



Drama

Involvement in theatrical productions, both serious and more light-hearted, has been a longstanding tradition in Toft and has involved children and adults. Toft performers have taken part in productions in Toft and in neighbouring villages, including Bourn, Barton, Comberton and Dry Drayton. In 1954-55, there was a drama group in Toft run by Stuart Mitchell, husband of the then Head of the village school. The play they performed in Toft was subsequently entered in a drama competition in Cambridge.

Over the years, Toft people have been actors, producers, directors, costume-makers, sound-and-lighting engineers, orchestra members, set-designers, ticket-and-poster designers, stage hands, video engineers, in short, supplying a pool of talent and expertise for everything connected with putting on a theatrical production.

Toft School entered into the dramatic spirit in 1947, with a production of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, with familiar village names in the cast. In 1950, the village put on a Nativity play. 1980 saw a Comberton Village College production of *Murder in the Red Barn*, appropriately held in a barn at Old Farm, Toft. The evening included Victorian-style food and a slide-show of images of Toft and Comberton in the 19th century. In 1985, Patrick Hoskins of Toft featured as one of the Ugly Sisters in a Comberton Village College production of *Cinderella*. Patrick re-emerged as the Sherriff of Nottingham in a 1989 Village College production of the story of Robin Hood. In 1991, Marylin Meadows produced and directed *Toad of Toad Hall* at Dry Drayton, with Ron Meadows starring as Toad.

More recently, Toft Social Club has put on a series of biennial pantomimes and reviews at the People's Hall, which have brought together a wide range of Toft acting and singing talent. Theatre lights were purchased for the Hall in 2002. The *Seaside Special* in 2003 saw the first performance by the now famous Toft Chalet Maids (a group of mature ladies unafraid to strut their stuff and kick their legs as Toft's chorus-line!). The 2006 pantomime featured Toft actors performing as, among others, Kermit and Miss Piggy of the Muppets, Peter Paul and Mary, and accompanied by no fewer than three dames (Richard Fletcher, Koran Collett and Martin Sebborn),

with a cameo appearance by (a very young) Victoria Unsworth. 2008 was the year of *Toft Goes West*, a cowboy and cowgirl extravaganza with appropriate western songs and gun-slinging. In April of 2008, a Shakespeare theatre-and-dinner evening was held, with extracts from some of the plays read and acted live. *Toft in Space* was the next pantomime in 2010, with *Star Wars* and *Dr Who* themes interwoven with a narrative of a parallel universe to which the Toft Chalet Maids were kidnapped by an evil emperor, Daft Raider. In 2012, the panto-review was *Toft at War*, in which the themes included *Dad's Army*, fifth-column spies, big-band songs and tap-dancing, a typical WWII government information film, and all the nostalgia of the war period.

In the autumn of 2010, a group of Toft residents got together and formed the Toft People's Drama Group, which gave its first performance featuring modern drama extracts live and on video, under the direction of drama teacher and Toft resident Jean Stewart, at a dinner-and-theatre evening at the People's Hall in early 2011. The same year, a second theatre-and-dinner evening celebrated Saint David's Day with a Welsh theme. In 2012, Toft resident Elizabeth Dolman wrote an original play, *The Witch of Toft*, based on extensive research into the witch-hunts in this county in the 17th century, interweaving that theme with modern-day media witch-hunts. The play, in video form, was shown at the People's Hall in October 2012, featuring members of the Drama Group.



Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs Toft 1947

L-R: Keith Collett, Dexter Robinson, Ray Clark, Warwick Ward, Roger Harley, Malcolm Collett, Terry Osborne



Nativity Play, Toft 1950

L-R back: Nancy Sparks, Elizabeth Sparks, Mrs Preston, Elsie Jacklin, Alf Collett, June Ward, P.C. Purkiss, Mrs Purkiss, Mrs Rogers, Laurie Collett, Sid Badcock
 Front: Keith Preston, Joan Hart, ??, ?? Nativity Play Toft 1950



Cast and helpers' party *Toft in Space* 2010



Jake Tebbit and Chalet Maids, Toft pantomime 2006



Erecting the stage, *Toft in Space* pantomime 2010



Finale, Toft in Space 2010 (front l-r: Linda Hollow, Victoria Unsworth, Elizabeth Dolman, Jean Stewart, Jake Stewart)



Gwalia Welsh drama evening 2011 (l-r: Mike McCarthy, Martin Yeadon, Paul Hollow, Barbara Preece)



Toft at War 2012 (l-r: Jake Tebbit, Eve Thorogood, Gill Collett)



Toft pantomime 2006: Miss Piggy & Kermit (Jane and Jake Tebbit)



Toft in Space 2010: Dr Who (Paul Hollow)



Victoria Unsworth dances, Toft pantomime 2006



The Saint Andrew's Sisters (Elizabeth Dolman, Val Sinclair and Katrina Holmes),
Toft at War 2012



Three Dames (Koran Collett, Martin Sebborn & Richard Fletcher), *Toft pantomime*
2006



Toft at War 2012 (l-r: Richard Fletcher, Brian Roberts, Terrence Unsworth, Jake Stewart, Paul Hollow, Roger Thorogood, Nick Nicholson)