

# The Hook Plough

In the centre of Hook, on the corner of the Old Reading Road with the A30, there stands a plough. This is the story of how - and why - it came to be there.

In August 1983, a villager noticed the handles of a plough amongst the undergrowth to the north-west of Ashwell's copse, on the east side of the village (SU 732544).

The Hook Environmental Group (HEG) was alerted and was concerned that the plough might disappear, as the adjacent field was scheduled for housing development very shortly.

The plough was removed from the copse for safety and stored by Bill Baggs (Junior) for eighteen months, until its owner could be traced.



*David Burke watches as the plough is lifted onto the truck near Ashwell's copse.*



*The plough in storage at North Warnborough.*

Glynis Wilsdon of the HEG made lengthy investigations and finally identified the plough's owner as a Mr. Harold Wing, who had an agricultural contracting business employing five men based at Bunkers Hill Farm in the 1940s.

He had purchased the plough second hand in 1947 from Gower's Foundry in Hook (next to the Grange) and had used it to plough the fields next to Ashwell's Copse for Mr. Cecil Masters of "Hartletts", a big house which stood on the site now occupied by Geffery's House.

Harold had abandoned the plough in 1948, having bought new equipment, and was happy to donate the plough to the village.

Gower's Foundry had been established in Hook by Andrew Gower in 1825. By 1947 it was no longer a foundry proper, but dealt in agricultural machinery. Our plough had been assembled from a number of ploughs bought second hand by Gower's - such items were referred to as "Bitzas" because they were made from "Bitza this and bitza that"!



*Bill Baggs Jnr. (left) supervises as the plough is delivered to Edgehills'.*



*After shot-blasting to remove the rust, the rough edges are tidied up a bit by a member of Edgehills' staff.*

Glynis discovered that the Hook plough consists of a Massey-Harris body, with Ransomes and Lister-Cockshutt parts.

The plough-shares were made by the "Bedford Plough and Eng. Co. Ltd."

Early on the morning of the Saturday 2nd November 1985, Bill Baggs moved it to Edgehills' premises on the industrial estate in Hook, where the rust was shot-blasted off. (It must have been thinly disguised as a set of aircraft steps, which were Edgehills' more usual line of business!)



*Jane Bonnin & Glynis Wilsdon give the plough its first coat of primer - quickly, before the rust can form again.*

Having been shot-blasted, it was a race against time to apply the first coat of red oxide primer before the rust could re-form. Once the paint had dried, it was then moved again, this time to the garden of Church Path Cottage in Newnham Road, where the restoration work would be completed.

It stayed there for eight months, while it was restored to its 1948 colours by a team of volunteers.



*Glynis Wilsdon, Peter Brown and Andy Cole applying the first undercoat (the fourth member of the party, Martin Rudd, took the picture.)*

A second coat of red oxide was applied, by a team consisting of Glynis Wilsdon, Andy Cole, Martin Rudd and Peter Brown.

In January 1986, this was followed by the first coat of drab undercoat.

The second undercoat didn't go on until July 1986 (hence the shorts!)

In the meantime, Glynis had undertaken extensive research into the likely colours of the plough when it had been in use in Hook in the 1940s. She established that the main body would have been in Standen Green, while the wheels would have been the same shade of yellow as is now used on JCB excavators. These colours were available in the "Farmasheen" range (made by Signpost) and were obtained to restore the plough to its original glory.



*David Burke (in the shorts), Jane Bonnin and Peter Brown applied the second undercoat (Glynis Wilsdon took time off from the painting to take the picture)*



*Andy Cole, Martin Rudd and Paul Boswell (front), apply a coat of Standen Green. Glynis took the photo.*

During July, the plough body was given two coats of green paint and the wheels two coats of yellow.

The plough shares would originally have been bare steel, so they were given two coats of aluminium paint to keep the rust at bay.

By the end of July 1986, the painting was complete and the plough was ready to be installed.

Once all the paintwork had been finished, Bill Baggs and his team moved the plough for one last time, to its present position opposite the White Hart pub on 6th August 1986

The plough was lifted onto the lorry by hand for this move - it took nine men.

The Parish Council had previously arranged for the concrete base to be installed. For safety, it was necessary to bolt the plough to the base - lengths of steel pipe were inserted through the wheels to provide the fixing.

The Parish Council added a plaque and the project was complete.



*Ian Cripps from Fleet, assisted by Jane Bonnin, welds the fixings which will hold the plough onto its base.*

And why? At a time when extensive housing development was taking place in and around the village, many villagers wanted a memento of Hook's history as a rural area.



*Glynis with the completed plough.*

The plough now stands as a reminder of Hook's agricultural past and a monument to the once green fields which have fallen victim over the years, one by one, to development.

### **Acknowledgements:-**

Glynis Wilsdon, who was the driving force behind the Plough project. This page is heavily based on Glynis's work and we can't thank her enough (and her family for allowing her time off to do it!)

Harold Wing for donating the plough.

W.W. Baggs and Co., in the person of Bill Baggs (Junior) and his staff, who moved and stored the plough.

Edgehills' for shot-blasting the rust off - particular thanks to Jim Blake.

Hook Environmental Group.

Peter Brown, Andy Cole, David Burke, Paul Boswell, Martin Rudd and Jane Bonnin, who all helped Glynis with the painting.

Paul Davies and Ian Cripps for welding.

Hook Parish Council, who paid for the paint and base and arranged for the installation on site.

John Hazell of Hook and the other local farmers who helped with identification.

Mr. D.C. Philips of the Museum of English Rural Life and Massey Ferguson, Lister and Ransome for identifying parts and colours.

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### **Plough details:-**

**Model Number: 442001**

**Parts Numbers: P3455, P203, P5458, P8758A, PC1075HT, BG88, L51S, K44, F20A, X22A, X23A.**

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