



## The Foresters Plough Play

As well as English morris and sword dancing, the Foresters Morris Men perform a plough play and a mummers play.

Plough Plays were performed throughout the East Midlands. They are distinguished from the more well-known Christmas Mummers' plays in that they are performed on Plough Monday (the first Monday after Twelfth Night), and have a different set of characters.

The Foresters play started many years ago as an amalgam of local plough plays from Tollerton (Nottinghamshire), Long Bennington and Staunton (Lincolnshire). Over the years our performance has evolved, until it has become well and truly our own.

The characters in our Plough Play are Tom Fool, the Recruiting Sergeant, the Farmer's Man, a Lady Bright and Gay, Dame Jane, Beelzebub and the Doctor. The plot is short and simple; in part of the play, one character is killed by Beelzebub (representing the end of the old year) and brought miraculously to life again by the doctor (representing the start of the new year).

If you are interested in other traditional ceremonial plays, details can be found on the English Folk Play Research website at [www.folkplay.info](http://www.folkplay.info) which includes a list of all known play scripts. The most authoritative article on Plough Plays is by local researcher Maurice Barley and was published in the Journal of the English Folk Dance & Song Society, Vol VII No 2, December 1953, p 68, with addenda in Vol VII No 3, p 184 and Vol VII No 4, p 249.

The Foresters Morris Men are based in Nottingham in the UK, near to Sherwood Forest, and so we have Robin Hood as our logo. We are concerned to preserve English and local folk traditions. The club was formed in 1952, and was the first morris dance side in Nottingham. It is still the best!

The Foresters (see [www.foresters-morris.org.uk](http://www.foresters-morris.org.uk)) practise morris dancing, sword dancing and plough plays throughout the winter at the Queen's Walk Community Centre in the Meadows area of Nottingham on Monday nights, from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m., then socialise over songs and a drink! In the summer we dance around local villages, as well as performing by request (for a fee!) at larger events. If you are up early enough you can always see us every May day 1<sup>st</sup> May at dawn (5.15am) dancing by Robin Hood's statue at Nottingham Castle with our friends the Greenwood Step Clog Dancers.

New members are always welcome, contact any of us for details, or chase our squire Stewart on 0115-9141061, or our bagman Eric on 0115-9786858 or by e-mail to [bagman@foresters-morris.org.uk](mailto:bagman@foresters-morris.org.uk).

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