

# Seanchas Ìle

## HERITAGE ARCHIVE

### Interview: Ploughing

DM: Duncan MacDougall

FM: Flora MacAffer

EE: Emily Edwards

DM: **[00:00]** Well, they used to plough lea the first year.

EE: Uh-huh

DM: You used ...

FM: Grass? Lea.

DM: Lea. That's it. Grass. The first year.

FM: (laughing) Grass.

DM: Well, the way they used to do it, you know...

EE: Grass?

FM: Yes.

DM: ... to plant it. Well, it was with the sowing fiddle they used to sow, and... Well, there was broadcast as well in many places. You had a horse and a sole plate and a thing that planted the seed and there was quite a quantity of machinery altogether, **[00:30]** but it was the sowing fiddle that was normal for seeding, more so even than the seeders...

FM: Sowing fiddle? The seed... the thing you used to... sow?

DM: Sow the seed, yes, just a sowing fiddle and the chest... you know.

EE: Aye.

DM: You used to sow . . . you used to sow with it. And, well that's why you used to put in a wee scrape [in the ground], every fifth chain along and in that way you'd see where you were going with the seed, so that not a speck was wasted...

EE: Aye. **[01:00]**

FM: Indeed not. You just used to make a line.

DM: A line.

EE: And how many horses did you have when you were doing that?

DM: Well, the seeder used to be pretty heavy, and it had discs on it, and there was a thing on it for... It used to measure the ground as well...

EE: Aye.

DM: ... in whatever way, it measured what you did. And there were two horses. And it was pretty hard on horses right enough, oh aye, you know, and there was a sowing sheet ... if the ground was steep. Again there used to be broadcast, there used to be one horse and it used to turn over a lot and make ridges at the time. And then you would harrow.

EE: Aye.

DM: And covering the seed over. And...

FM: Well, aye...

EE: And what implements did you used to use, what were the tools...

**[02:00]**

DM: The tools.

EE: ... that you used to use for the ..?

FM: The tools you used to use.

DM: The tools you used to use. Well, you used to use. Well, you used to use...

EE: Do you remember?

DM: For seed you just used either one of a sowing fiddle, or seeder, or broadcast, they had a sowing fiddle, we'd better not forget that (laughing)... They used to have the sowing fiddle for the job. Me, I had two horses...

**[02:30]**

EE: Two?

DM: Two horses. But in some places they used to use a two-share plough and that took three horses if you were ploughing *talamh leasaichte*, Redland as you call it, you know. Two horses could be used (laughing), two horses were...

EE: And when did they stop using horses?

DM: Well, they were still going here until the nineteen-sixties.

EE: The nineteen-sixties.

FM: There used to use a lot of horses.

DM: Aye. Aye. A lot of horses. And. **[03:00]** Aye.

FM: And, they used to come down our way. They used to go to the ploughing-match, and my father used to . . . to get them ready, and J-----'s father was exceptionally good at ploughing.

EE: Oh, really.

FM: And he won a Highland Society medal.

DM: Oh aye, oh by God aye. There used to be ploughing-matches. The first...

EE: What were the ploughing-matches called in Gaelic?

DM: *Latha-treabhaidh* (day of ploughing). **[03:30]** Well, it's *latha-treabhaidh* you used to call it if you were...one of the people, the neighbours who were helping - it's *latha-treabhaidh* that they called [it]...

FM: They used to help each other out at that time. And they were awfully kind.

EE: So what used to go on at the ploughing-matches?

DM: Well, a rig used to be set out for you, and you would gather [the land], there were pins in every lot. And you used to draw **[04:00]** your lot out of a hat (laughing). And from there you used to make the first furrow. You used to set the poles.

FM: The *druim*. That's the beginning.

DM: The first furrow. You used to put in the first furrow, and...

EE: Right.

DM: ... Anyway. I heard "plew-match" from a Tiree man (...) Well, aye, **[04:30]** oh, the horses were just fine the first time, my horses were fine the first time, but the second time I was there, one of them, took, well, he was... meandering around, but anyhow, I did it, I did it, I got off with it and with a bunch of prizes (laughing).

FM: They used ...

DM: Well, I did alright, I got as far as, but ... You used to make **[05:00]** the first furrow, and then you'd be tucking in coming back down, coming back down, the first two, as it were the edges round about, and then you used to start splitting the ones, the one that used to (??)

EE: And was there a cèilidh dance after the match?

DM: Oh Lord, there used to be a ball after the ploughing-match.

FM: A great ball!

DM: A great ball!

FM: Oh, I was at some of the balls, you know **[05:30]** it was so...  
DM: Oh Lord, we were out at a ball then...  
FM: (laughing)  
EE: And how often did they used be?  
DM: What?  
EE: How often did they used to be?  
DM: Once a year.  
EE: Once, once.  
DM: The ploughing-match used to be around the ninth of February; the first Wednesday of February is when the ploughing-match used to take place. And, well...  
EE: And you'd have a big cèilidh dance afterwards?  
DM: Aye, well, you know, it was relatives and friends mostly, you know, there were the cronies and the relatives... (laughing) anyhow.  
FM: Och aye, the people were ... so kind.  
DM: Aye. Aye, indeed. **[06:11]**