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# A Ted Bit Solving the world's problems from a tractor seat

Back in August, The Sidekick and I hosted the Halton Plowing Match at Brown Farm.

Since then, I've had a major hankering to get out and plow a field in the back of the farm, in preparation of growing barley next year to feed the sheep.

It's been a while since I truly plowed a field, from start to finish. All I've plowed was the garden—which isn't much.

The plowing match 'land' (area to be plowed) is a paltry 200 feet long, and keeping that straight isn't near as challenging as striking out across a full length field.

I have an old three furrow mounted plow, which has three 14-inch bottoms—okay, that means little to my urban friends, but a farmer knows what I mean.

The plow isn't big compared to some of the mega-equipment that cash croppers pull into the field with. With mine, three 14-inch bottoms means I'm only turning over 42 inches of land at a time—not much land by today's standards.

Years ago, my dad and I both had our own plows. His was fully mounted and mine was a semi-mount.

Both had four 16-inch bottoms, meaning we would each turn over 64 inches at a time, a bit over five feet wide.

With both of us plowing at the same time, that translated into 128 inches, or about 10 and a half feet wide.

Today's farmers have five, six or more furrows, with up to 22-inch wide bottoms to boot.

It'd be an understatement to say I was taking a major backwards step for me as I tackled the field with three 14s.

Mind you, when I was a kid, my dad plowed with an old trailer plow, which had three 12-inch bottoms.

So even three 14s was a bonus.

The fact that I'm actually plowing that field goes against the grain of many of today's farmers. They utilize minimum tillage or no-till policies, to cut down the number of trips across the field, or to save on fuel consumption.

But to plant non-till also requires expensive special equipment, not to

mention the fact it requires a lot more horsepower to haul it around.

I'm old-fashioned. I maintain ya gotta turn the ground over from time to time, to let it breath, and allow the nutrients to break down to be used by the crops.

My plow wasn't set up for my tractor, so I had to spend some time getting it set to plow straight, even and the correct depth. Once those obstacles were crossed, I was ready to plow that field!

I marked the headlands (the ends of the fields) to give me a point to drop the plow into the ground, then paced off a distance from the fence line into the field.

I drove in a stake, and drove to the other end of the field. I paced off the same distance, and then placed the tractor in position, ready to strike out the first land.

Eyeing the stake along the hood of the tractor, I started down the field, toward the stake. I learned a long time ago, as in life, never look back when striking out—you do, you'll pull to one side or the other and mess it



**TED BROWN**

up. I repeated the process a few times until I had strike outs across the field.

Next step was to plow between the strike-outs and finish with an open furrow. I must say, I was pleased with myself. I finished up with six 'finishes' and all were mighty respectable—I felt pretty good, considering I

haven't plowed an entire field from start to finish in more than 25 years.

The Sidekick walked out to the field as I was plowing it, and rode on the tractor for a short time—even took a spell behind the wheel to try her hand at plowing.

I've always maintained that all the troubles of the world could be solved from a tractor seat, as the field turns dark with the ground being turned over. Going up and down that field is downright therapeutic and calming.

It's one of those things that emulates life, as one plows a field. At the end of the day, you can stop, and take a look behind you.

And in doing so, you can see how far you've come.

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