



Built by John Fowler & Co of Leeds to the order of the late Frank H. Cooke of Town End Manor, Spalding, this was the largest and most powerful steam ploughing set in the British Isles. The set comprised two engines, a 4-furrow anti-balance deep plough, a 7-furrow anti-balance top soil plough, a 13-tyne cultivator, a living van for six men and a water cart. Each engine weighed 22 tons, Type

ZMS-20, 200BMP Compound Super-heater, and were fitted with 600 yards of 36-strand steel wire rope. The working capacity of the set in 10 hours was: 31 acres ploughed 18/20in deep with subsoilers, or 37 acres at 9/10in deep, or 75 acres 18/20in deep cultivating. (Photograph and notes supplied by Frank H. Cooke's grandson, N. S. Cooke).

## Ploughing in the Fens

The three tractors ploughing below are part of a fleet of six Caterpillars (five D2s and one D4) owned by Mr R. B. Donnison of Wykes Farm, Donington. The D2s are all well over 25 years old, and the D4 over 10 years old. The former were bought second-hand in the 1950s and have been at work on the farm ever since. They are used for all ploughing cultivating and general tillage work, and also for corn drilling. The reliability, pulling power and low ground bearing pressure of these tractors made them favourites with Lincolnshire farmers from the late 1930s to the 1950s. There are still a good many scattered around the Fens today, often being brought out when all else fails.

None of the D2s have had any major work done on them since purchase. All service work and general maintenance is done in the farm workshop. After a reconditioning, one of the D2s managed over 14,000 hours of work without having a spanner put to it, except to renew the tracks. One of Mr Donnison's drivers, Sydney Clark, has been driving D2s since he was 17 and has just completed 33 years on them. He has a very high regard for them, but surely it cannot be long before these tractors disappear from our farms, due to old age or incurable faults. What will replace them? (Notes and photograph supplied by M. R. Hodge).

