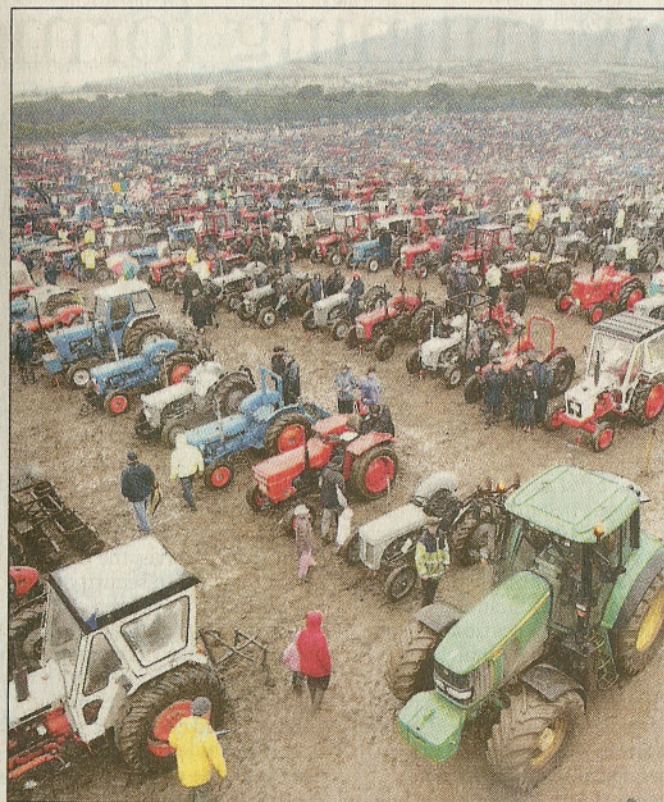


clique but there really is something for everyone."

Clockwise from top: The Pirates of Northants hit the street as vikings yesterday at the Spraoi 2007 Street Festival, which took place in Waterford over the weekend; Dean Herane (13), one of the Spraoi drummers, performing yesterday; The Daredevil Chickens - Anne Goldmann and John Taylor - perform on a double slack rope. Photographs: PJ Browne; Dylan Vaughan

TRACTOR RECORD: bid to run vintage machines at same time a roaring success



Tractors line up for the world record attempt on the Cooley Peninsula, Co Louth, yesterday. Photograph: Matt Kavanagh

Deluge fails to deter vintage festival fans

KILIAN DOYLE

They came in their thousands, converging on the Cooley Vintage Festival in a rain-sodden Co Louth with dreams of glory on their minds.

Theirs was a mission to retake the world record for running vintage tractors simultaneously.

The festival, which has been attracting farm machinery enthusiasts to the beautiful verdant tongue of land that is the Cooley Peninsula since 1988, took its first world record in 1995 for having 322 pre-1963 Ferguson tractors working in a field at once.

This year, tractors came from every county in Ireland, as well as 32 countries around the world, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

To qualify for the world records, all tractors have to be

over 30 years old, dragging an implement such as a plough or harrow, and running for 15 minutes.

After days of manoeuvring, nearly 5,000 machines were finally in place yesterday afternoon, and the record bid kicked off with a bone juddering roar. Fifteen minutes later the target wasn't just beaten, it was ploughed up and spat out like last year's spuds.

A total of 4,572 tractors, from a 1903 Ivel to a plethora of 1977 Massey Fergusons, seized the record with ease - tearing up and down three mucky fields in a spectacular procession of machinery.

While dramatic from a slightly elevated vantage point on one of the few remaining bits of grass left in this 200 acre corner of Louth, it must have looked incredible from above, like a second World War tank battle or

a scene from *Lord of the Rings*. That's assuming, of course, it could have been seen through an emissions cloud the size of Luxembourg; and then there was the noise, it was loud enough to rattle teeth.

Event co-ordinator Hugh Hardy described the scene as "biblical". A quick perusal of the Bible by *The Irish Times* revealed no mention of John Deere or Massey Ferguson. But we'll let it lie. We know what he means.

What was biblical, however, was the scale of the attendant deluge. The skies opened and drenched all below, turning the stubby fields of Co Louth into welly-sucking mudbaths. But tractor fans are hardy folk.

A bit of rain wasn't going to put 25,000 off. Heads were put in bin bags, shoes were wrapped in baling plastic and the show went on.

with a Mass in Keadue church where Cardinal Cahal Daly, a frequent visitor to the festival, criticised the media's preoccupation with "the good life" and its portrayal of religion as "old fashioned, out of date".

The cardinal, whose father was a native of Keadue, said today's newspapers celebrated a lifestyle of "exotic holidays, sun-drenched beaches, abundant food and fine wines". He said that anything connected with religion, especially the Catholic faith, was portrayed as "belonging to a bygone age, conflicting with science, and progress".

One of the festival highlights, the annual door dancing competition, will take place on the village street today, but the main event will be the international harp competition which has attracted harpers from around the globe.

Yesterday's official opening ceremony was preceded by a parade traditionally led by "the bard". This year, O'Carolan was represented by a German woman, Christina Becker from near Düsseldorf, who led the marching bands and floats through the village.

O'Carolan would have approved of the festive atmosphere. Famous for his love of Irish whiskey, he wrote a tune in honour of his favourite tipple.

Legend has it that, as he was dying, he called for one last drop remarking, "the drink and I have been friends for so long, it would be a pity for me to leave without one last kiss".

Young pony riders keeping