**Essays on Mount Crosby - The Plough**

In the garden at the front of the school there is a hand plough that was long used and longer buried at Edward Powell's properly at Kholo. It was rescued, that is to say dug up and restored, by Rob Swenson who took it to the pumping station and made a proper "foreigner" of it (a "foreigner" being a job not part of your normal business). One may be tempted to ask, "Whose job is it to restore old ploughs anyway?" for which the answer is: it is the job of those who appreciate them. Thank you Rob.

There's much to appreciate about an old plough and, considering how ubiquitous they were, there are relatively few visible to those who have come after the farming years. When we, who are unaccustomed to the plough, look at it, we see too much of the metal and too little of the straining horse, the farmer and the folding earth. Next time you see it, try to imagine it being used with effort and balance (a skill in itself I am sure you will agree).

Of its metal, look more carefully at the plough and see the simplicity of its design, millennia in the making. See how the plough is not a single piece of metal, but the point of the plough (called the share) is a separate hard piece of chilled-steel capable of cutting for years without blunting, and the greater part of the plough is the mouldboard whose job it is to smoothly turn the soil away from the share. The idea is that the plough reaches down to nutrients held below the surface and turns them to the top. It also breaks the soil and buries the remnants of last year's crop so that it will decompose and improve the soil.

Although Mount Crosby is not all good soil, those happy settlers that selected on the tertiary alluviums near the river made use of the plough to grow crops like cotton, coffee, maize and sorghum, among others. They became the permanent residents, and through them we developed.

Our plough at the school is an heirloom, passed from Edward Powell through Rob Swenson to all of us, just as the bush-whack and bog-hoe so memorably described by Thoreau:

*The weapons with which we gained our most important victories, which should be handed down as heirlooms from father to son, are not the sword and the lance, but the bush-whack, the turf cutter, the spade, and the bog-hoe, rusted with the blood of many a meadow, and begrimed with the dust of many a hard-fought field.*

Col Hester