

Drainage and the town plough*

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Abstract

From Cambridgeshire west to Herefordshire and north to Yorkshire there are references in seventeenth-century visitation records and manorial court rolls to 'town ploughs' or 'common ploughs'. Such references in manorial court records usually occur in relation to the customary duties of the commoners regarding drainage. In a few instances other documentary sources of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries describe in more detail such implements, but there appears to be only one place in England, Caxton, Cambridgeshire where there are all three record sources and a contemporary drawing to enlighten us about the implement known as the 'town plow' and its use.

While researching court rolls and other documentary evidence for a number of parishes across Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, the term 'town plow' or 'common plow' was noted. Further research indicated that such references were generally absent or rare in Fenland parishes and rarer still in those parishes with sandy soils as are found in Norfolk and Suffolk, but references to this implement occur in Northamptonshire, Bedfordshire, Leicestershire and other Midland counties and as far north as Yorkshire, generally where there is a preponderance of heavier clay soils. Such references, most of which date from the seventeenth century, occur either in conjunction with the duties of manorial tenants and other people in a parish in respect of drainage of the land, or they are found in the records of episcopal visitations. References in visitations exist in sufficient numbers to demonstrate that the town or common plough was often kept in the parish church. Further detail regarding this implement was noted from Mortimer's *The whole art of Husbandry* (1708), which describes, with a sketch, such a plough used at Caxton, Cambridgeshire, and Mastin's history of Naseby in Northamptonshire of 1792.¹

I

In pre-enclosure fields the use of ridge and furrow following the contours of the land ensured that whenever possible water ran off each strip. Where this run-off was on to a meadow there was no problem. Where however the strips lay against a joint or the headland of another

* My thanks to the staff at Cambridgeshire Archives and Cambridge University Manuscript and Rare Books Rooms for their invaluable help.

¹ J. Mortimer, *The whole art of husbandry; Or the way of managing and improving of land* (sec. edn, 1708); Rev. J. Mastin, *The history and antiquities of Naseby in the county of Northampton* (1792), p. 18.

furlong, problems could occur as the bank of soil prevented the further run-off of the water. It is clear therefore that ridge and furrow alone could not provide complete drainage and the tenacity of the soil meant that drainage was a constant problem. Regulation by the manorial courts and communal effort often ensured that drains and gutters were dug to carry water away, over the headlands and other obstacles to local streams. These needed to be kept clear by all those farming the land, and manorial court records often show occasions where the court required tenants to scour these ditches, often at fixed times during the year, usually after Michaelmas. October and November were the months of choice in most manors; for instance, Hemington and Lamport in Northamptonshire, and Longstanton and Caxton in Cambridgeshire.²

Many authors, including Darby, and Cook and Williamson, have considered the drainage of particular landscapes, such as clay lands, fields, marshes and meadows, without reference to drainage ploughs.³ Newman considered an example of such a plough, which he noted in the records relating to Moor Monkton in North Yorkshire.⁴ He noted the representations to commissioners regarding the drainage of the land in that and the surrounding parishes. Where examples of descriptions of the use of drainage ploughs exist, it is clear that effective drainage was a communal issue both for the occupiers of land in individual parishes and sometimes between parishes.

A review of court rolls of manors in East Anglia, including those with lighter sandy soils and those on the fen edge where references to drainage ploughs are scarce, shows that even here drainage was a communal responsibility enforced by the manorial courts. For example, in the Cambridgeshire manor of Soham, the manorial court required its tenants to scour both the main stream running through the town and particular drainage ditches, as was the case in 1708 when particular tenants were singled out to scour various watercourses:⁵

We present Henry Swener and Samuel Kid for a water course at the ends of the lands at Butchers Causeway that if it be not well and infrequently scoured between this and the twentieth day of this instant January then the said Henry and Samuel shall pay the lady of the manor the sum of five shillings.

Whilst drainage was an issue in some areas where there were lighter soils, the clay lands clearly needed much more effort in terms of drainage to ensure the land remained productive. The classic Midland ridge and furrow is testament to this. Ridge and furrow as a means of surface drainage clearly had some benefit, as the practice was widespread over a large area of the Midlands: from Cambridge west to Herefordshire and from Somerset north to Northumberland.⁶ However, surface water running off the fields had to go somewhere and the by-laws of manorial courts were designed to ensure it did not flood the lands of others.

It was usual for the water to be carried from the furrows and over the headland and at

² D. N. Hall, 'Drainage of arable land in medieval England', in H. Cook and T. Williamson (eds), *Water management in the English landscape, field, marsh and fen* (1999), p. 34; Cambridgeshire Archives (hereafter CA), L1/112, L88/4.

³ H. C. Darby, 'The draining of the English clay-

lands', *Geographische Zeitschrift*, 52 (1964), pp. 190–201.

⁴ P. R. Newman, 'A mid seventeenth-century trench plough from Moor Monkton, North Yorkshire', *Yorkshire Archaeological J.* 55 (1983), pp. 169–71.

⁵ CA, L1/136, fo. 94

⁶ D. N. Hall, *The open fields of England* (2014), p. 5.

the sides of fields by means of gutters and cross-gutters. Manorial courts often ruled on the communal responsibility of maintaining these gutters or common drains; for example, the manorial court at Longstanton, Cambridgeshire, in 1640 ruled:

that all common draines shall be done by the commoners and all other drains by them whome they doe concerne and they are to doe them when the ffieldreeves give them warning upon pain to forfeit to the lady of the mannor, 3s. 4d.⁷

Such orders given by manorial courts for guttering, gripping, scouring and trenching in the common fields commonly occur from the fifteenth century, and are very frequent by the seventeenth century.⁸ Occasionally additional detail is given, for instance, the court rolls of Stanground near Peterborough state, 'that every man shall drayne his arrable lande where needed is as deepe as the furrowes'.⁹ Such work imposed considerable effort both upon the community and individuals as the example from Longstanton shows. In parishes such as Caxton, Cambridgeshire, as we shall see from the following example, this was expected of every man in the parish who worked land as well as the parish labourers.

II

In addition to the references to the duty of individuals and the community regarding drainage in the court rolls, we occasionally find references to the use of the town or common plough. Seventeenth-century episcopal visitations record the presence of such ploughs in churches, and usually require the parish to remove the implement from the place of worship. For a late example, at Orwell in Cambridgeshire, the episcopal visitor in 1783 noted, 'The church is not kept [in] that neat and decent manner it ought to be, there being bricks and lime and other materials for repairing the church, also a large Town-Plough lying in the body of the church in the sight of all the congregation'.¹⁰

Some local historians studying individual parishes have made assumptions regarding such town or common ploughs. These range from the opinion that it was a ceremonial plough used in Plough Monday celebrations (a point of view I discuss in Appendix A), or that it was a normal plough, used on the arable fields, of the sort pulled by three or four horses, and provided by the parish for those who could not afford a plough of their own. While a few sixteenth- and seventeenth-century wills do suggest that ordinary ploughs were held in common for the poorer members of a parish, the small number of references to such ploughs

⁷ CA, L1/112.

⁸ TNA, SC 2/179/74, m. 3. In Graveley (Cambs., formerly Hunts.) the manorial court regularly required repairs to roads and the scouring of ditches from at least 1490. This was a practice which continued well into the seventeenth century, for in about 1620 each landholder was required to send a labourer every November to accompany the common plough. Jesus College Cambridge muniments, 2, court rolls 16, 20 James I; cf Cambridge University Library, Ely Diocesan Records (hereafter CUL, EDR), B 2/59A, fo. 38.

⁹ Northamptonshire Archives, Westmorland Coll., box 5, parcel v, no. 1.

¹⁰ CUL, EDR, Ely Diocesan Records, B 7/1, fo. 156. Other similar visitation records show ploughs in the churches at Longstowe, Kingston and Caxton (CUL, EDR, B3, fos. 35v, 36v, 37v), Comberton and Willingham (W. M. Palmer [ed.], *Episcopal visitation returns for Cambridgeshire: Matthew Wren, Bishop of Ely, 1638–1665* [1930], pp. 131–2); Dry Drayton and Elsworth (both *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 29 May 1903, p. 6).

in wills and so on suggests that this was unlikely to be universal. A further review of court rolls and other documents of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries identifies the Town or Common plough as a special plough held by the parish for draining land.

Hoskins noted an example at Ashby Magna, Leicestershire. The plough here was made by the folk of the parish and it was their responsibility for its upkeep and repair.¹¹ Similarly, at Loughborough, Leicestershire, the parish had a town plough, which was repaired at the expense of Burton's Charity in that town. The charity accounts recorded the repair of the town plough in 1642, when 6s. 6d., was spent on it.¹²

In Naseby, Northamptonshire, the town plough was still in use in 1792 when the Reverend Mastin wrote his history of the village in which he records:

The[y] practice a mode of draining with a large plow, called the town plow, made exceedingly strong in every part, having two coulter: it cuts a drain one foot both deep and wide, and throws out the earth the same distance from the side to the right hand. This plow is drawn by ten or twelve horses, a team made by as many farmers contributing each his horse. But this scheme, from the obstinacy and perverseness of some, is often rendered abortive. They put back into the drain the earth thrown out, to prevent they say, its lying in the way of the scythe at hay time.¹³

Mastin's description relates to land taken out of arable production and put down to sheep husbandry, which, without adequate drainage, would have lessened the amount of good grass for the sheep and caused diseases such as 'spring or summer rot' in those sheep. However, there were clearly some in Naseby who did not see the need to drain such former arable lands.

An earlier account of such a town plough is to be found in the *Faithfull Surveyour* of 1658, which states:

In some parishes they have a town-plow, that will hold eight or nine yolk of oxen, and a couple of horses afore for boys to ride on to guide them, and three or four horses with drivers on them, others to hold the plow (one one while another another while) booted up the middle, others following with bills, forks, spades, scopets, shovels, that if any grass, or turf-ground fall in after the plow, some may cut it to pieces with their bills, and other throw it out with their forks; but in plowed grounds with spades, scopets and shovels: thus yearly'.¹⁴

In some villages the failure to provide either horse or labourer resulted in a fine; for example, on the manor of Elton near Peterborough the court rolls for the 10 October 1672 record, 'Robert Hanson did not go with the inhabitants of the vill aforesaid for the comon plowing against the order made 1s. Also George Sherman, Henry Kingston, William Snow, Thomas Reeve, John Samson, Thomas Parrish, John Parrish, Richard Noble offended in like manner each forfeit 1s.'¹⁵ A similarly forfeit awaited those failing to go with the common plough in Longstanton, Cambridgeshire.¹⁶

¹¹ W. G. Hoskins, *Essays in Leicestershire history* (1950), p. 149.

¹² W. G. Dimock Fletcher, *Chapters in the history of Loughborough* (1883), p. 46.

¹³ Mastin, *Naseby*, p. 18.

¹⁴ G. Attwell, *The faithfull surveyour* (1658), pp. 88–9.

¹⁵ A. G. Clark, *A village on the Nene. Aspects of the social and economic history of the village of Elton from Domesday Book to the Great War* (2007), I, p. 84.

¹⁶ CA, L1/112.

With virtually all the men in the parish turning out, this was clearly a large event held over many days, usually in November, although examples of this activity taking place in the springtime exist. In some parishes bread and beer was provided for those turning out with the town plough on the first day, for example at Loughborough in 1641 it is recorded 'Item. Paid to the field masters when they went with the comon plow the first day, bread and bere, 3s. 6d.', similarly in 1691 'Given the men to drink that went with the comon plow 2s. 6d.'.¹⁷ It is unclear whether bread and beer was given on subsequent days.

In North Yorkshire we find a somewhat different story. Water draining into watercourses was an issue across a number of parishes, including Moor Monkton and Hessay and in 1638 a Commission of Sewers was set up to deal with the issue. This was to be one of many commissions that inspected the ditches and coerced landowners to ensure they were scoured effectively. The commissioners required the landowners to allow workmen onto their land to be 'diked with spaisds half foote broade and 2 foote depth'. One landowner, Sir Thomas Slingsby refused to have the commission's workmen on his land, instead he informed the commissioners' jury that he scoured the fosse with, 'a plough drawne with 28 yoke of oxen which make a furr[ow] of above 6 foote broade and half yeard debth, sufficient to carry the water in reasonable time through the same'. The surviving documentation describes the Moor Monkton drainage plough as 'an engine like a plow', made of 'the boale of an oake about 4 yeards in length and with winges'.¹⁸

III

Caxton, a small village to the west of Cambridge, provides a good example of the practice of drainage and the use of such a town plough in the seventeenth century. The Caxton example is probably unique in that there are three completely separate pieces of documentary evidence relating to Caxton's town plough and its use, one of which is a drawing of Caxton's 'Towne Plow'. The sources relating to the plough kept by the parishioners of Caxton are the manorial court rolls (1659–65, 1696), the episcopal visitation of 1665 and a book on husbandry of 1708, which describes the Caxton plough in detail, with a sketch drawing (Figure 1). Each of these will now be considered.

The 1665 visitation tells us little about the Caxton town plough, other than that it was kept in the parish church, in full view of the congregation.¹⁹ The manorial court records contain a number of orders to the parishioners regarding their duties. From a court leet and baron held in 1663 we learn that the hayward was the elected official tasked with overseeing draining by the people of the parish.²⁰ The parish constables accounted to the overseers for any expenditure and in 1663 were ordered to tell the overseers of any charges within two or three days so that, if their account was approved, it might be properly chargeable on the constables' rate. For his work the hayward was to receive £8 per year in 'quarteridges'. The court ordered the town plough to be repaired in 1663, 'That ye towne plow be repaired at the parish expense, the money

¹⁷ Dimock Fletcher, *History of Loughborough*, pp. 46, 48.

¹⁹ CUL, EDR, B 3, fo. 36v.

²⁰ CA, L88/4.

¹⁸ Newman, 'Mid-seventeenth century trench plough'.

to be expended by the constable, and allowed him upon his rate' and the cost to be met by the constables from their rate. We are not told the cost of the repair, but if the cost were similar to that of Loughborough, previously referred to, then the cost of repairs and overseeing the process, including any charges made by the constables was about £9.

As at Naseby, Elton, Longstanton and other places, the men of Caxton had to turn out with their horses as ordered by the manorial court. An order from a 1666 court leet and baron describes the requirement and the fine for failing to do so:

That every man that holdeth or telleth a plow land in the comman feld of Caxton shall bringe his horsse or horsses accordinge to their eacquall perpotions [proportions] to draw the comman plow & that every laboringe man shall com in p[er]sion upon lawfull warninge by the Constable uppon paine of every defalte for both horsse & man one shelline [shilling].

The court ordered that all the land to be sown was to be water-furrowed and that every man is to 'cross furrow by drawing their plowes over their respective lands soone after they are sowne soe as the hayward may make the water trenches accordingly'. The digging of the water trenches, also referred to as 'grips' under the control of the hayward, was what he received payment for, 'And that he shall receive £8 for his wages dooing y^e grips above mentioned on his part to be done'. Failure on the part of the hayward resulted in a fine, and the court noted that he should also not neglect his other duties. The residents of Caxton holding land in the parish in 1666 were also ordered, 'We ordayne that every man shall scower by his comman draynes betwex this and ye 5 day of November next upon paine of every defalt ~~3s. 4d.~~ 10d.'. (The fine for failure appears to have originally been 3s. 4d., or mistakenly written as such, but this was corrected or reduced to 10d., for every offence.)

Unlike any of the other parishes where such ploughs are known to have existed, that of Caxton is both described in detail, and drawn (Figure 1), in Mortimer's *Whole art of husbandry* (1708), where he states:

About Caxton in Cambridgeshire they have a very miry stiff clay with small rising grounds, the upper part of which they sow with corn, and the lower valleys, because of the poachiness of them, they keep for grass, which never the less in wet winters are so spuy [sic], that they know not how to seed them, and to cut drains with spades, they thought would be very chargeable, and so they invented a plough to do it with; which they made much like, another plough, only much stronger and bigger, and from the beam stands out a piece of wood at A, in which is a coulter set at B, and another set in the beam at C, which two coulters stand bending inwards as at D, to cut each side of the trench. The share is very broad and flat, and cuts off the bottom of the trench. The mould board is three times the length of other ploughs, to cast the turf a great way off of the trench. This plough cuts a trench a foot wide at the bottom, a foot and a half broad at the top, and a foot deep. It was drawn with twenty horses and cost three pounds to make, but the dispatch it made answered the charge.²¹

Mortimer believed this to be an invention of the men of Caxton. However, as we have seen, other accounts, both earlier and of the same period, suggest that other places at considerable

²¹ Mortimer, *Whole art of husbandry*, pp. 42–3.

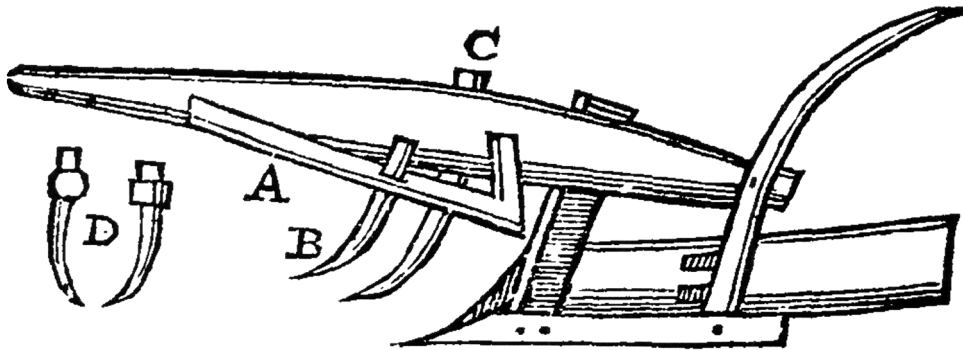


FIGURE 1: The Caxton 'Town Plough' as drawn by Mortimer.

Source: J. Mortimer, *The whole art of husbandry: or the way of improving of land* (sec. edn, 1708), p. 42.

distance from Caxton had similar ploughs for creating drainage ditches. Some of these, such as that at Moor Monkton, were clearly much larger than the Caxton example and required many more animals to pull them. There were also other drainage ploughs of a smaller nature at this time, including hand ploughs as shown by the drawings and descriptions in Walter Blith's *English improver improved* of 1653.²²

Attwell, writing in 1658, advised that for deeper ditches a normal plough pulled by a single row of horse be placed in the ditch newly created by such a drainage plough, to plough down further. The men were then to throw out the soil and repeat the process until the required depth was achieved. He notes that a landowner at Apsley Bury, in Shillington parish in Bedfordshire dug a large moat using this method.²³

The Caxton plough, like that described by Mastin had two coulter, probably these were the items referred to as 'wings' in the description of the Moor Monkton plough. References to such 'wings' have also been noted in the churchwardens' accounts of the parish of Norton by Daventry, Northamptonshire, where in 1548 new wings and a share were ordered for the town's plough.²⁴

IV

A number of the parishes discussed had manorial courts, which continued to operate after the fields in those parishes had been enclosed, whether by private agreement or parliamentary enclosure. Of those examined, none required tenants to turn out *en masse* to scour drains and gutters after enclosure. Enclosure of the lands of a parish usually meant that each owner's lands were grouped together in blocks and where leased often rented in blocks. Where strips were occupied by multiple tenants, it was no longer necessary to compel them to scour drains that

²² W. Blith, *The English improver improved, or The survey of husbandry surveyed discovering the improveableness of all lands some to be under a double and treble, others under a five or six fould* (1653), p. 202.

²³ G. Attwell, *The faithfull surveyour* (1658), p. 89.

²⁴ Northamptonshire RO, 243p/309, Norton churchwardens' accounts, vol. 1.

provided water run-off from furlongs. Manorial courts, where they continued to exist, were therefore reduced to dealing with admissions and surrenders. Individual tenancy agreements required the tenant to be responsible for the land in their occupation, including draining and improving that land. In addition, by the eighteenth century much more was known and understood about drainage, and the science of drainage continued to develop in the nineteenth century by which time most of the country had been enclosed. With these changes the communal town plough became obsolete.

Appendix A

The town plough and Plough Monday

In conducting this research I have attempted to identify whether there is any link between the drainage ploughs described in the paper and Plough Monday celebrations.

Plough lights, plough guilds and donations are known to have existed from at least the late fifteenth century. Numerous examples are known from across the country; for example, Leverton (Lincolnshire) 1498–1559, Warmington (Northamptonshire) 1532 and Luton (Bedfordshire) 1511.²⁵ Similarly, on the evidence of churchwardens' accounts, Plough Monday celebrations are known to have existed from around the same time; for example, Leverton (Lincolnshire) from 1498 and Cratfield (Suffolk) from 1491.²⁶

Accounts of such events usually involve boys dressing up and pulling a plough from house to house. Hutton describes a plough race held from the thirteenth century onwards at Carlton in Lindrick (Nottinghamshire).²⁷ He also notes examples where a plough was held communally, and cites examples from churchwardens' and other ecclesiastical accounts where ploughs were kept in churches, which he interprets as either communal or processional ploughs.

The question is, were all the ploughs kept in churches either communal or processional ploughs? From the evidence given above and that found in the literature, there may have been three types of plough kept in churches, communal ploughs, given by a benefactor for the use of the poorer members of the community who could not afford a plough of their own, processional ploughs like one at Cratfield, made for eight pence, specifically for Plough Monday celebrations,²⁸ and clearly no use as an implement for ploughing, and the drainage plough, a plough of such size and weight that it would have been too heavy to have been pulled by young men and taken from house to house or along the community streets in merriment. In 1852, a correspondent writing in *Notes & Queries* said

Not ten years since there was in the belfry of Castor church, Northamptonshire, a large clumsy looking instrument, the use of which was not apparent at first sight, being a number of rough pieces of timber put together as roughly. On nearer inspection, however, it turned out to be a plough, roughly made, worm-eaten and decayed, I should think at least three

²⁵ T. Davidson, 'Plough rituals in England and Scotland', *AgHR* 7 (1959), p. 35.

²⁶ J. Charles Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts* (1913), p. 248.

²⁷ R. Hutton, *The stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (1996), p. 124.

²⁸ Cox, *Churchwardens' accounts*, p. 248.

times as large and as heavy as the common ploughs of the time when I first saw the one in question.

The writer went on to query whether it was ever used for ceremonial purposes and taken on a circuit of the village on Plough Monday.²⁹ Hutton picks up on this and describes it as 'probably the last of these old-style ceremonial ploughs'.³⁰ However, a plough three times larger than a normal plough and kept in a church is clearly reminiscent of the drainage ploughs described above, in other words, an implement pulled by many animals for the very practical use of digging or scouring out ditches.

Two pieces of further evidence for these large town ploughs not being the same as those used in the Plough Sunday blessing and the Plough Monday celebration need to be considered. The first lies in their use. Plough Sunday was the Sunday after Epiphany Sunday (7–13 January) when a plough was blessed. On Plough Monday the plough was processed. Hutton informs us that Plough Sunday was the day before the commencement of the formal ploughing season.³¹ The ploughs blessed on this Sunday and then used to plough the fields would have been much smaller than the drainage ploughs previously described and used at a different time in the agricultural year. From various surviving court rolls ditching took place between the end of October and early January, when the ploughing of the fields commenced. The second relates to the ploughs lying in the churches. Hutton and others note that the Plough Monday celebrations, in most places, ended in the sixteenth century. However town ploughs are noted in churches right up to the end of the eighteenth century, with, as I have suggested, the decomposing remains of them still present in Castor church in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The evidence from Mastin³² and others presented above shows that town (drainage) ploughs continued in use by communities well into the late eighteenth century and were probably only made redundant by new agricultural techniques and enclosure. Therefore the town plough so often described in churchwardens' accounts and visitation records are unlikely to be the ploughs used in Plough Monday celebrations. The ploughs used in those celebrations were either purpose-built ceremonial ploughs like the one at Cratfield or those described by Hutton as standing on plinths in the churches of Great Yarmouth and Holbeach.³³ Alternatively, they might be ordinary ploughs belonging either to the community or to a farmer within the community, which were chosen for use in the celebrations that year.

The last item for consideration is, 'Why were ploughs kept in the parish church?' Prior to the dissolution of guilds, chantries and other such establishments many parishes had a guildhall or sometimes a parish or town house such as that at Morebath (Devon), Norton, Burton Latimer and Culworth (all in Northamptonshire).³⁴ Such parish or town houses appear to have had a number of functions, including acting as a parish social centre and storehouse. The Reformation eliminated all religious guilds and Plough Plays, and most, if not

²⁹ *Notes and Queries*, 7 (1853), p. 339.

³⁰ Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, p. 126.

³¹ R. Hutton, *The rise and fall of merry England: the ritual year, 1400–1700* (1994), p. 17.

³² Mastin, *Naseby*, p. 18.

³³ Hutton, *Stations of the sun*, p. 124.

³⁴ E. Duffy, *Voices of Morebath: reformation and rebellion in an English village* (2001); W. Franklin, 'Three Tudor churchwardens' accounts', *Northamptonshire Past and Present* (2015), pp. 17–30.

all, ceremonial occasions were abolished. The churchwardens' accounts for Holme Pierrepont in Nottinghamshire show clearly the effect of this step. In 1552 the parishioners had to pay an assessment tax annually to the church stock because the usual collections 'with hobby horse and light' were now prohibited.³⁵ Such ceremonies, and the income from church ales and so on, funded the upkeep of the parish or town house, and in those parishes that owned such a house the option was to rent it out as a dwelling, such as happened at Morebath and Burton Latimer. In those parishes where the parish or town house was owned by the religious guilds, the community lost their communal facility, which was closed and most likely sold with their dissolution. The loss of such a building therefore left the parish church as the only suitable premises for both worship and storage of communal property.

The nineteenth century saw the revival of some celebrations including the Plough Monday procession. A plough was brought into the church on Plough Sunday and blessed so that the new year's labour might prosper. On Plough Monday the plough was drawn through the community, led by the vicar and the altar servers. Such modern ceremonies appear to have had the effect of leading some historians to assume that references to a 'Town' or 'Common' plough referred to a ceremonial implement for use on that day.

³⁵ Davidson, 'Plough rituals', p. 36.