

TRADITIONAL DRAMA STUDIES



VOLUME 2

1988

THE RIPON PLOUGH STOTS¹

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As the title of this paper implies, I intend to offer a microstudy of one tradition of English folk drama. Despite the fact that dramatists and folklorists have been considering this genre for nearly a hundred years we still have only one published study of a specific play tradition.² This being the case it is obviously important that comparable bodies of data be made available as soon as is possible in order to facilitate the commencement of comparative study. With this overriding aim in mind this is essentially a descriptive paper, the result of collating my own fieldwork with secondary oral testimony and the bibliographical reference. Being perhaps all too ready to levy on others the charge of "merely descriptive scholarship" it is probably worth remarking that I am currently engaged in five such microstudies, employing both structural and functional perspectives, in an attempt to engender comparative study. For the moment, however, the facts must stand alone.

Ripon lies in North Yorkshire, about forty kilometres north of Leeds in the centre of a fertile agricultural belt, divided for the most part into large farms which focus on both pastoral and arable activities. Historically an important market town, Ripon has more recently countered its agricultural bias with the development of various light industries, some of which have attracted workers to the area. Ripon also boasts an early cathedral which, in conjunction with nearby Fountains Abbey, has given the area some considerable religious significance.

In the course of my fieldwork I have encountered several group names for the performers of the Ripon folk play. Of these "plough stots" is probably the most convenient to employ. "Blue stots" is almost certainly the result of a past mishearing of "plough stots", "mummers" is not used by the performers themselves and "sword dancers" is confusing as the tradition contains no sword dance. Some of the performers do indeed carry swords but these are not of the dancing variety and are simply clashed together briefly during the performance.

A great deal of confusion exists as to whether or not there ever was a Ripon sword dance and, secondly, regarding the possible origin of the Ripon tradition in nearby Kirkby Malzeard. I would like to try and clear this up as far as is

possible. In the 1920s four men became interested in the Ripon play, albeit peripherally. They were Drs. J. C. Husband and C. H. Moody of Ripon, Douglas Kennedy and H. M. Bower. Dr. Husband noted down the Ripon play text in 1920 and again in about 1923, Dr. Moody noted a third version in 1925 and all three versions were forwarded to Douglas Kennedy who published them in 1930³. In his brief introduction to the text Kennedy remarks that "the Ripon sword dance seems to have been very like the Kirkby Malzeard dance, if it was not actually the same dance". This is confusing as the Kirkby Malzeard dance had already been described by C. J. Sharp⁵ and there is no textual similarity between that and the Ripon play as published by Kennedy.

Kennedy also corresponded with H. M. Bower who was then collecting information about the Kirkby Malzeard dance. Bowers' brother and two sisters, all of Ripon, recalled seeing "plough boys" whom they believed to be the Kirkby Malzeard sword dancers performing their dance in Ripon during "Winter holiday time.... away back in the 1860's"⁶. Certainly we do know that the Kirkby Malzeard men performed at the Ripon Millenary Festival in 1886 and at the Ripon Historic Festival of 1896⁷. Dr. Husband was also in touch with Bower and informed him that he "...had often seen the Kirkby Malzeard dancers at Kirkby Malzeard and at Ripon: (quite distinct from the Ripon sword dancers whereof he had earlier given some particulars to C.F.E. Bower)."⁸ Bower goes on in his notes to say that:

"The Ripon Sword dancers may indeed from time to time have imitated the K.M. men. But they had their own independent performance, a tragi-comic drama of clown, king and Doctor, as distinct from the K. Malzeard impersonation of Samson [sic] and the Philistines."⁹

Thus far, then, we have Kennedy's assertion that the Kirkby Malzeard and Ripon dances were similar although he did not know whether or not there was a Ripon dance, and the Ripon play has no relationship to the Kirkby Malzeard dance. Secondly, Bower tells us that the Ripon men "may indeed from time to time imitate the Kirkby Malzeard men"¹⁰. While this latter remark must remain a possibility the implication remains that the two traditions were largely independent of one another. The only definite connection between the Ripon play and other sword dances or plays in the area lies in a common concluding verse,¹¹ but even this is not shared by the Kirkby Malzeard text.

These muddy waters were further stirred in 1930 when one Sutcliffe Smith offered the following brief description:

"Only last Christmas a party of Sword Dancers from Ripon travelled through the West Riding district; they performed a short play which included an exhibition of dancing."¹²

It is impossible to be certain whether this reference is to the Ripon Plough Stots or the Kirkby Malzeard Sword Dancers; as Norman Peacock has pointed out, "Ripon might well mean Kirkby Malzeard for a superficial observer"¹³. Nevertheless, the exhibition of dancing implies Kirkby Malzeard.

To further complicate the issue, Edward Hardcastle, a Ripon performer, was in 1953 reported as having said that he believed the tradition had originated in Kirkby Malzeard. Unfortunately this cannot at present be substantiated and Douglas Kennedy had certainly modified his opinion by that time. The same year, 1953, he wrote that he "was interested to know that the Ripon mummers are still in existence, it is a pity there has been this confusion with the sword dance which, I should imagine, has always been separate".¹⁴

In 1960, trying to sort out this contradictory evidence, Alex Helm wrote to Kennedy and received the following in reply:

"One thing I do remember is that H. M. Bower and I became confused over the Ripon dancers and the Kirkby Malzeard dancers, whom he had seen performing in Ripon. Probably from this confusion has emerged the subsequent mistaken references to a Ripon Sword Dance....I am sorry to be so vague after the thirty years lapse. I feel pretty certain that at that time the Ripon group may have used swords and pranced about with them, but their tradition was of a play mainly, and if there was any dance, a very vestigial fragment."¹⁵

In the final instance it seems that the confusion was generated by observers rather than by any genuine and prolonged interaction between two traditions. Nevertheless, Hardcastle's remark concerning a possible Kirkby Malzeard origin for the Ripon play cannot be ignored. Further clarity can best be gained by considering the Ripon play independently and attempting to trace it back as far as is possible. As is often found, performers have in the past made assertions that the play goes back at least two hundred years¹⁶. In this case Edward Hardcastle has mentioned that his great grandfather was a performer. There is no supporting evidence for this statement although a family link with the tradition can be traced back to 1884:

Bill Hardcastle was born in 1871, first performing with the Plough Stots in 1884 and continuing to do so until 1951, the year preceding his death. He had at least one brother, Percy, who performed prior to his death in the First World War. Bill Hardcastle had three sons: John, Edward and Walter. John performed early this century, and died, like his uncle, during the First War. Edward was born at the turn of the century and first performed sometime between 1908 and 1913¹⁷. He continued to perform until 1974 and died in 1975 or 76. Walter was born in 1904 and first performed in about 1918, remaining

with the team until 1976, shortly before his death in 1978. The family link with the tradition might well have ended with Walter's death were it not for his son-in-law, Tony Chambers. Chambers first performed in 1961 and now runs the team. This means that the Hardcastle family have been concerned with the tradition for at least ninety five years.

Building upon this core of the Hardcastle family it becomes possible to fit in other individuals about whom we have information. One James Brown, born in 1857, began to perform in 1870 and did so until the 1930s. This pushes back the date of the tradition a little further and suggests that the Ripon tradition was established at the time of the Kirkby Malzeard sword dancers' visits to the town.

One other hazy reference offers a performance date prior to 1900. It follows in full.

"The Peace Egg is a play that used to be performed during Boxing Week in the streets of the City of Ripon and several miles around more than 60 years ago, and the actors were well-known characters who passed their time at street corners and in doing odd jobs for an existence, among them being Bill Jarvis (Dry Pannam), Steele (Knockkneed (Spring-wire)," and others.

'Dry Pannam' used to go into Ripon Workhouse at Christmas-time so that he could have good fare of roast beef, Yorkshire pudding, and Christmas pudding. At other periods of the year he preferred two chunks of bread with cheese, and a pint of beer, instead of a good wholesome meal without beer. On Boxing Day morning at nine o'clock, the Ripon Characters used to assemble opposite the great doors of the Workhouse, and 'Dry Pannam' would not be long before he was astride the great doors. He would say, 'Mun ahr come, lads?' and the answer was 'Aye'. Down would drop 'Dry Pannam', and the party would be complete. Greenwood (Workhouse Master) had a human soul, and he accepted 'Dry Pannam' as an annual visitor at Christmas." 18

This bizarre account, appearing in a 1953 edition of The Wakeman and purporting to refer to the late 1890s, must obviously be taken with at least a pinch of salt. If, however, we look twenty years back rather than sixty, a further reference exists to performers by the names of William Steele and Tom Jarvis. James Carpenter, collecting in Ripon in c.1930¹⁹ gives a list of names of people connected with the play which includes the two above. While we may well be dealing with different members of the same family I have a strong suspicion that these are the same men.²⁰ Other names mentioned by Carpenter include A. Benson, William Canaboy, Dave Gregg (possibly Grieg) and John Kitchen. Finally he makes reference to one John R. Castle. Instinct tells me that this is probably a member of the Hardcastle family, but I have not as yet managed to substantiate this.²¹ It would certainly be a simple

matter for a hearer unused to the local dialect to mistake R. Castle for Hardcastle. Be this as it may, Carpenter's account remains puzzling on two counts. First, why do not the names of Bill, Edward and Walter Hardcastle appear? We are told elsewhere that they were performing at this time. Second, are the names mentioned those of performers or merely informants? I prefer to accept the latter as this also makes explicable the absence of the three Hardcastles from the list of names.²²

Little external attention appears to have been paid to the tradition between the 1930s and the 1950s; certainly very little has reached the printed page. An account from 1953 mentions the names of John Smith, Alfred Wilcock, Robert Haithwaite, Bill Cousins and Edward and Walter Hardcastle.²³ Additional references from the 1950s²⁴ mention Wilcock and the two Hardcastle brothers as performing in 1955 and again mention Edward as performing in 1957. In respect of determining the identities of the performers, most of these references are fairly unhelpful. This being the case I will temporarily leave aside a consideration of the present-day performers in favour of a textual examination in order to cover the available historical material by way of an introduction to contemporary performance. I have in my collection texts bearing 12 different dates. These are, chronologically: 1880, c.1890, 1907, 1920, c.1923, 1925, 1930, c.1930, 1966, 1971, 1977 and 1978.²⁵ The 1977 and 1978 texts were collected by myself and I have, respectively, 32 and 39 examples.

Of these texts the two allegedly earliest ones can immediately be discounted. These two are identical and bear little relationship to all the others which do demonstrate a very great similarity. One of these, dated 1890, is described as the Ripon Peace Egg²⁶. The other, dated 1880, is probably copied from it.²⁷ These two texts are approximately 250 lines long, whereas all the others are between 45 and 60 lines long. The first and last speeches of the bulk of the texts comprise the first and last speeches of the two longer texts but there almost all similarity ends.²⁸ It appears that the two longer texts are for the most part copied from a Peace Egg Chapbook with only these two verses tagged on to attain some degree of authenticity and localisation.²⁹

I do not intend to carry out a detailed textual analysis in a paper of this kind, nor indeed to consider the implications of variation within the texts. Suffice it to say, for the present, that the variations in text are slight and can be considered as gradual change with time, due to occasional lapse of memory rather than conscious alteration, addition or maintained improvisation. The text that follows is transcribed from a field recording made in Princess Royal Road, Ripon, on the 26th December 1977.

All Sing

Give me a Rose for I am a going
O for to leave you understand
For Christmas time has now been approaching
Since we left yon foreign land. (repeat)

O the first that comes is General Warrington
Over hills and yonder plains
For he's gone a marching against the Victory
On the plains of Waterloo. (repeat)

O the next that comes is the heathen laddy
Who's got sheep on yonder hill
For he's been a roaming among the bonny lassies
Now he's gone and spent it all. (repeat)

O the next that comes is Tom the Tinker
Who goes here your kettle for to mend
For lassies if you do not know his intentions
Tom will stand to be your friend. (repeat)

Bill Chapman In comes old Beelzebub
Over me shoulder I carries a club
In his hand a warming pan
And calls himself a jolly old man

John Livingstone In comes I Littlewit
My head be big my wit be small
But I do my best to please you all

Norman Carter A room a room a gallant room
'Cause enter I, I'm here to shed old blood
For old England again
Step in St. George and clear the way

Tony Chambers I am St. George
Bold Procter is my name
Broad sword and bucklebelt I hope to fight again

Norman Carter I'm sure to break thy head

Tony Chambers How can thy break my head
My head be made of steel
Knucklebone and fingerbone
I hope to make you yield

Bill Chapman Doctor, doctor, five pound for a doctor
Ten pound for a doctor
Is there a doctor to be found?

Norman Carter I am a Doctor

Bill Chapman By why?

Norman Carter By my travels

Bill Chapman How far hast thou travelled?

Norman Carter Italy, Titoly, France and Spain,
Half way round the world and back again

Bill Chapman What can thy cure?

Norman Carter All sorts

Bill Chapman What all sorts?

Norman Carter The itch, the stitch, the gallop, the gout,
The plague within and the plague without.
And the plague that hangs all round about
And if there be seven evils in a man
I'll take seven and seventy out

Tony Chambers Out with them

Norman Carter Here I have in my pocket a bottle
Let it go down thy throttle
Rise Bold Jack and fight again

Tony Chambers O my back

Norman Carter What's the matter with thy back?
Tony Chambers My back is broken

My heart's confounded
Seven senses into seventy seven
This play was acted here before

All sing
O gentry o gentry o stand in a row
I bid you your manners away
But I wish you your sweetheart
To you and your jacket
So ladies I bid you farewell. (repeat) 30

Before finally moving on to consider contemporary performance it is worth reconsidering previous accounts in an attempt to glean something of the past mode of performance. Bulmer Rudd, writing in 1907, described the performers as follows:

"Sword Dancers - Performed by five boys, wearing cocked-hats, and their clothing adorned with ribbons and carrying swords. The characters are - St. George, Beelzebub, Jack, Doctor, a collector. The play starts with all five standing in a row, and at various intervals, the characters step to the front and recite their parts, and St. George and Jack perform with the swords and finally all stand in a row for the last chorus" 31.

Report is made in the Helm collection³² of a photograph dated circa 1908³³. Although I have not been able to find this photograph it is alleged to describe "6 performers, much as today"³⁴. H. M. Bower, from his manuscript of 1926, describes the group as wearing "tag rag clothes showing all colours, red, yellow, green etc; some of the party wearing tall hats like Guy Fawkes' hat: high crown with feathers stuck upwards in it"³⁵.

Carpenter, writing about four years later, describes:

"White jackets trimmed up with ribbons, different colours sewed on shoulder hats with ribbons round, feathers stuck in band - Napoleon style. Trousers with stripes up - each one had a sword, steel sword, Six characters - One man as a woman - ...Began Boxing day, went to surrounding villages - one day Ripon."³⁶

The Darlington and Stockton Times describes the performance as being more

"in the nature of a narrative, each member of the team playing different characters, such as Wellington's troops, the doctor who tends a soldier's wounds and the 'Highland Liddle'. Way back in the past, the story was told to melodeon accompaniment. No music is played now,

but Edward is thinking of bringing a mouth-organist into the team next year.

Swords used by the 'dancers' are the real thing and two are thought to date back to the Boer War. The costumes, renovated and renewed every two or three years, are the work of Mrs. Edward Hardcastle, who took over the task from her mother-in-law." 37

In 1955 N. Peacock visited Ripon on Boxing Day and his report included the following information:

"No matter what his part - and some 'double up' - each man wears a white smock decorated with tags of bright material and flags. The ones Edward Hardcastle and his brother, Walter, wear are at least 50 years old and Walter's belong to his father. Their hats are very varied, ranging from an Australian 'Digger's' to two sun-helmets, and a photograph they have of the team about 40 years ago shows the Doctor with a 'Napoleon' cocked hat. Edward Hardcastle's hat has a sheepskin wig attached, reminiscent of the Clown's fox-tail at Kirkby ... There was only one cadger this year and he was new to the team; the two men who used to 'cadge', one of them dressed as a woman, were not well enough to turn out." 38

"Folk Dancer", writing in an edition of the Dalesman for 1957, mentions that the swords are "vicious looking French bayonets dating from 1870"³⁹. A more detailed description from 1965 describes something of the manner of delivery of the text:

"At Ripon, Yorkshire, for example, the six performers dress in white knee length jackets, with tags of rags of many colours sewn on, deliver their lines at the top of their voices with no inflexions whatsoever. They stand in a straight line for the most part, the man who is killed merely drops his head, the performer who calls for a Doctor puts his hand on the 'dead' man's shoulder, and keeps it there until he is 'alive' again".⁴⁰

A report for 1969 mentions that "there are now five in the team, two collectors and three actors; there used to be four actors but Mr. Hardcastle now takes two parts".⁴¹ B. J. Ward makes a fairly lengthy report of the 1971 performances, of which I will make more mention later. Finally, a 1976 edition of the Ripon Gazette includes a plea from the group:

"For the last two Boxing Days we have not put on a performance because we do not have any cadger. People who say they are willing to do it have dropped out at the last minute and if nobody comes forward for this Christmas the tradition may well die ... Until recently the team used French bayonets made in 1823, but on the death of one of its members the weapons were given to relatives ... the swords they [now] use are just pieces of metal, which, says Mr. Chambers, are out of place in a custom with so much tradition attached to it." 42

This then is the information concerning the tradition which I have been able to glean from printed references, manuscripts and secondary oral testimony. I would now like to turn to a consideration of contemporary performance based on my own fieldwork in Ripon during the last two years and including performances on the last two Boxing Days.

Tony Chambers, present leader of the group, is at this time (1978), 45 years old and steward to the Ripon City Club. He has been performing for seventeen years in a variety of parts. In 1977 he played St. George, in 1978 the Doctor and the Opponent. Bill Chapman is a council worker and part time cinema projectionist who has been performing for between twelve and sixteen years. For the last two years he has played Beelzebub and the Caller (my name for the person who calls the Doctor). He is now in his late fifties. Norman Carter, although a few years older than Bill Chapman, has been performing for a slightly shorter period of time. A hod-carrier, in 1977 he played the Opponent and the Doctor, changing parts in 1978 to play, initially, Littlewit, and later St. George. John Livingstone is in his late twenties, a relative newcomer to the tradition he first performed in 1976. He played Littlewit in 1976 and 1977, St. George for a while in 1978, then reverted to his original part. The final member of the present team is Brian Harland, in his late thirties he has only been performing for two years. He is the cadger, joining in the sung choruses but having no independent speaking part.

When I arrived in Ripon on Boxing Day 1977 there was no sign of the group in the City Square so I asked a policeman. He had no idea what I was talking about and suggested I asked the landlord of a nearby pub. The landlord did know what I was talking about and had not yet seen the team. He expected they would appear on his premises around lunchtime. He described the group as "cheeky buggers, they come in, use your toilet and then bugger off again".

After a short while I caught up with the group on a council estate to the south of the town. There were five in the group, wearing white coats such as a butcher might wear. These were covered at random with scraps of cloth; two of the coats had large cats embroidered on the back. Two of the men were carrying swords, certainly not dancing swords. I thought at first they were small sabres but they turned out to be meat-cutting tools borrowed from a local butcher; finally, two other men were carrying large wooden collecting boxes - capacious is probably the best word to describe these!

The gang stood in a circle in the middle of the road, initially no-one was watching but when they began to sing faces started to appear at windows, including bedroom windows, as it was still quite early in the morning - around

9.30. The singing is very loud, with all performers having a fair idea of the words although clearly allowing Tony Chambers to lead. While the last verse of the song was in progress Brian was already rapping loudly on doors, shouting "compliments of the season" and collecting money. The instant the song finished Bill came in with his first lines: "In comes I Beelzebub". At this point John started heading for the other side of the road from Brian; as soon as Bill finished John would shout from wherever he happened to be standing: "In comes I Littlewit". His three lines left him free to carry on with his collecting with Brian. The pace of the play is tremendous, the performers getting a very strong rhythm into the lines. The flow of words rarely stops; during the combat the verse is emphasised by the clash of the swords. When St. George is killed he merely drops his head and leans forward on his sword; again there is no pause in action or dialogue. Norman as Doctor had a bottle in his pocket but he was in such a rush that it was rarely produced. He generally just grabbed at it through the coat and said that it was there. After the cure was effected the two collectors rejoined the group to sing the final song. The entire performance was completed in well under five minutes and no sooner was it finished than the gang began to stride off up the street. By the time they had covered twenty five yards the whole business was starting all over again. Brian and John rarely ceased from their collecting, later in the day complaining about blisters on their hands from the collecting boxes. When I asked what the group did with the money Tony informed me that "we bloody keep it. It's ours, well it's a case, it costs so much for smocks, I mean smocks are four pound apiece and then each year all clippings to come off and go on again".

In this particular group of housing the gang covered seven performances or "pitches" before they were asked in for a drink. A woman called them in from an open window. The response was immediate from three of the group although Brian and John finished collecting in the street before they joined the others. They remained inside for about ten minutes, long enough for a drink and a chat, before recommencing performances. Norman was worried about his words: "I want them down in type like in t'paper - I know them right well but I can't think on 'em".

Time is of the essence to the group for they like to perform at twelve pubs, most of which close at two in the afternoon. The majority of the group wanted to visit a thirteenth pub, but Norman, who was barred from it, was not keen on the idea. In the end the others complied with his wishes. They really had very little option; no-one else knew the words. Tony was thinking about Walter Hardcastle, no longer performing. "He were out last year but it were

just too much for him. He was bad in the legs see, couldn't shout, no lung in him, bad memory, he were forgetting his lines after doing it all those years. He'll feel it today though. He wanted to come but he wasn't able."

After a couple more house visits Norman was finding his lines a little more difficult to remember. While performing outside the house of some of Bill's relatives Norman lost himself completely.

Bill Chapman Is there a doctor to be found
(Pause)

Is there a doctor to be found
(Pause)

Tony Chambers Is there a doctor to be found
(Pause)
(shouting) Norman

Norman Carter Eh?

Bill Chapman I am a doctor

Norman Carter Eh?

Bill Chapman It's you, you daft bugger

Norman, Bill,
Tony I am a doctor

Bill Chapman By why?

We were all invited in for another drink and Norman summed up the problem. "It's all drink, drink, drink. People invite you in. That's the trouble with this job like, it pays your beer like." On the way to the first pub Tony pointed out that they do sometimes slip up, with regard to Norman, "He's doing it that's never done it before". Norman agreed, "I've never done it before, me, I've been on collecting". "He's been doing it despite, see" said Tony, "We'll just have to go wrong along the way till it's right". "I've been doing it donkeys years" muttered Norman "but I never learnt it on frontal job, I were always on collecting, learnt it me own way". That's the trouble" Bill pointed out, "It's a bloody big part".

We were on our way to the Brewers Arms and the day began to take on a rhythm, a shape, The Brewers Arms, The Bowling Club, outside the Alma Inn, inside

the Alma Inn, outside the Royal Oak, inside the Royal Oak, Ripon City Club, the Turks Head, the Unicorn Hotel, The George and Dragon, outside the Black Bull, inside the Black Bull, the British Legion. Into the pub, shouts of quiet, performance, Norman forgets his lines, Bill sighs, Tony prompts, the collection. The drinks, outside, the next pub and so on.

After the pubs and clubs had closed for the afternoon the group carried on with street performances and occasional house visits. It seemed a very long day, which finally broke up at about five o'clock. The last dialogue I heard seems worth reporting, it sums up the atmosphere of the last stretch of the day. Norman was talking: "listen, I expected to go collecting this year. I didn't expect this, he didn't bloody tell me. I haven't done the part before, have I? I know the bloody thing. I know it. It's just a question of remembering it. I've always been on the end of the stick, maybe it's my fault. There's houses over there that are good." "It's dark" Bill pointed out. "I know what I'm doing" said Norman. The last remark I heard was "Come on Norman."

I had seen thirty two performances that day, and Tony estimated that I had missed about eighteen, making a total of fifty performances in all. The group certainly deserved whatever was in the collection box.

As mentioned above the group remained the same for the following year. However, as I was present for the entire day in 1978, certain organisational points are probably worth making. Firstly, the group make no effort to meet formally prior to the day of performance. I discovered during the intervening year that they do not know each others' addresses and do not meet regularly on a social basis. A considerable amount of organisation is dependent on who Mrs. Chambers meets when she is shopping. This has slowed down my fieldwork considerably. They meet at the Ripon City Club at about eight thirty on Boxing Day morning, last year waiting patiently in the rain until Mrs. Chambers let them in. The miserable weather, incidentally, seemed to make no difference to the intention to perform⁴³.

The route the group followed around the town did not change over the two years to any great extent. It is interesting to note that many people living in Ripon are unaware of the group's existence if only for the fact of the very restricted route they follow. Performances are confined to the Council estates south and east of the town centre. The performances in public houses in the city centre are at a time of day when most people, on Boxing Day, appear to be at home. The pubs provide a noticeably male audience, as do the city centre streets, as most women are probably engaged in preparing lunch.

House visits were much the same over the two years, being confined to the homes of relatives, own homes, immediate neighbours and close friends. Drink was provided on each occasion and the length of the visits tended to increase as the day wore on simply because the performers were increasingly glad of an opportunity to sit down. Less pubs were visited in 1978 for a number of reasons. They seemed to be quieter and the group saw no point in performing to two or three people. In two cases pubs had changed hands and the team were hesitant to approach strange landlords. In one instance they were turned away. Two regular "pitches" told the group to come back later in the day. Each year they have visited a bookmaker's and been given five pounds to go away as they might disrupt the racing. The team made no complaint about being bought off.

Because of Norman's difficulty with lines, Tony had organised a change round for 1978. Tony took Norman's parts of Doctor and Opponent, giving him the part of Littlewit. John took over Tony's part of St. George. John, unfortunately, had the same problem as Norman. Despite the fact that he had written the words on a small piece of paper he was unable to deal confidently with them. At just after twelve noon the group decided that Norman and John should change places. John was fine as Littlewit but Norman was very unsure of the St. George lines. It has to be admitted that the only performers confident of the lines are Tony Chambers and Bill Chapman. A reduction in the number of public house performances led to the 1978 total of 39 pitches.

As I made clear in the introduction, this has been a descriptive paper. Nevertheless I hope I have managed to convey something of the provenanced history of the tradition and some impression of its contemporary manifestation. Inevitably, more questions are raised than are answered, particularly those concerning the attitudes and beliefs of the performers and their audiences. Tony Chambers at least has no doubts about the future of the tradition. It seems reasonable to leave him the last word:

"It will keep going, more so now. It's a tradition and I'm going to make sure that it doesn't die out."

NOTES

1. This paper has grown out of research for a higher degree in the Institute of Dialect and Folk Life Studies, University of Leeds. Full acknowledgements are therefore due to my supervisor, Mr. A. E. Green, and the Director of the Institute, Mr. S. F. Sanderson, for their continued advice and criticism. I would also like to thank Ian Bowater and Sally Newman for their invaluable assistance with transport.
2. See Susan Pattison, "The Antrobus Soulcaking Play: An Alternative Approach to the Mummers' Play", Folklife, 15 (1977) 5-11. Also, for a more generalised though excellent survey, Dr. Ian Russell, "'Here comes me and our old lass, Short of money and short of Brass': A Survey of Traditional Drama in North East Derbyshire", Folk Music Journal, 3:5 (1979).
3. Douglas Kennedy, "Observations on the Sword-dance and Mummers' Play", Journal of the English Folk Dance Society, 2nd Series, No.3 (1930) 23. See also H. M. Bower - Notebook Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
4. D. Kennedy, (1930).
5. C. J. Sharp, The Sword Dances of Northern England, originally published by Novello and Co., London., reprinted (Wakefield: E.P. Publishing, 1977) Part 1, pp.37-53.
6. H. M. Bower, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, p.8.
7. W. Harrison, ed., Ripon Millenary (Ripon, 1892) pp.103, 131, 134, 138, 140, 159, 181, 186, 198, 202, 221. See also D'arcy de Ferrars, From Boadicea to Victoria: Official Programme and Guide to the Ripon Historic Festival 1896 (Ripon: W. Harrison, 1896) pp.31 and 44.
8. H. M. Bower, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, p.9. C. F. E. Bower was his daughter Cornelia.
9. Bower, p.12.
10. Bower.
11. See Ripon text for the verse. Also the Bellerby text printed in M. Karpeles, "Some Fragments of Sword Dance Plays", Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 2nd Series, No. 2 (1928) 35-42. For a fuller discussion of the verse see T. Chambers, "The Strange Case of the Sentry's New Great-coat", Folk Roundabout: The English Folk Dance and Song Society Cleveland and Dales Magazine (March 1976), 8.

12. Quoted in the Alex Helm Collection (Vol. H37, Sheet No. 2 - Ripon, Yorks)
13. Alex Helm Collection (Vol. H37, Sheet No. 2 - Ripon, Yorks). Norman Peacock comments on the reference.
14. Letter from D. Kennedy to Mr. Huddleston dated 12.1.1953.
15. Alex Helm Collection, (Vol. H37, Sheet No. 3 - Ripon, Yorks).
16. Edward Hardcastle as reported in The Darlington and Stockton Times (2.1.1953)
17. I am still in the process of checking dates with local records. It is impossible to be certain about the date at which Edward Hardcastle first performed as he himself has given different dates at different times.
18. The Wakeman, No. 84 (Dec. 1953) 9.
19. J. Carpenter Collection, microfilm printout numbers 419, 435, 437, 439. The date is not specified although it can be calculated from other dates within the collection to approximately 1930. For this information I am indebted to P. S. Smith and G. Boyes.
20. Based on the reliability of Carpenter and the popular style of the Wakeman article.
21. J. Carpenter Collection.
22. These names appear in the Carpenter Collection without a great deal of contextual information. Further fieldwork may clarify the point.
23. Darlington and Stockton Times (2.1.1953).
24. See E. C. Cawte and N. Peacock, English Dance and Song, XXIV (March April 1956) 128. Also Folk Dancer "Song and Dance at Ripon", Dalesman, Vol. 18, No. 12 (March 1957) 613.
25. 1880. "The Peace Egg Play c.1880. Ripon". Text held by the Ripon Public Library. The Librarian informed me that this typescript had been forwarded to him by a local resident.
1890. The City Mummers: When the Peace Egg Play was performed by Well-Known Characters", Wakeman, No. 84 (Dec. 1953) 9-11.
1907. H. Bulmer Rudd, "Yorkshire Christmas Customs in the Ripon District", Yorkshire Notes and Queries, 111 (10 Jan. 1907) 299.
1920. Dr. J. C. Husband. See D. Kennedy, "Observations on the Sword-dance and Mummers' Play", Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society, 2nd Series, No. 3 (1930).

1923. Kennedy (1930).
 1925. Dr. C. H. Moody, in Kennedy (1930).
 1930. D. Kennedy (1930).
 1930. J. Carpenter Collection.
 1966. T. Chambers Collection.
 1971. B. J. Ward, "Collecting Pocket Money and Distributing Violence at Ripon", A Functional Approach to Folk Drama, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1972, pp.113-124.
 1977. Harrop Collection.
 1978. Harrop Collection.
26. See reference above.
 27. See reference above.
 28. Refraining from a detailed textual analysis it would appear that these two texts are copied from a chapbook text in the first instance. Probably from a Peace Egg Chapbook as discussed by G. Smith, P. Smith and M. J. Preston in An Interim Checklist of Chapbooks Containing Traditional Play Texts (Newcastle: History of the Book Trade in the North, 1976) pp.17-29. A more specific conclusion must await the further work of the above authors. See G. Smith, P. Smith and M. J. Preston, Chapbooks and Traditional Drama Part 1, (Sheffield: CECTAL Bibliographical and Special Series, No. 2, 1977).
 29. These verses are certainly not common to the type of Chapbook text discussed above.
 30. Harrop Collection.
 31. H. Bulmer Rudd, (1907) 299.
 32. Helm Collection, (H.37, Sheet No. 1 - Ripon, Yorks).
 33. Helm Collection, (H.37, Sheet No. 1 - Ripon, Yorks), dated by W. F. Cassie.
 34. Helm Collection, (H.37, Sheet No. 1 - Ripon, Yorks).
 35. H. M. Bower, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library.
 36. J. Carpenter Collection.
 37. Darlington and Stockton Times, (1953).
 38. Cawte and Peacock, (1956).
 39. Dalesman (1957).

40. A. Helm, "In Comes I, St. George", Folklore, 76 (1965), 127-128.
41. D. Hislop and D. Trenow, "Customs Club", English Dance and Song, XXII:3 (Autumn 1970), 104.
42. Ripon Gazette and Boroughbridge Herald (21.5.76) p.5, col. f/g/h.
43. Mr. Chambers has mentioned to me that one year the weather was so bad that only one performance was given, immediately outside the Ripon City Club. He was unable to recall the precise year.