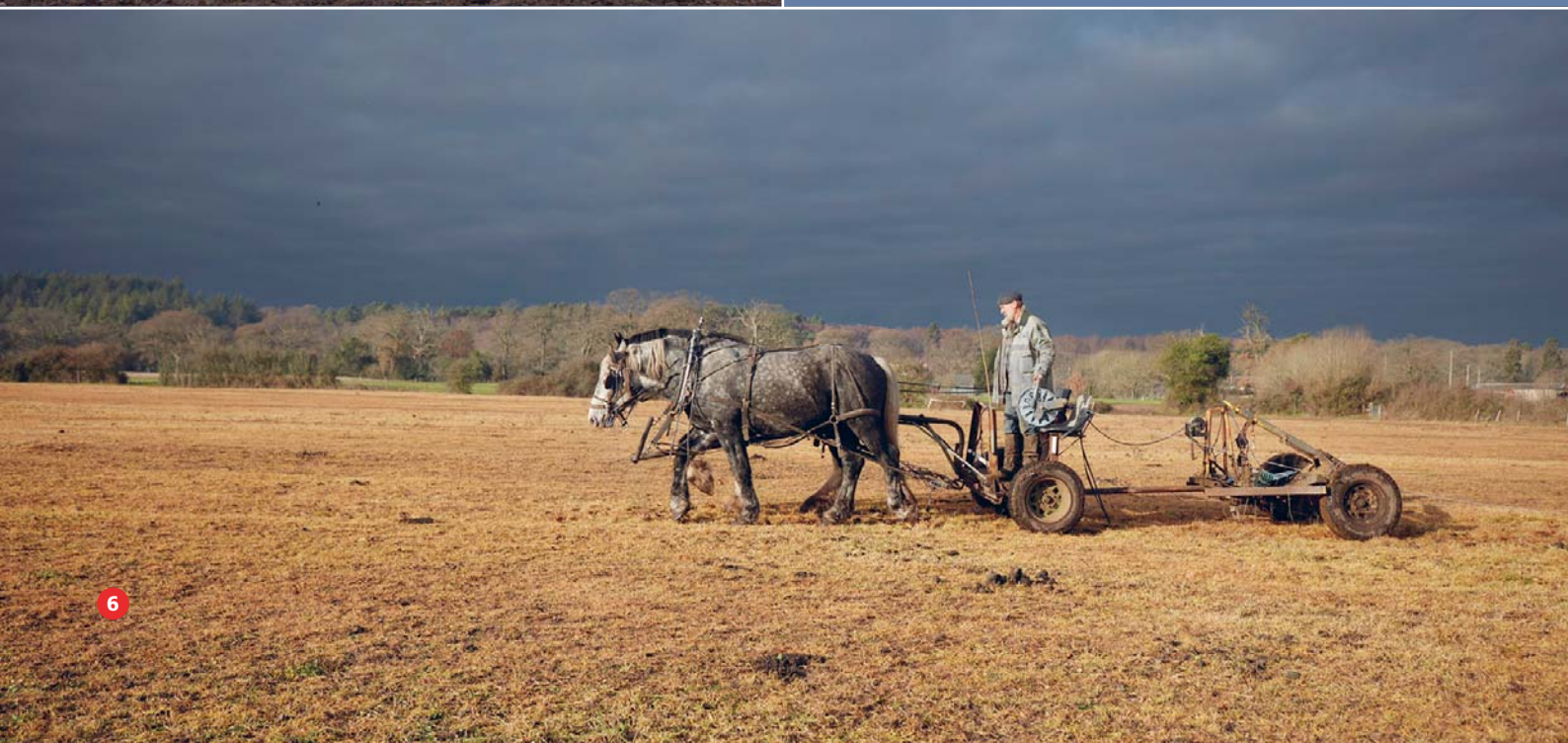
swivelled round at each headland and used alternately on each run up and down the field. This allows the ploughing to start at one hedge and continue across the field, turning all the furrows in one direction. Most horse ploughs however, have a single mouldboard which turns the furrow to the right, so if you were to plough along the hedge side, you would have to return empty to the starting point to lay another furrow against the first.

To avoid this, the field is laid out into sections, into parallel strips called lands, with the headland all around the edge to turn the horses. To set out the field, a very small furrow, a scratch furrow, is ploughed parallel to the hedges, about 5-6 yards away. This is the line where you will put the plough into the ground and take it out at the end of a furrow.





“ I have a lifetime interest in horses, and particularly working horses. ”





**Mike & Ellie Paddock's latest update on their horse-drawn farm business in Devon**

## The right horses for the job

**O**ur Hitch-in Farm Working Horses business has been going for nearly four years now, and we have made a lot of progress on our horse-drawn farm in West Devon. We are building a 60×40 steel frame barn, so we can finally get our kit in out of the wet, and this is now half-way up!

We have also invested much of our hard-earned money in a new Brabant colt. Walter is now eight-months-old, and turning a lovely shade of blue. He arrived early in January in the rain, at a little after midnight! He was rather unimpressed with this set of circumstances but was happy to follow Dolly up the fields to a nice straw bed, along with some other colt buddies. He is a big boy, but comes very low in the pecking order and has earned himself the nickname 'Wimpy Walter'.

His best friend is another colt, Oscar, which we bred from one of our Cob mares, and a colt we borrowed from Robert Sampson. Our investment in Walter to breed with our mares is part of our efforts to breed slightly bigger Cob X heavy horses. The idea behind this is that they would be able to do the jobs on the farm with ease, but would retain the economical benefits of using Cobs – low feed requirements and minimal health issues.

Oscar is the first of these horses, and is standing about three inches taller than Mum at just nine-months-old. We have also managed to source a couple of Ardennes X Cobs, Rosie and Jim; a Clydesdale X Cob, called Lupin, who is ridiculously laid back, and Tom, a Percheron X Cob, who is extremely keen to begin his career! Every time we are out working in the fields he has to march alongside and tell the others what they should be doing! He is not particularly popular with our mares . . .

We have seen a huge increase in interest in our courses, and a couple of weeks ago were able to take a leap of faith and hand in our notices at our other jobs to allow us to focus more on our own business. All our monthly logging courses through the winter sold out, and we are now doing bracken rolling and logging contracting again. In July last



“ We have also invested much of our hard-earned money in a new Brabant colt. ”

year we started a new bracken rolling contract on Dartmoor covering 150 acres, with the most amazing views!

Due to this demand we have taken on two interns for the summer to help us with our workload. We had over 100 applications for the position, but had to choose just two. We were extremely pleased to see such a high level of interest in learning horse-drawn skills! Emily and Gabriella will be starting this month with Emily our assistant horse person and Gabriella as our assistant grower, helping out with the 2½ acres of veg we have in the ground.



**Mike & Ellie Paddock using their horses on the farm, on their courses and for logging and bracken rolling.**

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# MAILBOX

## Ploughing memories

I wanted to say how much I enjoyed a couple of articles in the latest issue of *Heavy Horse World*. Part 1 of 'Learning to Plough', by William Castle, was interesting and well-written (as are all of William's articles).

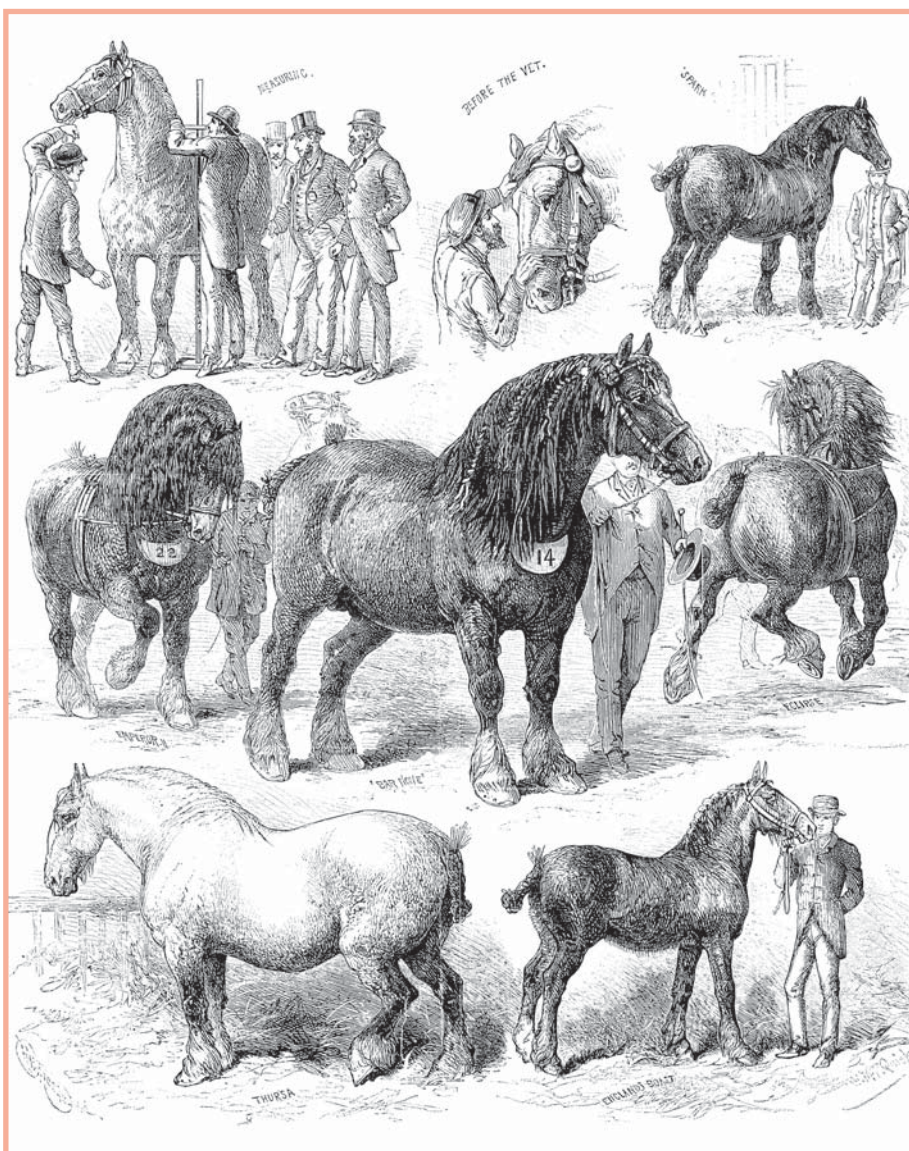
But I particularly liked the story and photographs featuring Cheryl Grover. The photos were delightful (totally natural and un-staged) and the story unpretentious but interesting. They reminded me of my own experience in the 1980s, during my collar and harness-making apprenticeship, when we used to work the horses for a few weeks every year to prepare a paddock for growing the next crop of cereal rye (*Secale cereal*) for collar-making straw.



Here are a couple of photos from that time. The first shows myself ploughing the rye paddock on the banks of the Nepean River near Camden in New South Wales. The part-draught horses are Dusty (in the furrow) and Nelson (on the land). The second photo shows one of our ploughs, a 'Paul', parked next to the blacksmiths shop (note the pile of coke behind the plough, and the smaller heap of 'clinker' to the right of the plough). As you can see, we plough with a land wheel only (no furrow wheel).

MARK PORTER

Asterisk Horse-collars & Harness  
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## The best, Bar None . . .

From *The Illustrated London News* of 11 March 1882 comes one of their much-admired series of drawings from that year's Cart-Horse Show, held at the Agricultural Hall by the English Cart-Horse Society, the forerunner of the Shire Horse Society and founded in 1878. This was its third show, and 112 horses were present. James Forshaw's Bar None takes pride of place in the centre, a 17hh bay with four white feet from Nottinghamshire, but bred in Yorkshire, and following his first prize win at Garstang the previous year. Second prize went to Forshaw's Tom of the Shires. Another winner was Emperor II, a 12-year-old bay belonging to Sir Richard Wallace, and pictured on the left of Bar None. Walter Gilbey's Spark, pictured top right, and champion the previous year, won the four-year-old class. On the right of Bar None is two-year-old winner, the Earl of Ellesmere's Eclipse, and champion mare was the rather solid-looking Thursa, bottom left, a five-year-old grey owned by Mr Garrett Taylor of Trowse, Norwich, but bred in Buckinghamshire. The event was witnessed by the Prince and Princess of Wales among many other distinguished visitors. Thanks go to Richard Beard for sending in the image.

**Many thanks indeed for the Spring Issue of *Heavy Horse World*. I particularly enjoyed the article about Cheryl Grover's ploughing on the Essex/Suffolk border in *Farm Work in the 1980s*, which alongside Part 1 of *Learning to plough* by William Castle, enhanced both articles.**

What was also pleasing was the mix of heavy horse activity right across the board: from the show ring to logging, and the farm run by working horses. Looking forward to the Summer issue of HHW!

YVONNE HATCH

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