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FOURPEN

at farms.

(from the Arthur Swan award.) the importance of flexibility

How village enjoyed Xmas fertility rites

IN THE DAYS prior to Kaiser Bill's Teutonic hordes sweeping across Europe, some of the inhabitants of the sleepy little village of Branston used to be involved with Macedonian fertility rites at Christmas.

But before eyebrows rise and protesting pens scratch paper, it should be explained that this was all quite decent and the villagers were only taking part in an ancient Plough play, whose origin it is believed comes from Macedonian fertility rites, depicting the changing of the seasons.

Mr. B. Dawson, music teacher at Branston Church of England School, said he had reason to believe this was true because there were

still plays with the same theme as Branston's — that of some-one being killed and then brought back to life again — in Macedonia.

The reason why this long lost art form should suddenly be brought to the public's eye again is that three men, Mr. Dawson one of them, did a great deal of research into the play. The result was that pupils of Branston Church of England Primary School performed it to entertain the elderly villagers this week.

It all started at the Lincolnshire Show this year, when Mr. P. Arrowsmith found reference to a similar play that used to be performed at Brattleby, while he was helping on the health stand.

DIGGING STARTED

Then the digging started and, Mr. Dawson said, they went to libraries and talked to people, trying to find any other local villages that has such a play.

"About a month later we discovered that Branston used to have a plough play, and when we spoke to a Mrs. Rudkin, of Willerton, she said she had a copy written by an old Branston resident, Fred Jacklin, in 1953," said Mr. Dawson.

But he said no trace could be found of Mr. Jacklin. They presumed him dead as he had been 70 at the time of writing.

Inquiries were still far from complete, however. They then set about finding the oldest resident in Branston, who was born in the village. This turned out to be 84-years-old Jack Redford, of 62 Hillside Estate. Here they struck lucky, for not only did Mr. Redford remember the plays, he, his brothers and his father used to perform in them.

FILLED IN

Mr. Redford said he filled in missing details and cor-

rected some facts in Mr. Jacklin's version of the play. Then the idea was born to let schoolchildren present it for the elderly.

The play has seven characters, a king, lady, ribboner, fool, sergeant, old dame and a doctor, and the plot is that the sergeant kills the king and the doctor brings him back to life again.

In the early 1900's, the play was performed with more mercenary motives. Mr. Redford said they used to go to local farms in Branston and neighbouring villages, and the occupants used to pay them for performing or invite them in for something to eat and drink or perhaps join a party.

The play was performed until Plough Monday, which came shortly after New Year, and on Plough Monday the Branston Feast would start — this is also now extinct.

OLD SONGS

Mr. Redford, who used to play the part of the lady, said the last time the play was performed was in 1913. Mr. Dawson agrees with this. He says the men went away to war and it was never revived on their return.

To help Mr. Dawson prepare the music for the play, Mr. Redford sang some of the old songs and tunes into a tape recorder.

Although he enjoyed seeing it revived this once and thought the children made an excellent job of it, he said that at 85 he has no intention of making it an annual event.

So if Branston wants to keep this part of its history alive, someone else will have to show enthusiasm as well, unless this small piece of the past, which records show to date back to at least 1590, is to slip back into obscurity.

Plough Monday Play from Branston near Lincoln

By L. B. and M. W. BARLEY

A number of the Lincolnshire folk plays once performed on Plough Monday have already been printed.¹ This play from Branston seems worth adding to the number. It was taken down in 1953 by one of the writers, from Fred Jacklin of Branston. Mr. Jacklin, who was then 77 remembered every line without difficulty. He had last taken part before 1913; the photograph taken about 1900 which he has preserved and which is here reproduced, shows him as the Doctor. The team had already ceased to carry round a plough when he joined it in about 1895. Rehearsals were held in the stables of Jubilee House, Branston, from early December; performances began a fortnight before Christmas and went on until Plough Monday. As usual, special nights were reserved for performances at large houses in the district. On such occasions it usually fell to the abstainers to see the rest of the party home. As many as eight or ten performances were given on some evenings; takings, sometimes amounting to as much as £7 a night, were shared out.

The preservation of a photograph gives this team particular interest. The Fool's costume is one of the few recorded instances of the use of cut-outs of farm animals, implements and the like; the Ribboner's costume is also particularly noteworthy. King George has a sort of helmet and fierce horsehair moustaches. Just as the costumes seem to preserve unchanged an old tradition, so the text has suffered little corruption. The wooing of the Lady by the Ribboner is the longest and best of the versions collected in recent years; it is introduced by Tom Fool with a song whose words are identical with a version recorded from Swinderby in 1842.² The song in which Tom Fool agrees at the end to marry the Lady is unique, and preserves an 18th or early 19th century flavour. The play thus lost little or nothing in the 19th century, and it is hoped that its publication will encourage others to persist in the search for disappearing texts.

It should be noted that Mr. Jacklin always referred to the players as Morris Dancers. What that signifies is not clear, but it is an instance of the kind of detail that should always be noted, and which may be elucidated by further recording and research.

The play is introduced by Tom Fool at the door:

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen all. Hope you wont be offended at me being so bold as to make you a call. I hope you wont be surprised at these few words I've got to say. For theres many more pretty boys and girls to come in this way. Okum, Spokum France and Spain, in come our Sergeant all the same.

Sergeant : In come I, recruiting sergeant, I've arrived here just now with orders from the King, to enlist all that follow horse, cart or plough. Tinkers, tailors, pedlars nailers all at my advance, the more I hear the fiddle play, the better I can dance.

Fool : I'm a fool come to see you dance.

Sergeant : Pray, father, if you dance sing or say I'll soon march away.

Fool : Sings (Free version of Trad. Air "God rest ye merry, gentlemen").

All good people give attention and listen to my song;
I'll tell you of a nice young man before the day is long.
He's almost broken-hearted, the truth I do declare,
His love has been so tiresome, she's drawn him in a snare.

Ribboner : Behold you now, I've lost my mate
My drooping wings, hangs down my fate
Pity my condition, it's all along of a false
young maid
Whose led me in despair.

Fool : Cheer up, cheer up, young man, don't die in
despair,

For in a very short time, our lady will be here.

Lady sings : In comes the lady bright and gay
(as above) Misfortune and sweet charms
So scornful I've been drawn away
Out of my true love's arms.
He swears if I don't wed with him
As you shall understand
He'll list for all a soldier
And go to some foreign land.

Sergeant sings: Come all you boys thats bound for listing
You shall have all kinds of liquer
And likewise kiss the pretty maid
Ten bright guineas shall be your bounty
If along with me you'll go
Your hat shall be all decked with ribbons
Likewise cut the gallant show.

London History Museum Vol 11 P36

- Ribboner : Now kind sir, I'll take your offer
Time along will quickly pass
Dash my rags, if I grieve any longer
For this proud and saucy lass.
- Lady sings : Since my love enlisted and joined the volun-
teers
I neither mean to sigh for him
I'll have him for to know
I'll get another sweetheart
And with him I'll go.
- Sergeant : No madam, I desire to know if I am the man
The pleasing of your fancy, I'll do the best I
can
I'll give you gold and silver
All brought from India's shore
And I'll forever love you
Pray what can I do more ?
- Lady sings : What care I for your gold or silver
What care I for your house and land
What care I for your rings and diamonds
All I want is a handsome man.
- Fool : Takes lady by the arm and dances :—
A handsome man will not maintain you
For his beauty will decay
The finest flower which grows in the summer
In the winter fades away.
- Ribboner : Now madam, I desire to know whether I shall
be the man
The pleasing of your fancy I'll do the best I can
I'll bring you silks and satins all brought
from India's shore
And I'll forever love thee, pray what can I do
more ?
- Lady : Pooh, pooh, young man. You can't be of
your right mind
Give me the man with the ragged trousers
Who takes a girl in a sly corner.
- Fool : Ah ! Ah ! Now you see this fair lady took her
chance
Please strike up the music and we'll have a
dance.
-
- Enter King : In come I, King George, noble champion bold
With my bright sword in hand.
I've won 10,000 pounds in gold
I fought the fiery dragon

And brought him to a slaughter
And by these violent means and schemes
I gained the King's eldest daughter.
I'll turn myself round to see if any man dare
face me.
I'll hash him and dash him, the smallest of
flies
And send him to Jamaica to make mince pies

Sergeant to King :

Hold hard Jack, don't be too hot
Thou, little knows that thou has got
A man to entertain thee of thy pride.

King :

You ! Entertain me of my pride ?

Sergeant :

And lay the anchor by thy side
For my head is made of iron
My body is guarded with steel
My legs and arms are made of the best beaten
brass
And no man can make me feel.

King :

Your head is not made of iron
And your body is not made of steel
Your arms and legs are not made of the best
beaten brass
And I can make you feel.

Sergeant :

Stand out, stand out, you proud and coxey
coon
I'll make thy buttons fly
I'll fill they body full of hills and holes
And by my hand and sword thou shalt die.

Fool :

Stir up the fire and shine the light
And see the gallant act tonight.
The clock has struck, and the time has come
For this battle to go on
If you don't believe what I've got to say
Please move your chairs and move away.

Sergeant to the King :

Draw out thy sword in haste
For thy ribs I will abase
Thou silly ass, thou feeds in grass
Thou knows thou art in danger
Thou lives in hope to guard thy coat
And keep thy body from all danger.

(Serg. here pricks the King with the sword and down he goes).

Sergeant : The King of Egypt is dead and gone
 No more of him you'll see
 His body's dead and his soul has fled
 What will become of me ?
 He bore me out and challenged me out to fight
 And this I don't deny
 I only stripped one button off his coat,
 And made his body die.

Fool : Dead, Dead to be sure
 Five pounds for a doctor
 This dead man to cure.

Sergeant : Ten pounds for him to stay away.

Fool : Fifteen pounds, we must have him.
 Doctor, Doctor.

Doctor : In come I the doctor.

Fool : You're the doctor ?

Doctor : Yes sir, I am the doctor.

Fool : How came you to be a doctor ?

Doctor : I travelled for it.

Fool : Where did you travel ?

Doctor : England, Ireland, France and Spain
 Over the hills and back again
 From fireside to bedside
 From bedside to my old grandmother's corner
 cupboard
 Where I had many a piece of cold pudding
 Made me such a fine man.

Fool : Fine man like me doctor, what pains can you
 cure ?

Doctor : All kinds of pain.

Fool : What is all kinds of pain ?

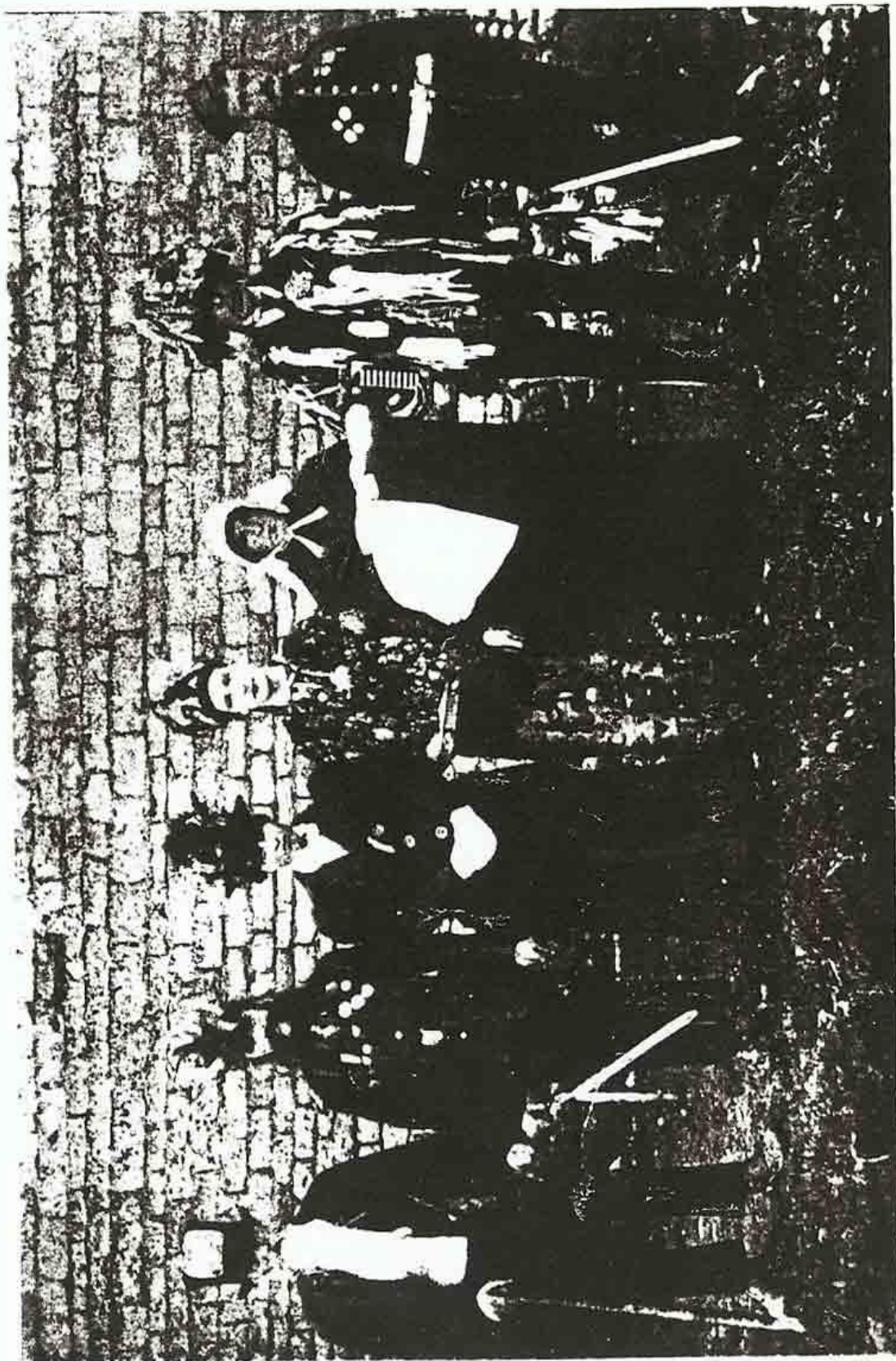
Doctor : The itch, the pitch, the palsy gout
 Pains within and pains without
 Set a tooth, draw a leg, and cure the pains
 Within the head.
 If this man has nineteen pains in his head, Sir
 I can draw twenty one out.

Fool : You must be a clever doctor
 You had better try your skill

Doctor : Thank you Sir, and by your leave, and so I
 will.
 Hold my horse bay, while I feel of the man's
 pulse.

Fool : Is that a man's pulse ?

Doctor : Yes sir, the strongest part of a working man
 Is backwards in the head.



THE BRANSTON "MORRIS DANCERS," c.1900 : l. to r. DOCTOR, KING GEORGE, LADY, FOOL,
DAME JANE, RIBBONER and SERGEANT

- Fool : I expect you know best doctor
Is this man dead? (pointing to the King).
- Doctor : No, he is not dead, he's in a trance
He's been trying a new experiment,
He's been living nineteen days out of a
fortnight
By mistake he has swallowed our donkey and
cart
And choked himself with a pillow, poor fellow
I'll give him a drop out of my bottle
And team it gently down his throttle.
It will heal his wounds, and cool his blood
And I hope it will do his soul some good.
This man can dance if you can sing
So arise, young man and lets begin.
- Fool : Hey, Hey, What's the dancing and jigging
about ?
Here's the tight lad to dance
I can dance half an hour on a barley chaff
riddle
Neither break nor bend or spill.
I'll ask you all to me and my wife's wedding.
For what you like best, you must bring on with
you
I know what me and my lady likes
And what we likes best we shall have.
- Doctor : What's that? Ragden (What's that? Why
it might be Latin!)
- Fool : Go and look, greasey chops
I've always you to please
A longtailed cabbage
A pickled sumerit
A liver and lights of a cobblers laps
And half a gallon of butter milk to relish it
down.
- Doctor : We shall have a feed.
- Fool : Thank you sir.
- Old Dame Jane :
In comes I old Dame Jane
Head and neck as long as a crane
Dib, dab, over the meadow
Once I was a blooming young maid
Now I am a downed old widow
I travel from door to door
Since all my joy was asked
Since you called me what you did

Tommy, take your bastard. (Here "child"
was inserted if in respectable company).

Fool : Bastard Jinney. It's not like me
and none of mine.

Dame : It's nose, eyes and chin as much like you
As ever it can grin.

Fool : Who sent you here with it Jinney ?

Dame : The overseer of the parish, who said I was
bring it to the biggest fool I could find,
So I thought I'd bring it to you.

Fool : You had better go swear it to the parish pump.

Dame : That's all I've got to thank you for.

Fool sings : Now madam, as I crossed over yon dell
One morning very soon
Dressed in my best apparell
Likewise my clouded shoes
To thee I come a wooing
To thee my buxom Nell
If thou loves me as I love you
Thou lovest a person well.

Dame : If you love me, tell me true

Fool : Yes ! And to my sorrow.

Dame : When shall be our wedding day ?

Fool : To my love, tomorrow.

All sing : And we'll be wed in wedlock dear
So brave old Nelly and I.
Good master and good mistress
As you sit round your fire
Remember us poor plough boys
Who ploughs the mud and mire.
The mire it is so very deep
And the water runs so clear
We thank you for a Christmas box
And a pitcher of your best beer.

Dame : Hey, Hey and a bit of your pork pie.

Fool : Yar allust hungry !

Dame : And yar allust dry.

Fool : That's it Jinney, scrap about.

All sing : Here's to the master of this house
The mistress also
Likewise the little children
That round the table go
We hope they'll never come to want
While nations do provide
A happy home and plentiness
And a tender fireside.

verse II

We are not the London actors
That acts the London part
We are the Branston Ploughboys
We are not the London actors
We've told you so before
And we've done it as well as we can, me boys
No man can do no more.
(Pass round tambourine and collect beer
and pork pie).

verse III

Good master and good mistress
You see our fool has gone
We make it in our business
To follow him along
We thank you for your civility
And what you've given us here
And we wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year.

BRANSTON HOME GUARD SOCIAL CLUB

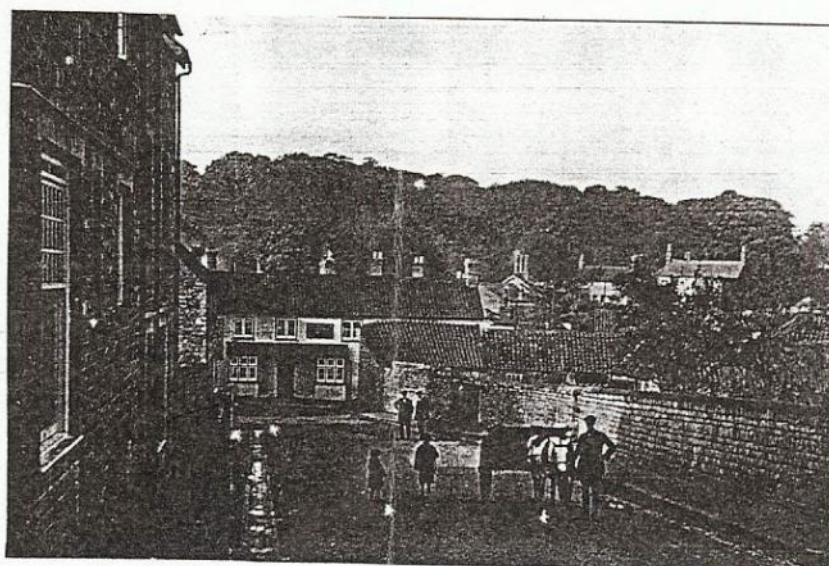
PRESENTS

STUFFED CHINE NIGHT

SATURDAY JANUARY 8th 2000

in celebration of

BRANSTON FEAST WEEK



BRANSTON FEAST WEEK

ORIGINS OF PLOUGH MONDAY

Plough Monday customs have their origins in the proclamation of Julius Caesar, recorded by Josephus, that all horses and oxen used for ploughing throughout the Roman Empire, should be given a weeks holiday, in January.

This gave the ploughmen leisure, which they employed in rude entertainment, and feasting and evidently in the middle ages they attempted to dramatise the Epiphany.

Mr. Walker (Washingborough) recalls that half a century ago, the Washingborough plough boys, having gathered funds from their visits the the "Big Houses", round about, entertained the old people of the village during feast week.

He also says his father, an old soldier, gave the Branston plough boys an old tunic and bearskin for the adornment of the Soldier.

Lincolnshire Echo
January 21 1931

PLOUGH MONDAY CUSTOMS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

GROTESQUE MUMMERY THAT SURVIVED TILL RECENT YEARS

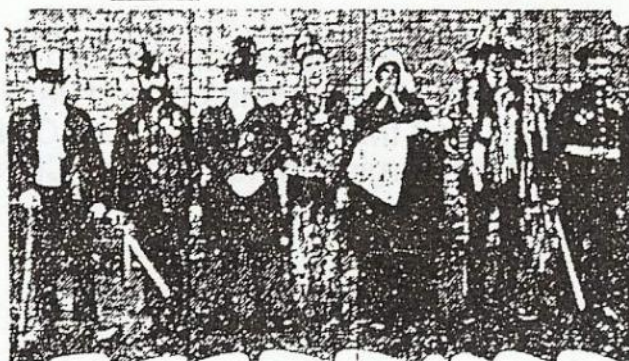
Branston Villager's Memories

The first Monday after Epiphany (January 6th) was from time immemorial observed in various parts of the country as "Plough Monday", and the custom survived generally in Lincolnshire until a few years ago. Indeed it is probable that in some villages to-day there have been some attempts to call it to memory, and a few groups of small boys may have been seen with smeared faces and grotesque clothes doing some mummary from door to door in an effort to collect pennies. But in olden days there was quite elaborate play-acting with definite characters and parts, the origin of which is lost in obscurity.

Plough Monday was probably of heathen origin. The procedure was to drag a decorated plough around the parish, the processionists soliciting contributions for subsequent jollification. This was itself a survival from the times when the ploughs were taken to the priests to invoke a blessing which would avert the displeasure of the gods of the fields.

Grotesque Play.

With Plough Monday, there came, at some subsequent period, to be associated the grotesque and nonsensical play which survived in quite a number of Lincolnshire villages until quite recent years. Mr. John Drayton, the oldest inhabitant of Branston, who will be 95 years of age this year (1931), has a clear recollection of the old Plough Mondays followed by Branston Feast which was maintained until Thursday, followed by that at Heighington on Friday. Mr. F. Poucher, of Branston, can recite all the parts of the old play, which probably represents an old mystery play with many corruption's and rustic additions.



Plough Menday Players at Branston thirty years ago.

The picture is a photograph taken in Branston in 1901, of those who then took part in the play. From left to right they are: The Doctor (Mr. F. Jacklin), The King (Mr. J. Green), The Lady (Mr. Joe Redford who was killed at the battle of Loos), The Fool (Mr. John Fuller), Dame Jane (Mr. Joe Gilbert), Musician (Mr. J. Taylor), Soldier (Mr. Tom Lindle).

Quaint Songs.

In some versions of this play Beelzebub has a prominent part, while it is the Soldier and not the Musician who is covered with ribbons. The Branston players were so much in request to give their quaint performance at the big houses in the neighbourhood as an after-dinner entertainment that their "season" extended over nearly a month from Christmas until towards the end of January.

They commenced by singing outside the house something like this;

Good master and good mistress
As you sit by the fire
Remember the poor ploughboys
Who travel through muck and mire.
The mire is so deep we travel far and near
To wish you a happy and prosperous New Year.

Then the fool knocked at the door and asked permission to show their play:-

In comes Tom Fool
The biggest fool you've ever seen
There's five more little boys out here
By your consent they shall come in.

The soldier entered and sang a song, followed by a man dressed fantastically as a woman:

In comes I old Dame Jane
With neck so long as a crane
Long have I sought thee, now I have found thee
Tommy, bring the baby in

Miracle Play.

It is thought by some that, because of the season in which this rustic play was performed it represents some garbled version of a miracle play of the Epiphany, and that the Woman and Child were originally representations of the Virgin Mother and the Christ Child.

This idea is strengthened by the presence in the group of a King. The Doctor may have been another of the magi, or St. Joseph, while the soldier may have been one of Herod's soldiers who sought the Child to kill it.

If this theory is correct the story had long become hopelessly travestied, for the play proceeded on lines of ridiculous farce. It would be worthwhile, perhaps to take down the complete words and airs of the songs from some old people who can still remember them before all recollection of this ancient play disappears.

Plough Masters.

In the first volume of "Lincolnshire Notes and Queries", 1889 there is a note concerning references to the office of "Plowmaster" in the churchwardens book at Waddington. Under date 1642 the appointment of four persons as Plowmeisters "is noted".

It appears that these plough masters had in their hands certain monies called plough money, which they undertook to produce on plough day- The first Monday after Twelfth Day.

Mr Drayton of Branston remembers an old verse which was recited on these occasions:-

God Speed the Plough
Esteemed by Kings of old.
Mariners prize it more than gems of gold.
With colter and share with beams conjoined
Caused faithful Ruth to show her pious mind.

Then let brave boys esteem the plough
With bread and all come from the barley mow
Prime porter and strong ale you may here drink
I'm free to wait and hope to take your chink.

Which seems such nonsense, that one wonders whether it originated during bibulous conviviality, or whether it represents traditional misunderstanding of verse which once had some meaning.

Lincolnshire Echo
January 12 1931

An Old Branston Custom

Club Supper in Feast Week

In the Waggon and Horses Inn, Branston, last night some 50 members and guests of the Friend in Need Pig Club, sat down to a good old English supper, served by Mr. E Young of Branston.

It had been the custom for some years to hold this very popular function on Wednesday in Branston Feast Week.

The supper was followed by a social. Mr E. Linton, presiding in the absence of his father, Mr. John Linton of Heighington.

Songs and other entertainment were provided by Mr. John Redford, Mr. Almond (Lincoln), Mr. Brum Price, and Mr. Dave Wood (Lincoln).

Mr. W. Martin gave the report on the years workings, stating that the year had been a good one. Losses represented a total sum of £7 13s 0d. There was a balance in hand of £127-13s and about 40 members.

The Chairman congratulated the members on their choice of Officials.

Mr. H. Dowman entertained by request, with a humorous item, "Slap dab with his white wash brush". Many good old songs were sung. Mr T. Speed senr., giving "Grandfathers Clock", Mr. H. Pearson "Hearts of Oak", Mr. D. Marshall (Late of Branston) "Memories return", and Mr. C. Pearson "An old Favourite". The Company sang "The Farmers Boy". Mr. H. Pearson, on behalf of the members, thanked the Chairman, the Host, and the Hostess, (Mr and Mrs P. Baldwin), the artists, and Mr. Young, for their assistance, in making the whole event one of the best held for many years by this, Branston premier club.



PLOUGH PLAYS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Plough Plays exist throughout the East Midlands and although there are regional differences in the plays, the outline of the story and the chief characters are the same. Both male and female characters are played by men or boys.

THE PLOT

A *Recruiting Sergeant* is calling up the *Farmer's Man*. *His Lady* is not pleased and turns her attentions towards the *Fool*. They agree to be married. *Dame Jane* appears carrying a baby. She claims that the *Fool* is the father. *Beelezebub* enters and knocks down *Dame Jane* dead. A *Doctor* is called, who raises *Dame Jane* to life.

The Plays are delivered in a mixture of song, verse and prose, with plentiful use of ad libs. There is sometimes dancing.

HOW OLD ARE THEY?

This is impossible to answer. There is little written evidence. Unlike the aristocracy and important people, rural workers rarely kept diaries or wrote books and letters which have survived. We have only a few rather disconnected facts which leave us with a very patchy picture.

1. The Monday following 6th January, Plough Monday, is an important date in the rural calendar and used to be a public holiday.
2. Farm labourers were once responsible for the upkeep of the Plough Light (or similar) in Churches. 15th and 16th Century records show that money or fuel was collected and distributed about this time.
3. Feasting on Plough Monday is recorded from early times.
4. There have been mid-winter rituals or performances depicting death and resurrection (the rebirth of the earth?) since pagan times.



The Branston Plough Play Team in the late 19th Century.

WHO PERFORMED THEM?

Plough lads: and in particular, in some areas, horse handlers.

WHERE?

The plays were rehearsed and costumes repaired and taken around the houses of local land owners in the immediate region (probably not more than a 4 or 5 mile radius). The players would be rewarded with money and/or refreshment.

WHEN?

Sometimes only on Plough Monday. Sometimes on every day between Christmas Eve and Plough Monday.

WHY?

It is certain that Plough Lads were not mindful of carrying on an ancient tradition — in the same way as these days we do not question *why* we eat pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. Consider, however, that at this time of the year there was often little work on the land. In some cases this meant no employment. Farm hands welcomed the opportunity of diversion with free food and drink. It was an accepted form of charity from both giver and receiver. The words 'alms' and 'begging' were never used.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Plough Plays are also called Plough Jags, Plough Stots, Plough Boys, Plough Jacks, Morris Dancers and Plough Bullocks. There is no standard spelling for any of these names.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM?

The tradition died out rapidly in the second half of the 19th Century and the early 20th Century. The break up of teams or casts could be due to several things — work, movement away from villages to cities, increased mechanisation on farms, greater provision for the hungry and needy.

As farm teams were less likely to stay together, the handful of plays which survived the wars were likely to be kept going by a core of people from one family.

WHO PERFORMS THEM NOW?

To the writer's knowledge there is only one instance of a regular performance by members of a family, plus their friends, from an agricultural background. They will perform wherever and whenever they are invited (usually around Plough Monday) and they collect for a local charity.

Other plays are revivals performed by enthusiasts, often folk song clubs or folk dance teams. They perform around 6th January in pubs and clubs, collecting for a local charity.

Other revivals are put on by community groups, schools and youth groups often for village anniversaries, fairs or special events. There were several revivals at the time of the present Queen's Coronation. They will usually be one-off performances and will happen at any time in the year — whenever the celebration may be.

It is hoped that people in Lincolnshire will continue this unique tradition.

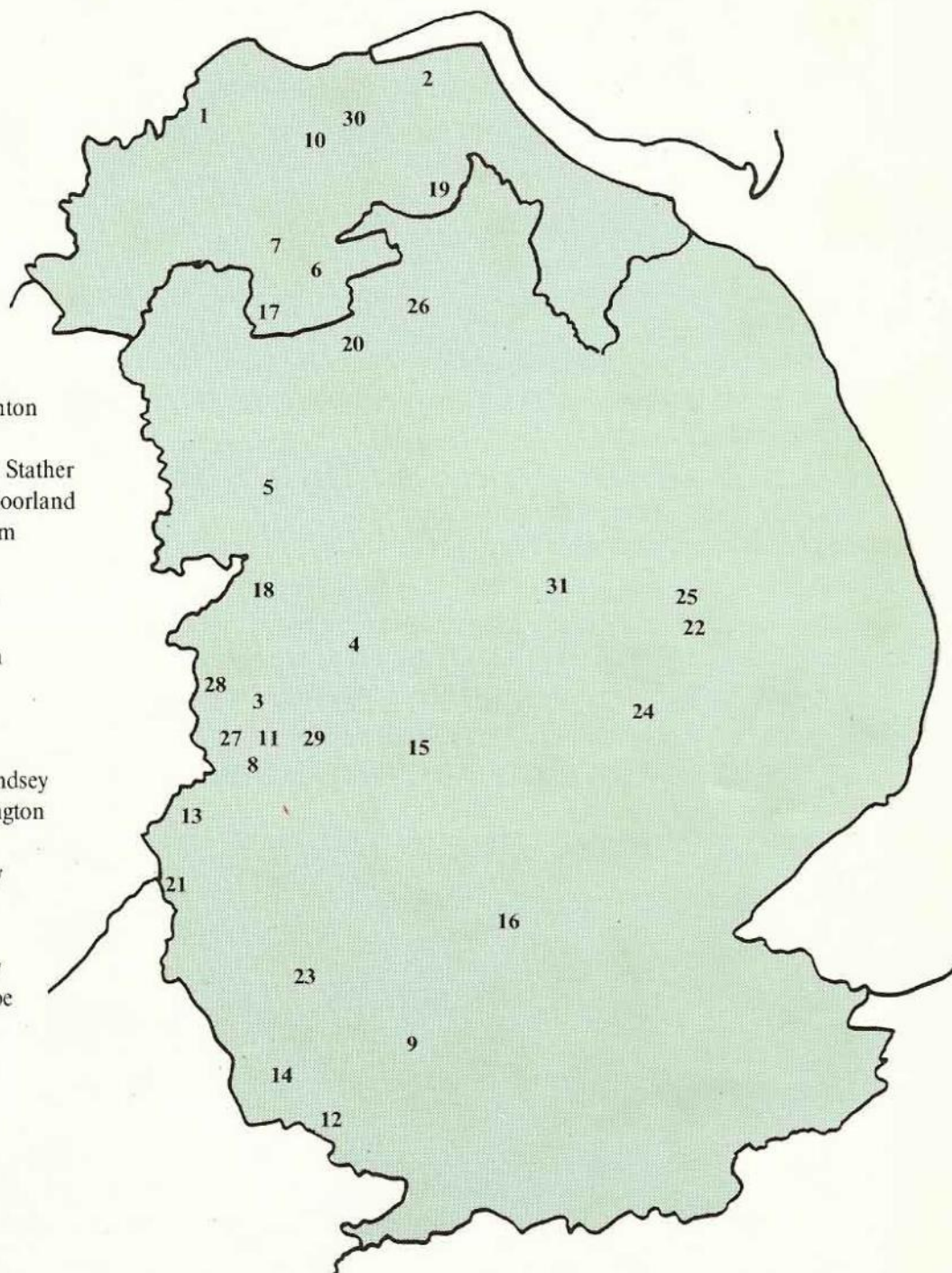


*The Stragglethorpe Plough Boys in 1937.
Two of the Bagworth family, pictured here, are still performing the play.*

This map shows some villages in Lincolnshire where there are known texts of Plough Plays in existence. These texts may be found at the Lincolnshire Archives Unit, at the Museum of Lincolnshire Life or in the possession of individuals or Folklore specialists.

Property of Branston History Group

- 1 Alkborough
- 2 Barrow
- 3 Bassingham
- 4 Branston
- 5 Brattleby
- 6 Brigg
- 7 Broughton
- 8 Brant Broughton
- 9 Bulby
- 10 Burton upon Stather
- 11 Carlton le Moorland
- 12 Castle Bytham
- 13 Claypole
- 14 Colsterworth
- 15 Digby
- 16 Helpingham
- 17 Hibaldstow
- 18 Jerusalem
- 19 Kirmington
- 20 Kirton in Lindsey
- 21 Long Bennington
- 22 Lusby
- 23 Old Somerby
- 24 Revesby
- 25 Somersby
- 26 South Kelsey
- 27 Stragglethorpe
- 28 Swinderby
- 29 Wellingore
- 30 Winterton
- 31 Wispington



This information has been compiled by the Lincolnshire Folk Development Project with invaluable assistance from Brian Dawson and grateful thanks to Andrew Horn and the Bagworth family for the photographs.

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Branston Plough Play or Morris Dance.

FOOL (at door of farmhouse):

Good evening, Ladies, Gentlemen all. Hope you won't be offended at me being so bold as to wake you a call. I hope you won't be surprised at these few words I've got to say. For there's many more pretty boys and girls to come in this way. Some can dance and some can sing - by your consent they shall come in. Okum, Spokum, France and Spain, in comes our Sergeant all the same.

SERGEANT:

In comes I, recruiting sergeant; I've arrived here just now with orders from the King to enlist all that follows horse, cart or plough. Likewise tinkers, tailors, pedlars, nailers, all at my advance - the more I hear the fiddle, play, the better I can dance.

FOOL:

I'm a fool to see you dance.

SERGEANT:

Pray, father, if you dance, sing or say, I'll soon march away.

FOOL (sings):

All good people give attention and listen to my song;
I'll tell you of a nice young man before the time is long;
He's almost broken hearted, the truth I do declare;
His love has been so tiresome, she's drawn him in a snare.

RIBBONER:

Behold you now, I've lost my mate,
My drooping wings, hangs down my fate;
Pity my condition, its all along of a false young maid
Who's led me in despair.

FOOL:

Cheer up, cheer up young man, don't die in despair,
For in a very short time our lady will be here.

LADY (sings):

In comes the lady bright and gay
Misfortune and sweet charms
So scornful I've been drawn away
Out of my true love's arms;
He swears if I don't wed with him,
As you shall understand
He'll list for all a soldier
And go to some foreign land.

SERGEANT (sings):

Come all you boys that's bound for listing,
Listing do not be afraid;
You shall have all kinds of liquor
And likewise kiss the pretty maid;
Ten bright guineas shall be your bounty
If along with me you'll go;
Your hat shall be all decked with ribbons
Likewise out the gallant show.

RIBBONER: (sings)

Now kind sir, I'll take your offer
Time along will quickly pass.
Dash my rags, if I grieve any longer
For this proud and saucy lass.

LADY (sings);

Since my love enlisted, and joined the volunteers,
I neither mean to sigh for him, nor for him shed a tear;
I do not mean to cry for him, I'll have him for to know,
I'll get another sweetheart, and with him I will go.

SERGEANT: (sings)

Now madam I desire to know if I should be the man,
The pleasing of your fancy - I'll do the best I can.
I'll give you gold and silver, all brought from India's shore,
And I'll for ever love you, pray what can I do more?

LADY (sings):

What care I for your gold and silver
 What care I for your house and land
 What care I for your rings and diamonds?
 All I want is a handsome man.

FOOL: (takes lady by the arm and dances): singing:-

A handsome man will not maintain you
 For his beauty will decay;
 The finest flower that grows in the summer
 In the winter fades away.

REBBONER: (sings)

Now madam, I desire to know whether I shall be the man
 The pleasing of your fancy - I'll do the best I can.
 I'll bring you silks and satins all brought from India's shore
 And I'll for ever love thee. Pray what can I do more?

LADY:

Pooh, pooh young man; you can't be of your right mind,
 Give me the man with the ragged trousers
 Who takes a girl in a sly corner.

FOOL:

Ah! Ah! Now you see, this fair lady took her chance.
 Please strike up the music and we'll have a dance.

POKEA.

KING:

In comes I, King George, I'm noble champion bold,
 With my bright sword in hand,
 I've won ten thousand pounds in gold,
 I fought the fiery dragon, and brought him to slaughter,
 And by these violent means and schemes
 I gained the King's eldest daughter;
 I'll turn myself round to see if any man may dare face me;
 I'll beat him and dash him, the smallest of flies
 And send him to Jamaica to make mince pies.

(to King):

Hold hard, Jack, don't be too hot.
Thou little knows that thou hast got
A man to entertain thee of thy pride.

KING:

You! Entertain me of my pride?

SERGEANT:

And lay the anchor by the side.
For my head is made of iron
My body guarded with steel
My legs and arms are made of the best beaten brass
And no man can make me feel.

KING:

Your head is not made of iron
And your body is not made of steel,
Your arms and legs are not made of the best beaten brass,
And I can make you feel.

SERGEANT:

Stand out, stand out, you proud and comely coon,
I'll make thy buttons fly,
I'll fill thy body full of hills and holes,
And by my hand and sword thou shalt die.

FOOL:

Stir up the fire and shine the light,
And see the gallant set tonight;
The clock has struck and the time has come
For this battle to go on,
If you don't believe what I've got to say
Please move your chairs and move away.

SERGEANT (to King):

Draw out thy sword in haste for thy ribs I will abase
Thou silly ass, thou feeds on grass,
Thou knows thou art in danger.
Thou lives in hope to guard thy coat
And keep thy body from all danger.

No more of him you'll see.

His body's dead and his soul has fled

What will become of me?

He bore me out and challenged me out to fight

And this I don't deny.

I only stripped one's button off his coat, and made his body die.

FOOL:

Dead, dead to be sure

Five pounds for a doctor

This dead ann to cure.

SERGEANT:

Ten pounds for him to stay away

FOOL:

Fifteen pounds, We must have him.

Doctor, Doctor, Doctor?

DOCTOR:

In comes I, the Doctor.

FOOL:

You're the doctor?

DOCTOR:

Yes, sir, I am the Doctor.

FOOL;

How came you to be a Doctor?

DOCTOR:

I travelled for it.

FOOL:

Where did you travel?

DOCTOR:

England, Ireland, France and Spain,

Over these hills and back again,

From fireside to bedside;

From bedside to my old grandmother's corner cupboard,

Where I had many a piece of cold pudding -made me such a fine man.

Over these hills and back again,

From fireside to bedside;

From bedside to my old grandmother's corner cupboard,

Where I had many a piece of cold pudding -made me such a fine man.

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DOCTOR:

No, he is not dead, he's in a trance,
He's been trying out a new experiment,
He's been living nineteen days out of a fortnight by mistake:
He's swallowed half an acre of green tatey tops,
Choked himself with a pillow
Swallowed a wheel-barrow
And by mistake he' swallowed our old donkey and cart
And can't digest the wheels.
Poor fellow! I'll give him a drop out of my bottle
And team it gently down his throttle;
It will heal his wounds and cool his blood,
And I hope it will do his soul some good.

DOCTOR:

This man can dance, if you can sing,
So arise, young man, and let's begin.

FOOL:

Hey, hey, what's the dancing and jiggling about?
Here's the tidy lad to dance.
I can dance half-an-hour on a barley chaff riddle
Neither break nor bend one spell.
I'll ask you all to me and my wife's wedding
For what you like best you must bring on with you.
I know what me and my lady likes
And what we likes best we shall have.

DOCTOR:

What's that? Red knob.

FOOL:

Go and lock, old greasy chops, I've always you to please,
A long-tailed cabbage, a pickled sumerrit,
A liver and lights of a cobbler's laps
And half a gallon of butter-milk to relish it down.

DOCTOR:

We shall have a feed.

FOOL:

Thank you, sir.

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DAME JANE:

In comes I, old Dame Jane,
Head and neck as long as any crane.
Dib, dab, over the meadow,
Once I was a blooming young maid,
Now I am a downed old widow
I travel from door to door
All in my disasters.
Long I've sought thee,
Now I've caught thee,
Tommy, take your child.

FOOL: Child - Jinney? It's not like me, and none of mine.

DAME: Its nose, eyes and chin are as much like you as ever it can be.

FOOL: Who sent you here with it, Jinney?

DAME: The overseer of the parish, who said I was to bring it to the
biggest fool I could find. So I thought I'd bring it to you.

FOOL: You had better go take it to the parish pump.

DAME: That's all I've got to thank you for.

FOOL (sings):

Now, madam, as I crossed over your dell
One morning very soon,
Dressed in my best appareil
Likewise my clouded shoes
To thee I come a-wooing
To thee my buxom Nell;
If thou loves me as I love you
Thou lov'st a person well.

DAME: If you love me, tell me true.

FOOL: Yes! And to my sorrow.

DAME: When shall be our wedding day?

FOOL: Tommy, love, tomorrow.

ALL SING:

And we'll be wed in wodlock, dear,
So brave old Nelly and I.

Good master and good mistress,
As you sit round your fire,
Remember us poor plough boys
Who ploughs the mud and mire;
The mire it is so very deep
And the water runs so clear,
We thank you for a Christmas box
And a pitcher of your best beer.

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DAME:

Hi, hi, and a bit of your pork pie
I'm as hungry as our old fool's dry.

FOOL:

You're allust hungry!

DAME:

And you're allust dry!

FOOL:

That's it Jimney, scrap about
That's all I've got to thank you for.

ALL SING:

Here's to the master of this house,
The mistress also,
Likewise the little children
That round the table go;
We hope they'll never come to want
While nations do provide
A happy home and plentiness
And a happy fireside.

We are not the London actors
That acts the London part,
We are the Branston ploughboys
That come from plough and cart.
We are not the London actors
We've told you so before
And we've done it as well as we can. We have.

Good master and good misters
You see, our fool has gone;
We make it in our business
To follow him along;
We thank you for your civility
And what you've given us here;
And we wish you a merry Chris'
And a happy New Year.

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