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A plough that turns over, and a plough that arrived with cream separators

A typographic fact sheet. No photographs.

Two museum ploughs, two clever ideas: a beam that turns at the end of the furrow, and a transatlantic trade in which ploughs travelled one way and cream separators the other.

The Hornsby butterfly

Richard Hornsby & Sons Ltd of Grantham made a one-way reversible, or "butterfly," plough around 1900, now MERL object 62/524. It has two mouldboards on a swivelling beam: one in the ground, the other in the air. At the end of the furrow the ploughman released a catch and the beam turned over, so the next bout could be cut beside the last. The firm began as Seaman and Hornsby, at Spittlegate Ironworks, in 1815. By the end of the nineteenth century it had 1,500 employees on a 17-acre site.

The Lister-Cockshutt deal

The Lister-Cockshutt No. 6, MERL object 79/68, is a two-furrow tractor plough made in 1936 by the Cockshutt Plow Company of Brantford, Ontario, and imported by R. A. Lister & Co. of Dursley. The arrangement was reciprocal: Lister imported Cockshutt ploughs, and Cockshutt imported Lister cream separators. This example, originally red, was used at Low Farm, Hemingfield, Barnsley, and bought at auction when the farm was sold on 30 May 1979. The official MERL label says the mass-produced Fordson was "more compact and efficient than steam ploughing equipment, and faster than horse ploughing," and "cheaper than either of these options," on the same principle as the Ford Model T.

Sources, checked 17 November 2026: The MERL, Hornsby one-way or butterfly plough, object 62/524; The MERL, Lister-Cockshutt No. 6, object 79/68. This is not a MERL publication. ploughs.farmyard.im is part of the ReallyByte network, run by REALLYBYTE, based in the Isle of Man. ReallyByte — Fun. Educational. Useless.