

ROOMER

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MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND
DEPARTMENT OF FOLKLORE

MUMMING IN THE COURTS

Two contributions from Canada and England.

1. NEWFOUNDLAND

Contributed by Julia Bishop

[From Evidence, Magistrates Court, Bonne Bay, PANL GN 5/3/F/12]

Southern District

Bonne Bay

To wit

Margaret Macaulay Pltf

vs

For Slander

Elizabeth Hatcher Dft

Upon reading the charge to Defendant and asking if she were guilty, she replied, "It is false."

Margaret Macaulay sworn who says

I live at Winter House Brook. Defendant and Beatrice Lundrigan came to my father's house on Tuesday night the 30th day of December 1902 about eight o'clock dressed as mummers. There were also with them two other persons dressed as mummers, Charles Dobbin and James Prosper in females' clothing. When one of them was crossing the floor, she attempted to lift her veil. I caught her by the veil and recognized her to be the Defendant. She tore away from me. I followed her and she struck me with a stick. She then sat down and I took the stick from her. I told her to get out of doors. I followed her to the

door and gave her a crack of the stick. She then called me "Henry Webb's damn whore". I called her in return a dirty pup, then shut the door, returned to the kitchen and went on with my work.

Cross examined by Dft

Yes, you did call me "Henry Webb's damn whore". Yes, you struck me with a stick and cut my cheek. No, I did not call you Sam Hatcher's whore, the like never came out of my mouth.

By Magistrate

Henry Webb lives in the next house to ours. Deft accused me of keeping company with him last summer twelve month. I have not been friendly with Dft since then on that account. Dft had not been in our house for nearly two years.

Angus Macaulay sworn who says

I am the father of Pltf. On the night in quersion I was washing my hands. When I stood up I saw Pltf and Dft was into a kind of scuffle between themselves and Beatrice Lundrigan was patting [sic] at Pltf with a stick. I told them to stop it which they did. Then Dft and her sister went out sputtering about the scuffle they had. I stooped down and finished washing my hands. Pltf went to the step of the doot with the same stick that Mrs. Hatcher (Dft) had. Dft said something and with that I hear a crack and Deft say Pltf struck her. They had some words out of doors but I cannot say what it was. Beatrice Lundrigan came back to the door and said that Pltf would be brought to the court house tomorrow morning. Dft told me in her own house that Henry Webb told her that he could have sexual connection [with] Plaintiff at any time he wanted.

John Macaulay sworn who says

I live with my father at Winter House Brook. I was at home when Deft and others came to the house, disguised. When they came in, Pltf walked across the floor and took hold of the veil of one of them and hoist it up. Then the mummer struck Pltf with a stick. They then got into a scuffle and swept [sic] across to the other side of the room. Then Deft sat down. I turned around my chair from the table and said, "What in the hell are you about?" or "What do you mean?" After a little more scrimmaging, my sister (Pltf) went across the room and said (to Deft) "If I would not go in people's houses with my face uncovered, I would not go in them covered up." Deft said, "I am not ashamed of anything." I said, my sister said then you can go as quick as you like. Deft went out of doors and said something to my sister who immediately struck her on the head.

Cross ex'd by Deft

I told Pltf to leave you alone but I did not call my sister a damn fool.

By Magistrate

I recognize that Defendant is one of the women who were disguised and the

one who struck my sister first. I saw her make the attempt to strike my sister. I saw the scar on my sister's cheek shortly after the mummers left. It was not on her cheek previous nor before tea.

Elizabeth Hatcher Deft at her own request was sworn and who says

I am a married woman, wife of Samuel Hatcher, and live at Winter House Bk. I, with these(?) others, went into Mrs. Macaulay's house. Were [sic] disguised as mummers. We went to the door. Mr. Macaulay was on the bridge emptying water. The door was open. Asked permission to go in. He replied, "Walk in." I was not three steps across the floor when Pltf hoist up my veil. I sat down on the becnh. She tore the stuff off my face and called me a snotty pup and Sam Hatcher's dirty whore. With that the two boys who came in with us ran away. Pltf told me and my sister to get out. I was not over the threshold of the door when she struck me twice on the head and then me and my sister walked home.

By Pltf

Yes you called me Sam Hatcher's whore. I have a witness to prove it.

By Magistrate

I cannot prove that Pltf is a whore.

Beatrice Lundrigan sworn, who says

I live at Winter House Bk. I went into Mrs. Macaulay's house, sat down on a chair. Pltf and Deft were in a quarrel. I rose, went over and struck Pltf on the shoulder, and when I did, she called me a dirty pup. I went back, sat down for a few minutes. Shortly after I left the house. Pltf came on the door step and struck Deft twice. I did not hear the Deft call Pltf Henry Webb's whore but Pltf called Deft in the house Sam Hatcher's whore. I did not see Deft strike Pltf in the house. I could not swear if Deft struck Pltf or not.

At the conclusion of the evidence Plaintiff wished to say that she does not require damages or imprisonment inflicted on Defendant and that she only entered action against Deft to clear up the bad name and character that Deft was circulating about her.

After cautioning Deft against a like repetition and giving her some plain facts to think about the following judgement was given

Favour of Plaintiff \$3.00 which sum includes the costs.

Thos. F Duder, J.P.

Jany 7th 1903

2. GUILDFORD

Submitted by Steve Roud

Surrey Gazette 9.1.1869:

Acting A Mummer With a Vengeance

JOHN OWEN SUMMERS, a lad of 15, was charged with stealing an umbrella from the premises of the Rev. Mr Molyneux at Compton Rectory, on the 26th Dec.

The defendant was one of a party of "mummers" who were going about on Boxing night displaying their powers of "Momus," acting at the different residences in the neighbourhood. A witness named John Hardy deposed to seeing defendant go into the rectory grounds at Compton for that purpose, and when he came out he had a silk umbrella in hid hand. In reply to the witness, defendant said "he had picked it up." Witness advised him if that was so he should take it back to the house and restore it to the owner. This defendant refused to do, and went off with it.

Sergt. Atkins proved apprehending the defendant at Mr. Hopkins' farm, at Peperharrow, in whose employ he was. Defendant admitted picking up the umbrella, and said it was in his box.

The umbrella was identified by Mrs. Colonel Combe as her property. She was at the time a visitor at Mr Molyneux's.

Defendant pleaded guilty to the charge, but said the umbrella was lying outside the door.

He was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment with hard labour.

*

Mumming and the BBC

Thoughts and Clippings from Duncan Broomhead

1. COMBERBACH

Newspaper Clipping from unknown source:

PLAY ACTED FOR
2,000 YEARS

AND IT HAS NEVER HAD A NAME

A play which is believed to have been acted for 2,000 years but has never had a name will be heard on the wireless this week.

It is the curious "Soul Cake" play, which is given by young unmarried men of villages in mid-Cheshire.

The players will visit farmhouses dressed as the Hero-Knight George, Beelzebub, a witch doctor, a prince, and a three-legged horse consisting of a

stuffed horses's head with spring jaws and hindquarters represented by a rug over the players.

The play has no point, but no one cares. Traditional music is sung.

The broadcast, which will all be in the broad Cheshire dialect, will take place in a house at Comberbach, Cheshire.

RADIO TIMES for 31.9.1934, Northern Edition

Entry: "7.45 'Nutcrack Night' or Hallowe'en in the North. A Radio-Study in Superstition and Folklore by D.G. Bridson. In which is included a relay of the Comberbach Soul-Caking Play from Frandley House, Cheshire."

Caption to accompanying photograph: "A TOUCH OF REALITY was brought to last night's broadcast of Northern Hallowe'en customs when a microphone was installed at Frandley House, where Comberbach villagers performed the traditional "Soul Cake" play."

2. ALDERLEY

Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser 17.12.1937, p. 2G:

The Alderley Mummers

A strange old Christmas play whose lines are never learnt from writing or print will be performed by Lord Stanley's Mummers at Alderley Park in the second part of the North Region's "Carol Cavalcade" programme, which will be the outstanding feature of the Christmas Eve programmes.

The whole programme will be in the form of a Christmas journey, through four centuries in carol, hymn and verse. The title is "Christian Men, Rejoice!" The period of the second part - consisting of this outside broadcast from Alderley - is 1737.

The play is to be relayed from the Tenants' Hall in Alderley Park. This is the great hall of the house, much of which is now demolished. The actors, eight in number, are all members of the Barber family, which began the performances of this Christmas play nearly a century and a half ago.

The show has been put on annually at the Alderley Christmas house party for the entertainment of the guests and the people on the estate.

NO SCRIPT

There is no script, and the whole play has been handed down by word of mouth. None but a Barber has ever acted in it. Curious costumes and exciting action are features of the performance. Two of the main characters are St. George and Beelzebub.

The traditional mumming plays such as those from Comberbach and Tarvin on All Souls' Day and from Rochdale at Easter, closely follow each other. St. George sometimes becomes a king, and the Black Prince becomes sometimes the British champion and sometimes a dragon. St. George, however, always kills his adversary, and the quack doctor is called in to restore him to life.

In the end most of the plays bring on a hobby horse, about which tales of prowess are related. The horse, which has a couple of men acting as the body,

finally gives rides to any who care to mount him and be thrown, and also takes a collection among the audience.

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Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser 24.12.1937, p. 9C:

MUMMERS ON THE AIR
CHRISTMAS EVE BROADCAST
FROM ALDERLEY PARK

What Listeners Will Hear

WHAT LISTENERS WILL HEAR

The Alderley Mummers who, as announced last week, will broadcast on the North Regional programme at 9.10 on Friday night (Christmas eve) give a somewhat quaint entertainment which will probably sound somewhat strange to listeners-in who will not have the advantage of seeing the striking costumes of the players or of observing how they fit their actions to the words. There is no doubt that illuminating explanations will accompany the broadcast, but a brief outline of the play will probably be of interest to our readers and may help them to visualise the performance as it comes over the air.

The Tenants' Hall, which will provide the setting for the event, is a spacious apartment where, in years gone by, estate tenants used to assemble for their annual ball, and also where the children used to have their Christmas party. When the main portion of the Hall was demolished some years ago the Tenants' Hall was transformed into a drawing room. There is a musician's gallery at one end and round the walls are hung many paintings of members of the Stanley family. A painting of the late Lady Sheffield as Commandant of a Red Cross hospital reminds us that during the war the Hall was used as a hospital for wounded soldiers. The Mummers have a wholesale disdain for scenery, nor do they deem a stage necessary for their performance; all they require is a hall in which to strut about, and the Tenants' Hall is admirably suited to their purpose.

THE PLAY

A saddle room is utilised as a dressing room, and when ready the players approach the hall in single file. Enterer-in, attired in a somewhat exaggerated naval uniform, with sword in hand, leads the way. A loud knocking on the door will herald their arrival and Enterer-in will then be heard:

Open the door and let us in,
We hope we shall your favour win.

His demand for a room is unchallenged and so St. George, a striking figure in naval costume of the period of Nelson and very much rosetted, enters and as he paces to and fro brandishing his sword as though slaying phantom warriors, or should we say dragons, he will tell how:

"By fair means I won fair Sheba,
King of England's daughter."

As a valiant knight St. George will challenge all comers to mortal combat. Black Prince, in flowing robes and wearing a black mask, will be the first to cross swords. He is brought to his knees and the pardon he begs is graciously granted. Col. Slasher, in brilliant red tunic, is the next to face the redoubtable St. George, who threatens:

“I’ll lop thee and chop thee as small as flies,
And send thee overseas to make mince pies.”

A duel follows, and as the gallant Slasher falls, St. George declares: “No pardon will I give thee, but wound thee ten times more.

“I challenged him to fight, why should I deny?
“I cut his coat in ragged holes and made his buttons fly.”

THE PHYSICIAN ARRIVES

As the Physician enters, in a long cloak and high-pointed hat like the magicians of old, he boasts of his ability to bring “dead men back to life,” and that he has cured:

“Smoking houses, howling, scowling wives, and a lass with a winking eye.” He bends over the prostrate Colonel and producing a small phial holds it to the patient’s lips with the injunction:

“Here Jack, take this nip-nap,
Let it go down thy tip-tap.”

And the gallant Colonel speedily revives. St. George, quite unrepentant for his bloody work, continues:

“For England’s right, for England’s wrongs,
Which makes me carry this sword,
To prove my words, if in this land,
Any man dare before me stand.
I’ll cut him down with sword in hand.”

The revived Slasher retorts:

“Oh mortal man, who lives by bread,
What makes thy nose so long and red.”

St. George:

“Thou silly fool!
It is Lord Stanley’s ale, that is so stale,
That keeps my nose from growing pale.”

Beelzebub, a fearsome-looking creature carrying a large club with which he beats the air, stamps about the room and his dire threats are somewhat muffled by the mask he wears. The property horse with its capacious jaws snapping threateningly is brought by the groom, and after prancing about and

scattering the guests the Mummers break into song with the exhortation:

“Ye gentlemen of England,
Go down into your cellars
And see what you can find.
If your barrels be not empty
We hope you will prove kind.

And the play ends with the chorus:

“Ha’pence and strong beer
And we’ll no more come a-acting
Until another year.”

There is, of course, a good deal more in the play but what we have said will give a general outline of the course of events. There is no script of the play which has been handed down verbally from one generation to another, and the Barber family is so numerous that there has never been any difficulty in maintaining the tradition that no one who does not bear the name shall be allowed to take part.

Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser 31.12.1937, p. 9B:

MUMMERS ON THE AIR
Perfect Broadcast from Alderley Park

The Christmas Eve broadcast by the Alderley Mummers was a signal success, and listeners-in were provided with a fine interpretation of the traditional play, the texture of which takes the mind back through the ages, and reminds us of the good old days when people were less sophisticated, and more partial to fun of the robust type. When one cannot see the action of the players, or the costumes worn by them, the play must lose something in effect, but it was a tribute to the Mummers that their first venture on the air gave hundreds of people an exceptionally good interpretation of the play itself. Every word came through with perfect clearness, and thus enabled one to visualise the scenes where duels were fought and miracles of healing performed. Never before have the Mummers performed to such good effect. The pace was good, enunciation clear, and everything so perfectly timed that the whole play was through before the Mummers were “faded out” for the next item on the programme.

As usual there was an interested party of spectators in the Tenants’ Hall, and the applause which punctuated the performance was an indication of the way in which they appreciated the entertainment.

The Alderley and Wilmslow Advertiser of 24.12.1937, p. 9b, includes an article entitled “Pearly Pearls’ At Over Alderley” in which members of the Barber family feature in the acting:

This begins: “The Annual Christmas entertainment arranged by the Over Alderley Young Men’s Club, and given in the Reading Rooms, is so popular that

two nights are always set apart for it...The members' venture into the realm of dramatic art is always interesting, and this year the presentation of "Pearly Pearls", a two act play by John J. Melliush, was one of the most entertaining things they have done." It goes on to mention, among others, that "The part of Bennett, the butler, was capably handled by K. Barber...Mona Barber was excellent as the charming Marjorie Pilchard; Lily Barber, as cook, was always amusing, and was particularly good in the scene with Sir George and others. As Marie, a maid, Joan Barber had only a small part, but it was played well..."

I have other references to their appearing in Panto at the hall at Christmas as well: proper thespians!

The 1937 performance turned out to be the last by the mummers. They were all tenant farmers on the Alderley estates, which were sold and broken up the following year.

It would be interesting to know who arranged for the broadcast and why. Was it Lord Stanley who knew the estate would be sold, doing it as a thankyou to the mummers who had featured at the Hall for so many years?

3. MIDGLEY

From H.W. Harwood and F.H. Marsden, The Pace Egg: The Midgley Version, privately printed by the authors, Halifax, 1935 (2nd edition published by David Bland, Halifax, 1977, by kind permission of Mrs. Constance Drake), p. 12:

"There was no hiatus in the Midgley Street performance of the play up to the year of the War...The present writers were responsible for reviving it for performance first by directing two broadcasts to the North Region listeners from Leeds studio on the Thursday night before Good Friday 1931 and 1932. These were by adults, most of whom had given the play as youths. Mr. J.E. Akroyd the then headmaster of Midgley School had costumes made and certain of the elder boys trained, so that they could give the play in the school on parents' day in 1932. The play was taken on to the streets again by these boys at Easter 1932, and it has been given by boys from the school at Eastertide ever since. On Good Friday, 1934, when they gave it on the streets they also had the great honour of broadcasting the play from Lacy Hey Fold, Midgley, in the presence of a great crowd, not only to the nation, but to the Empire when preliminary talks were also broadcast by the present writers. The prominence given in the Press and by the B.B.C. to this play from Midgley no doubt re-awakened general interest in the Mummers' Play, resulting not only in added volumes to the study of its history and circulation, but in the broadcasting of Mummers' Plays from widely scattered areas."

The book includes a photograph, the caption to which runs: "The Midgley Players Who Broadcast in 1934".

SOURCES FOR THE MUMMING IN CHIPPING CAMPDEN, GLOUCESTERSHIRE 1860-1900

Craig Fees

The following is based primarily on Sections II:1 and II:3 of Craig Fees, Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town, PhD., University of Leeds, 1988.

What little information we have about mumming between 1860 and 1900 in the small (about 2,000 population) Cotswold market town of Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire derives entirely from 20th century sources, written and oral.

The earliest written note which unambiguously pertains to mummers in Campden is in Cecil Sharp's Dance Notes, pp.93-94 (Vaughan Williams Memorial Library). The note is not dated, but may have been collected by Sharp in Stow-on-the-Wold in 1908 (I suggest this because it is accompanied by no other specific identifying remarks, while the words to a song immediately following are noted as collected from "John Mason at Stow". Peter Harrop, in The Performance of English Folk Plays, PhD., University of Leeds, 1980, p. 177, dates the note to "at all events earlier than 1914"). Stow is another Cotswold market town, about 8 or 9 miles from Campden. The note in full runs:

At Chipping Campden the mummers fool used to announce himself thus:-

Here comes I as an per net
A great head and little nut
My head's so big and my net's so small
here comes I to please you all

I'll sing you a song
It is not very long
But I think you'll find it very funny

Don't be in a fuss
But pull out your purse
And give the poor mumper some money.

In Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town I state that there are good reasons to believe that the mummers did not come out publicly in Campden between 1900 and 1914, and that Sharp's note with its past-tense could "almost certainly" be taken as referring to a 19th century mumming (p. 38). Don Ellis of Campden (b. 1902), however, subsequently told me in a rather significant letter of 30.6.1988 (and after several years of regular discussions about Campden and its customs): "I can remember the mummers coming to our house one Boxing Day some time before the first World War". It can therefore be said only that the stanza may refer to a 19th century mumming, and certainly to the mumming as it was before the First World War. (Harrop points out that the first stanza is found in a similar form in the current Campden mumming text, the second stanza not at all, suggesting on this basis a direct connection between the pre-World War I text and the play as it is currently performed. Given the stereotypic nature of the stanza among mumming plays in general I personally would not want to push this argument very far).

Chronologically, the next two references to a 19th century mumming in Campden follow hard in the wake of a broadcast of the play by the BBC in 1934. The first is by James Madison Carpenter, the American researcher who visited Campden late in 1934 or early in 1935, recording the text from Tom Benfield and George Greenall (the elder) and noting on sheet 1213:

Mr. Benfield learned 40 years ago,
here in Campden, from older mummers,
Old Mummers - Henery Brotherridge,
Mr. Greannell learned same time as
Benfield never saw in print.

The second is a kind of postscript to a brief reminiscence of his boyhood spent in Campden in the 1860s and 1870s (with occasional visits into the 1880s) by J.C. Kingzett, published in the Evesham Journal on July 13, 1935, p. 2. Born in 1861, the youngest son of a prominent local farmer, he concluded his recollections:

By the way, I have not mentioned the mummers, who, by all reports, are still going strongly. Those of today must be the grand children of those I used to see performing outside the Wolds End [a farmhouse then at the very end of town] fully 70 years ago. May they still continue, for another 70 years or more!

His father died in 1870, providing him with a strong fixed reference point for dating his memories, and the majority of those which can be dated refer to events of the late 1860s and early 1870s. Because of this it seems reasonable to me to take his dating of the mummers more or less literally, and to regard "fully 70 years ago" as referring to the period of around 1865 before his father died.

As far as I am aware there are only two further published references to a 19th century Campden mumming. The first is an outright mistake: In 1937 the local newspaper published a photograph captioned "Campden Mummers in 1891" (Evesham Journal 16.1.1937, p. 16). The paper corrected itself in the following issue, Evesham Journal 23.1.1937, p.13: "The photograph published last week in our 'Stalwarts of the Past' feature was of the Campden Morris Dancers and not the Campden Mumming as was stated." Keith Chandler has discussed the photograph and its history in some detail in "The Archival Morris Photographs 2: Campden Morice Dancers, Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, 1896", English Dance and Song 46:3 (1984), pp. 6-8. Note the correct date of 1896.

The second is problematic, because it could very well be a misattribution based on the Morris photograph, in which George "Ninety" Griffen appears. Griffen was a well-known Campden labourer/"character" - he features, for example, in H.J. Massingham's Wold Without End, Cobden-Sanderson (London) 1932, pp. 207-208. When he died in 1939, therefore, he was given an obituary in the Evesham Journal of 16.12.1939, p.13, in which it is stated that he was a mummer "several years nearly fifty years ago" - or in about 1890, a year off the mistaken date printed in 1937 and not subsequently corrected. There is no other published reference to Griffen as a mummer. Don Ellis, who was undertaker in Campden at the time Griffen died, wrote in his letter of 30.6.1988 that Ninety Griffen was among those who performed in his house before the First World War, and it may be that such a memory combined with the mistaken photograph led to Griffen's being described as a mummer in the obituary. This, at least, is the argument I made in my thesis, pp. 113-115, and it remains a tenuous one.

In one form or another all of these printed and written references were or may have been reports of personal experience with mumming in 19th century Campden. Subsequent references belong to oral tradition - for example, the report of Ernest Buckland (b. 1902) in a recording made for the BBC in 1946 (my transcription from BBC Record No. 10029f, 20.12.1946):

Well, it's a job to say where we got it from, but first time I heard on it was sat on my old grandmother's knee, and her tell me after I'd asked her where she got it from, and she said, "well, I can remember my grandmother telling me about it when I was a kid", and old Uncle Tom...Uncle Tom Benfield [the Tom Benfield recorded by James Madison Carpenter], he pipes up and he says to me "I used to be in 'em", and I says, "did you", and he says "aye", and he said "if I lives long enough I shall have me another troupe..."

At the time of my thesis I firmly regarded Harry Keeley as a 19th century mummer. The only reason at the time were oral reports that he was an "old mummer". These reports arise in the context of stories about the BBC's 1934 broadcast of the mumming, in which he is remembered as the "old mummer" who interrupted the performing mummers to tell them that they were doing it wrong. In the ensuing fracas the "B" word was used, going out live and uncensored to a national prime-time audience - much to the enjoyment of various national newspapers and of a number of local people who have retained the story in their active narrative repertoire. In the letter from Don Ellis cited earlier, Keeley is recalled as another of those who played the mumming in the Ellis' house before the First World War, which makes the state of the evidence for his having been a 19th century mummer similar to that for Griffin. If the term "old mummer" is relative to Benfield and Greenall, however - these were the Benfield and Greenall interviewed by Carpenter, and were two of the three performing mummers in the broadcast - and if we accept their testimony that they learned the mumming at the end of the 19th century, then the argument for Keeley having been a 19th century mummer is strengthened.

There is another reference which is in a different category altogether and might or might not be referring to a mumming. In Campden Petty Sessions Minutes for April 4, 1990 (Gloucestershire Record Office PS CA M1/6), Charles Brotheridge is charged with having been drunk and disorderly late on the night of January 3, 1890 - the delay between the offence and the hearing being due to Brotheridge's absconding. It is quite likely that the "Henery Brotherridge" from whom Tom Benfield and George Greenall reportedly learned the play was Charles Brotheridge's elder brother (see Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town, pp. 101-106).

The same Tom Benfield testified on Brotheridge's behalf that he had been with Brotheridge "the whole of the day and night" (Evesham Standard 19.4.1890, p.3), and that although both of them had had a bit to drink, neither was drunk (cf. the Minutes of the case). The particularly interesting evidence came from Brotheridge's mother in a statement which she clearly believed would mitigate the judgement: "he had had a little drink because he had been out with some music he played." It didn't work for Brotheridge, but by bringing in a number of different arguments - mainly by association - it is possible to defend a case that Brotheridge played music for a mumming (see Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town, pp. 106-108). It can be argued with less interpretation that Mrs. Brotheridge's statement reflects at least a (possibly perambulating) custom of performance for drink; a type of custom, such as carolling or bands, to which mumming could belong (see Christmas Mumming in a North Cotswold Town, p. 108). In building up a circumstantial case, which is what we are so often about in the study of traditional culture, such information can become important.

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