



Plough
Monday
Play Script
from Morton, near Bourne

The Full English

The Full English was a unique nationwide project unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage by making over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning project. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with other cultural partners across England.

The Full English digital archive (www.vwml.org) continues to provide access to thousands of records detailing traditional folk songs, music, dances, customs and traditions that were collected from across the country. Some of these are known widely, others have lain dormant in notebooks and files within archives for decades.

The Full English learning programme worked across the country in 19 different schools including primary, secondary and special educational needs settings. It also worked with a range of cultural partners across England, organising community, family and adult learning events.

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Plough Monday Play Script

From Morton, near Bourne

These words were set down by Reginald Tuxworth, a Constable in the Lincolnshire Constabulary, sometime between the 12 June 1939 and 1 May 1939 when he was stationed at Morton by Bourne.

“Plough Monday was the day in Olden Times when the rustic population returned to their labours after the Christmas Festivities, and it fell upon the first Monday after Epiphany (6 January), Twelfth day after Christmas Day, It was usual for the ploughboys on the evening of this day to visit the various large houses and ask permission to give their play. If they were refused permission to act they would plough up the garden of the person refusing, much, to his annoyance.

“If they were allowed to entertain the Leading Man of the Play was admitted first, followed by Tom Fool, the Recruiting Sergeant, the Farmer’s Boy and the Lady. Later during the play Old Threshing Blade enters, argument then ensues and Threshing Blade rebukes Tom Fool, and knocks him down, various members of the company believing him to be dead then call for the Doctor. The Doctor enters and after giving off his own praises causes Tom Fool to rise. The whole company then sing and then pass round the hat. Then in another song by the whole company they thank the audience for their patronage, wish them a Happy New Year and depart.

“In the village of Morton, near Bourne the custom has been carried on for a considerable time. Several of the elders of the village inform me that it had been played as long as they can remember.

“Mr. John Alford, who is 84 years of age can clearly remember his part of the Doctor, played when he was about sixteen years of age. Another old member tells me that he played the part of Farmer’s Boy and further that his Grandfather used to tell him of the fun they had when someone refused to hear the play and they took the plough into the garden and ploughed it up. There does not appear to be any script of this play and from the enquiries I have made it would appear that the words have been handed down by word of mouth from one generation to another. I am satisfied without doubt that since the original play given by the Plough-de-Jags, that the words have been altered to meet with the times for in this play it will be noted that Napoleon and Waterloo are quoted, this to my mind seems to suggest that the version I intend to give was originally brought out about the time of Waterloo.

“At the present time the older members of the troupe in Morton have taught their boys the play and so once more it seems that perhaps it will be carried on for a few more years. For the play itself I am indebted to Mr. Samuel Neal, a horseman in the employ of Mr. James Measures of Morton Fen, he has at my request written it from memory. I do not know whether or not versions of this play have been given before, but I am of the opinion that it should not be allowed to pass away unrecorded.”

A word of caution

None of The Full English materials have been censored. The contents do not reflect the opinions and views held by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, or any of The Full English partner organisations.

The Plough Boy's Team

The **Leading Man**, after knocking at the door and gaining admittance, commences by saying:

In comes I who's never been before.
Six more actors at the door.
Some can dance and some can sing,
By your consent they will all walk in.

Tom Pool In comes I who's never been yet.
My big head and little wit.
My head is large, my wit is small
I can act Tom Fool as well as them all.
Ocome, Pocomo, France and Spain,
Walk in Sergeant all the same.

Sergeant In comes I the Recruiting Sergeant,
I arrived here just now.
I had orders from the King to list all fellows
that follow Horse, Cart, or Plough.
Tinkers, Tailors, Pedlars, Nailers, anybody,
Hear to my advance,
The more I hear the fiddle play,
The better I can dance.

Tom Pool What, you dance?

Sergeant Yes Tommy, I can either dance, sing, or say.

Tom Pool Well if you dance, sing or say.
We shall all walk away.

Farmer's Boy In comes I the farmer's man
Don't you see my whip in hand?
As I go to plough the land
I turn it upside down as I go from end to end.
I scarcely make a baulk or bend,
And to my horses I attend,

As they go gaily round the bend,
Gee, Whoa, Spanker.

The Lady Behold this lady bright and gay,
Good, fortune and sweet charms.
How scornfully I've been thrown away,
Right out of my true love's arms.
He swears he will not wed with me,
But if you understand,
He's enlisting for a soldier
And going to some foreign land.

Sergeant Ten bright guineas will be your bounty if along with me you go,
Your hat shall be neatly trimmed with ribbons then you will cut a
gallant show.
Are you free, able, and willing?

**Farmer's
Boy** Yes

Sergeant In your hand I place this shilling,
On your hat I pin this ribbon,
You're a King's man.

**Farmer's
Boy** Thanks kind soldier for your offer,
If I stay longer I might fare worse.
Sash my rags if I grieve any longer
For that proud and saucy lass.

Lady Now since my love has listed and entered volunteers,
I neither mean to sigh, nor shed a single tear.
I neither mean to care for him, I mean to let him go
I have another sweetheart and along with him I go

Tom Fool Wilt though have me my pretty fair maid?

Lady Yes Tommy, and to my sorrow.

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- Tom Fool** When shall our wedding be?
- Lady** Tommy love, tomorrow.
- Tom Fool** We shake hands and we will make banns,
 And we wed tomorrow.
Now I'm going to ask a few of me old skip-me dolls
and cock-me-dolls to me and my old lady's wedding.
You better bring with you what you like best because
I tell you what we are going to have.
- Leading
Man** What are you going to have Tommy?
- Tom Fool** The leg of a lark and the wing of a toad and a farthing loaf, and if that
 won't do, what will?
- Threshing
Blade** In comes I old Threshing Blade, all good people know.
 My old Dad learned me this trade just ninety years ago,
I threshed this Nation and I threshed, that Nation

At last I got in the battle of Waterloo,
 There I threshed Bonaparte and all his crew,
And if you don't mind Tommy, I'll thresh you
- Tom Fool** What, a little fellow like you thresh a great big fellow like me?
You don't know what I'm made of.
- Threshing
Blade** What are you made of Tommy?
- Tom Fool** My head is made of iron, my body made of steel,
 My shins are all knucklebone.
There is not a man who can make me feel.
- Threshing
Blade** I don't care if your head is made of iron
 and your body made of steel,
And your shins are all knucklebones,

I can make you feel.
I'll slish you, I'll slash you as small as flies,
I'll send you to Jamaica to be made into mince pies.

Tom Fool What, you slish me, slash me, small as flies,
 And send me to Jamaica to be made into mince pies?
Get away you foolish fellow, don't come here
 with none of your lies.

(Threshing Blade knocks Tom Fool down)

Leading Man Steady Murphy, steady, see what thou has done,
 Thou'se slain poor Tommy like the rising sun.
Here he lies bleeding on this cold floor,
 Faith, he'll never rise no more,
Five pounds for a doctor.

Threshing Blade Ten to keep him away

Sergeant Fifteen to come, must come on a case like this.

Doctor Whoa, whoa, hold my horse, give him a good stiff feed,
A threepenny bit, rub him down well with a brick and
I'll show the change of a farthing when I come out.
In come I the Doctor.

Leading Man What, you a doctor?

Doctor Yes, I'm a Doctor

Leading Man How become you to be a doctor?

Doctor I travelled for it.

-
- Leading Man** Where did you travel for it?
- Doctor** All over England, France and Spain,
 Come back to doctor old England again.
- Leading Man** What can you cure?
- Doctor** Ipsie, pipsie, palsy, gout,
 Pains within and pains without.
Cure the sick, heal the lame,
 Bring dead men to life again.
- There was once an old woman lived down up in Yorkshire, she came to see me with her eye out and her nose in a sling, a crookle bone in her stocking, and a very sure cure I made. She lives up to this day if she's not dead.
- Leading Man** You seem to be a very clever doctor, would you try your skill on this poor fellow?
- Doctor** Certainly. By laying down my hat and stick and walking gloves I feel of his pulse.
- (Doctor lifts up one leg of prostate man and feels of his ankle)*
- Leading Man** Why? you would not feel there for a man's pulse
- Doctor** Why of course, where would you feel?
- Leading Man** Why the back of his head, or the bridge of his nose,
 That's the strongest part of a man.
- Doctor** This man's pulse is heating nineteen times to the tick of my watch going half once. I better give him a little of my medicine. Now I've got a little bottle here called "Elcome Pain" bring dead men to life again.

Now I have also another little bottle called "Go sorrow", here today and gone tomorrow.

I'll give him a drop of that, here you are Tommy.

Now I have also a lovely box of pills, here they are, lovely stuff, they are sugar coated, they are what you call early risers. Now I will give him one tonight, there you are Tommy. Now I will hand over the box to you. You will want to give him one in the morning, two at dinner time, and the box at night.

If the pills don't digest, the box will, he's been living very hard.

Leading Man What's he been living on Doctor?

Doctor Rakes, Forks, bars of iron, and all such goings on as that,
Last night he must have swallowed a young wheelbarrow,
he's in a very low state, very low state indeed,
you will not get him any lower without you dig a hole under him.

Leading Man We don't want him any lower, Doctor, we want him higher.

Doctor Well this man's not dead, he's in a trance,
Rise him up and let him dance,
We can sing, rise him up and let's begin.

(Tom Fool rises and then the whole company sing)

The Company Good Master and Good Mistress you sit around the fire,
Remember us good ploughboy that go through muss and mire.
The mire is so very deep, the water is so clear,
Put what you like into our box, and a jug of your best beer.

Tom Fool Steady up about your beer, I don't see nothing in the old hat yet

Sergeant Why, what do you want to see in the old hat, Tommy?

Tom Fool Why a good old Mince Pie, Pork Pie.

Sergeant Why your old belly's always hungry.

Tom Fool Yes, and yours is always dry.

Sergeant Well Tommy, you seem to be the best man among us so you had better take the hat round and see what the good people will give us.

**The
Company -
singing** You see our song is ended, you see our fool is gone,
 We make it our business to follow him along.
 We thank you for civility, for what you gave us here,
 We wish you all good-night another Happy Year.

(EXIT)



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