

Fordhall Community Land Initiative and Love Lee Production present

Arthur's Plough 2026

adapted by Chris Eldon Lee from the lives of
Arthur, Ben, Charlotte and Connie Hollins

FORDHALL



Dairy Products

Oh this earth must not be ploughed
While here we stand to guard the land
Nature will do the work, we'll lend a hand
And the earth rebuffs the plough...

www.fordhallfarm.com

Arthur's Plough '26

The **ACTION** takes place in and around Fordhall Farm, Market Drayton, Shropshire.

Act 1 is set in the 20th Century... covering the period 1918 to 1975.

There will then be a 15-minute **interval** during which almost 30 years pass by.

Act 2 is in the 21st Century... from 2003 on into the near future.



**PLEASE BE SURE TO TURN OFF
YOUR MOBILE PHONE**

And any other annoyances you may
have about your person



The Actors

ARTHUR in his later years	Allan Price
ARTHUR as a young man/Mr QUICK BLITZ/AUCTIONEER	Paul Wilkinson
ARTHUR as a lad	Adam Butler
WWI SOLDIER/UNCLE TOM/BLACKPOOL LANDLADY/HELGA/ SHROPSHIRE WILDLIFE TRUST CHAP/HIGHLY PREGNANT COW/TV PRESENTER	Christina Cubbin
MOTHER/CONNIE	Genevieve Tudor
GLADYS/FLOWER	Eloise Wilkinson
EDITH	Sally Tonge
VICTORIA/CHAIR WOMAN/PRUENELLA SCALES	Dawn Lake
JACK/Mr THOMPSON/BUYER/LAND AGENT/CHARLES	Mark Smith
FRED/DOUBTFUL REPORTER	Jo Cox
MAY/SOPHIE	Alex Osborne
HOLGA/BEN HOLLINS	Oscar Boughton
CHARLOTTE HOLLINS	Ruth Tipton

Other humans, animals, micro-organism and bacteria are played by the cast.
Bodger the Badger, Flo the newborn calf play themselves, naturally.

Performed in memory of previous cast members Janine Clarke and Sue Miles



The MERE SINGERS

portray The Fordhall
Shareholders' Choir.
They are:

Director Mary Keith with
Audrey Bramford
Grant Brackley
Janet Bennett
Lyn Chambers
Lottie Clarke
Debbie Clough
Jerry Conway
Ruth Conway
Kathy Cunningham
Yvonne Davies
Lizzie Grocott James
Louise Hart
Hilary Howell
Helen Howes
Fran Hunt
Sheena Jenkins
Chris Kerr
Mary Latto
Rachel Leigh
June Lewis
Corinne Littlehales
Sally Mawinney
Andy May
Lorna McGain
Anthea Ollerton
Suzanne Orion
Susie Osborne
Sam Owen
Marilyn Owens
Sandy Ramsey
Ellen Robeson
Stephanie Short
Sarah Smith
Sara Toyn
Ruth Walmsley
Jane Williams
Claire Winch

The SONGS

Arthur's Plough
The Moo Cow Chorus
Nine Months
Following the Binder Round
Pancake Day
Going Down to London Town
Porka Polka
Arthur Hollins Had a Farm
The Fordhall Dairymaids
On a Hill in Shropshire
Nobody Seems to Care
Eight Hundred Thousand Pounds
Sharing
A Whole New Future

Music / Words by

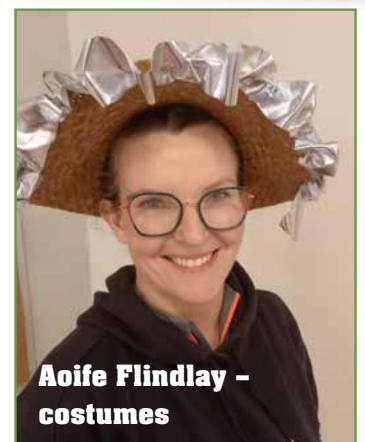
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Mary Keith / Barry the Bull
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Peter Faulkner / Roger Pye
Steve Ashley
Traditional arr. Mary Keith
Alistair Gillies / Roger Pye
Trad. arr. Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Ernest Watkinson / Arthur Hollins
Johnny Coppin / Margery Lea
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee
Mary Keith / Chris Eldon Lee

Mary Keith plays accordion.



The Production Team comprises:

Adaptation/Direction Chris Eldon Lee
Production/Choreography Maggie Love
Musical Direction Mary Keith
Director's Assistant Kim Jones
Production Assistants Lisa Morris, Cat May, Bill McCabe, Martyn Lake
Costume Aoife Findlay
Chaperones Kate Boughton, Emma Wilkinson, Lisa Morris
Technical Management Elliot Roberts Pete Morris Lucy Wrench
Creation of the 'Occasional Table' Sue Hall
Posters and Programme design Mike Ashton, MA Creative
Drawing of Fordhall Farm Lydia Fitzpatrick
Video Micro Video
Transport Tim Hockly



We offer our thanks to Shrewsbury United Reform Church, St Mary's Church, David Purslow, Home Farm, Attingham, Ian Pritchard and Tanner's Wines for the *empty!* wine crates



The Cast and their main roles

ADAM BUTLER plays young Arthur

"Hi, my name is Adam. I am 8 and this is my first play, but I have been on TV pretending to be the Town Crier! I am a dancer, and have been on the stage with Viv Kelly School of Dance and Theatre for their 'One Night Only' productions. I have really enjoyed playing Young Arthur and a Jersey cow in 'Arthur's Plough'."

OSCAR BOUGHTON plays Holga and Ben Hollins

Growing up in a theatrical family, Oscar has always had a passion for acting. He has been a member of Shropshire Youth Theatre since 2019, performing in 'The Winter's Tale', 'Great Expectations' and 'As You Like It'. He will play Banquo in SYT's production of 'Macbeth' next year.

JO COX plays Fred and the Doubtful Reporter

Jo studied Performing Arts at Northumbria University and on graduating, formed a company called Theatre of Incurable Players with three fellow students. After teaching for few years in her native Somerset, Jo moved to Shropshire and has appeared in numerous local productions; sporting a blood-smeared placard (and very little else) in 'Play The Man', a cod piece in 'Richard III' and full female clothing in (amongst others) 'Creditors', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'The Taming of the Shrew' and 'Playhouse Creatures'. For Love Lee Production she played Di in 'Atlantic Ladies', and Dorothea in 'Swallows and Amazon's Winter Holiday'.

CHRISTINA CUBBIN practically everything else

Christina is playing a variety of parts, including a pregnant cow, a microbe and the back-end of a 'Shaker-ater'! She made her stage debut aged 9 playing Morgan Le Fay in her junior school's critically acclaimed production of 'King Arthur' and has loved acting ever since! More recent work includes 'Atlantic Ladies' and 'Jabs' for Love Lee productions and 'ManBand' and 'Lions led by Donkeys' for Bloomin' Good Productions.

DAWN LAKE play Victoria and Prunella Scales

I started drama when I was 7 years old with Chester Little Theatre Club and then the next time was when I was 24! I taught some drama at The Corbet school and adjudicator for Shropshire Young Farmers for several years. I am a member of Bayston Hill drama group and I enjoy directing and acting with them. Love Lee Productions include 'Silhouette', 'Shrewsbury's Finest Hour', and 'Winter Holiday'. I particularly enjoyed the diverse range of characters I was given in 'Arthur's Plough'. Victoria Pig in particular. Thank you team.

ALEX OSBORNE plays May Hollins and Sophie Hopkins

"I love amateur dramatics and, since moving to Shrewsbury, have discovered a wonderful community of like-minded people. As a member of Bayston Hill Amateur Dramatics, I made my debut playing Paula and Millie in 'Confusions', followed by a sexy police officer in 'Hello, Is There Any BODY There?'. I've loved every opportunity to play different characters, and 'Arthur's Plough' is no exception. I hope you enjoy this true-to-life country-bumpkin play!"

Adam Butler with Eloise



Oscar Boughton



Jo Cox





Christina Cubbin



Dawn Lake



Alex Osborne

ALLAN PRICE plays Arthur in his latter years

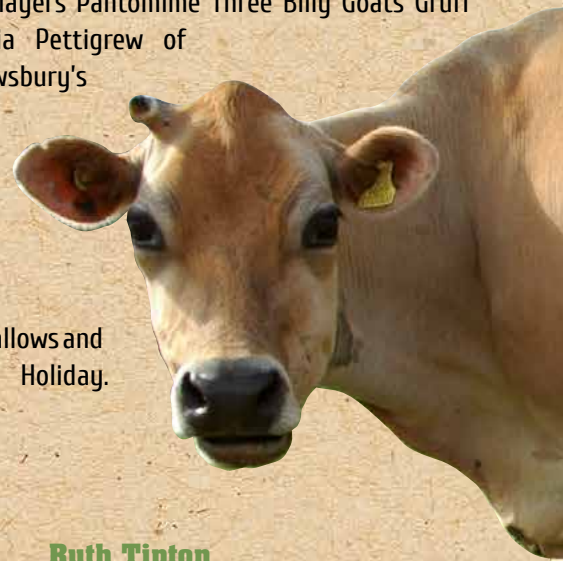
Allan Price first set foot on stage in the days when Arthur Hollins was still selling yoghurt. He played Arthur in the 2008 production of Arthur's Plough, and he's thrilled to be able to give voice to this fascinating character again. He admits he may step down if the play is revived in 2056.

MARK SMITH plays Jack, Mr Thompson, Land Agent and Charles

Mark Smith has been involved in amateur theatre in Shropshire since 1993 when he was in Shrewsbury Theatre Guild's production of An Inspector Calls. He has been in several productions of Chris Eldon Lee's plays including Dear Agnes, Mr Weaver's Shrewsbury Tales and Shrewsbury's Finest Hour. He has particularly enjoyed the variety of characters he has had the chance to play in this production, the part of the 'boar' being particularly close to his heart

RUTH TIPTON plays Charlotte Hollins

Ruth Tipton has a masters graduate in Bioarchaeology and Forensic Anthropology at UCL (University College London). During her time in London, she has participated in a number of acting workshops. Here in Shropshire she has taken part in productions in Bayston Hill and pantomimes in her hometown of Pontesbury. She played the lead role of Heidi (Hi!!!) in the Pontesbury Players Pantomime Three Billy Goats Gruff and Miss Cynthia Pettigrew of the BBC in Shrewsbury's Finest Hour, the female lead in Chris Niblock's fascinating sci-fi play Backdated and Titty Walker in Swallows and Amazon's Winter Holiday.



Allan Price



Mark Smith



Ruth Tipton





Sally Tonge

SALLY TONGE plays Edith

Sal is a popular community musician and storyteller. For Love Lee productions she has appeared in Silhouette, Ursula Queen of the Jungle, Atlantic Ladies, Shrewsbury's Finest Hour and Jabs. She makes stunning marmalade and can keep a hula hoop spinning for half an hour.

GENEVIEVE TUDOR plays Mother and Connie Hollins

Genevieve studied drama in Stratford on Avon and went rapidly downhill from there. She's been in two incarnations of Arthur's Plough and they thought it would be unkind to leave her out of this one. She likes folk music, Morris dancing and cats.

ELOISE WILKINSON plays Gladys Hollins and the Flower

"Hi, I'm Eloise, I've been at Shropshire Youth Theatre since I was just 5 years old. I'm now 13. I'm now in Seniors and my first project is coming up which is 'Macbeth'. I've grown

up around theatre with my dad being an actor, my sister and I being in SYT and my mum supporting us. I've found so much joy in acting and 'Arthur's Plough' has been such a great opportunity for me. I hope you enjoy the play!"

PAUL WILKINSON plays Arthur and a young man and Mr Quick Blitz

Hi I'm Paul, and I am thrilled to be appearing in 'Arthur's Plough', which will be my first time performing with my daughter Eloise. Like her, I also started acting in youth theatre and followed my passion through my education, achieving a degree in dramatic arts from Bretton Hall College, after which I worked as an actor for some time. I toured the UK and Europe with various productions and appeared in a few adverts, tv shows and films. Eventually I fell into various other jobs and now work in operational excellence. I came back to acting after the pandemic, where I appeared in 'Jabs' with Love Lee productions and then 'Manband' with Bloomin' Good Productions. It is an honour to be taking the part of one of the Arthur's in this anniversary production and I hope everyone enjoys this updated version of this amazing story.

Genevieve Tudor



Eloise Wilkinson



Paul Wilkinson



The Production Team

CHRIS ELDON LEE

Chris Eldon Lee was a founder member of BBC Radio Shropshire. He won the BBC's Frank Gillard Gold Award for producing the county's oral history project The Century Speaks. He has performed 500 comedy gigs with Three Men In A Bowtie, recorded the oral history of 200 Antarctic explorers, and produced at least 250 programmes for BBC Radio 4. His 14 plays include Arthurs Plough, Dear Agnes, Silhouette, Ursula Queen Of The Jungle, Atlantic Ladies, Shrewsbury's Finest Hour, JABS and Swallows and Amazon's Winter Holiday.



MAGGIE LOVE

Maggie has an extensive career in Theatre as a movement specialist and dance historian across the world. She began working with Chris on 'Arthur's Plough' in 2008 and has co-produced all 'Love Lee Productions'. Maggie's Royal Credits include being Artistic Director of the Shropshire Diamond Jubilee Pageant 2012 and she was project Manager for Darwin 200 in Shrewsbury. She freelances for Heritage Events and Festivals. Maggie is a Shrewsbury Town Guide and enjoys giving talks and workshops. She was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the Mayor of Shrewsbury in 2025 in recognition of her continued work in the promotion of the Life and Wellbeing of Shrewsbury.



MARY KEITH

Mary has been carefully cultivating and nurturing Shrewsbury based community choir the Mere Singers since their initial seeding with Pentabus Theatre 23 years ago. When not creating original music for choirs and theatre shows, she likes to play organic gardener and amateur ceramicist, immersing her hands in soil and clay and seeing what emerges!



Arthur's Plough 1991 reprinted from The Shropshire Magazine

I had never before felt so helpless. It was Saturday 23rd February 1991 and I was sitting somewhere in the middle of Pontesbury Public Hall trying not to look too conspicuous. My only consolation was that Arthur Hollins, on the front row, was probably feeling a great deal worse.

Of course I'd sent him draft copies of the script for his approval. But only now did he confess, minutes before curtain up, that he'd not read any of them.

"I didn't want to spoil the moment, Chris," he told me. The shock very nearly ruined mine. It's not every day one man puts his life story into the hands of another without checking its progress. So neither of us knew what to expect.

We needn't have worried. The wonderful Pontesbury public laughed. Then they clapped, held their breath, fell silent and laughed again. Arthur was constantly reaching for his handkerchief.

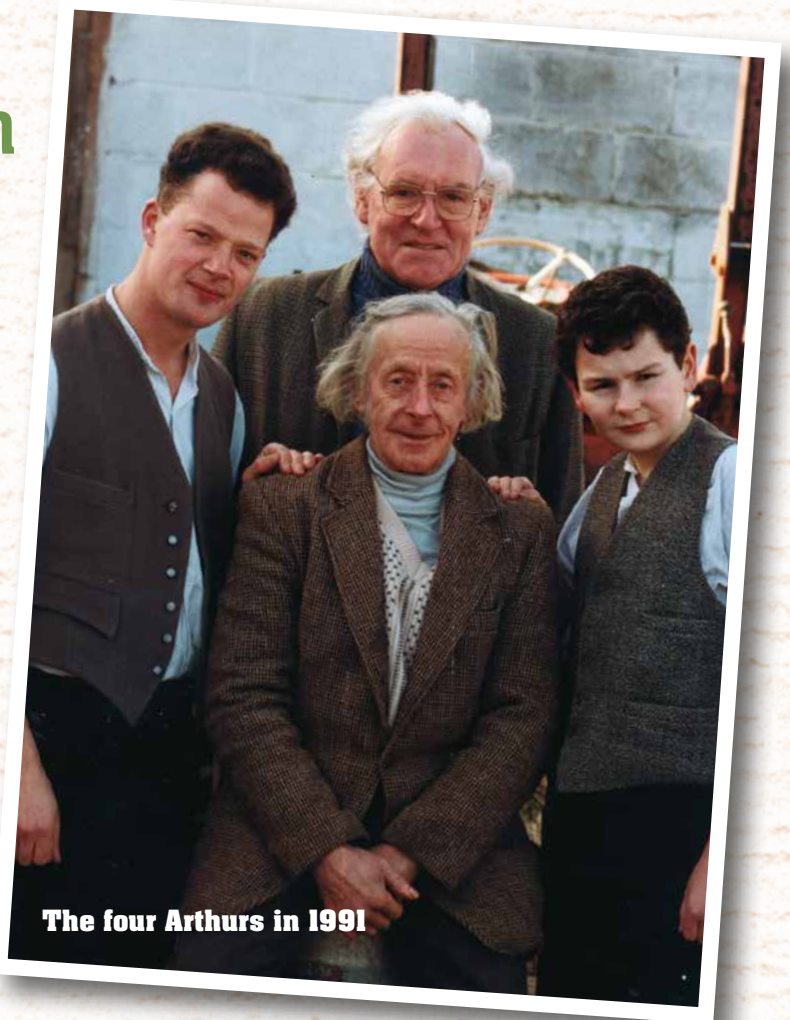
Even so, it was not until the fourth performance at Bishop's Castle did we begin to realise we had a success on our hands. That Wednesday night the rain awas Welsh. We got soaked hauling the straw bales into the Community College and people poured down from the hills along lanes that had become rivers.

But this particular Shropshire audience really took Arthur's story to heart. They seemed to revel in the very Shrophireness of it all. Arthur just smiled sagely. He knew! This was his triumph. I was merely the facilitator.

At the interval I eavesdropped on a group of other farmers. It was naughty of me, but I couldn't help myself. They were totally animated; discussing Arthur's organic methods (not without some jocular comment) and sympathising about his struggle with the land and the War Ministry. "I could have wept for him," said one. The bell went. "By God, we'd best get back. We might miss summat!"

Our eighth performance was in Market Drayton, Arthur's home territory. This was the real test. These people really knew Arthur Hollins. The characters on stage were their neighbours. Whispers went through the audience. "She went to Grammar School you know." "He was up to no good." "Poor dear! She had such a tragic end." I even met a man who'd fed Arthur's pig Victoria. "That actress, you know, was just like her!" he said. I hadn't the heart to tell him "that actress" was a recent Mayoress of Newport.

Chris Eldon Lee

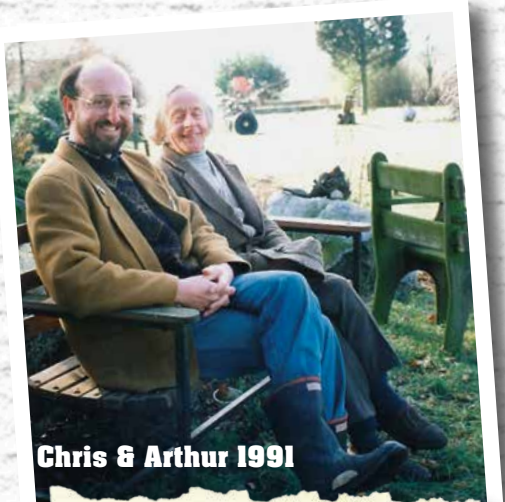


The four Arthurs in 1991

The first performance of the original version of **Arthur's Plough** was given at Pontesbury Village Hall on 23rd February 1991. The original cast consisted of John Oliver, John Roberts Tom Calver, Genevieve Tudor, Gail Gillogaley (now Sinden), Sue Miles, Andrew Jones, Janine Clarke, Mandy Rouch (later Roberts) and Ian Musty - with musicians Alex Steele, Di West and Alistair Gillies.

The Story of ARTHUR'S PLOUGH by Chris Eldon Lee

Reprinted from the 2008 programme



Chris & Arthur 1991

Theatre Guild tells a farmer's story

Arthur's Plough, a musical adaptation of the autobiography of Shropshire farmer Arthur Hollins, is the latest production by Shrewsbury Theatre Guild.

When Arthur Hollins inherited Fordhall Farm, near Market Drayton, the soil was ruined and destitution beckoned.

But now, aged 75, Arthur is expecting his 50th organic harvest and is about to manufacture "an invention to revolutionise farming".

He took over the running of the farm at 14 years of age and realised his father's farming methods had ruined the thin Tern Hill soil.

But the family rallied round and a combination of hard work and ingenuity transformed a disaster into a thriving business.

Then came Arthur's experiment with organic farming and his realisation that the soil was being destroyed by ploughing.

So 15 years ago he designed his plough to the scrap heap and has not used it since. He has since designed a new "culture seeder" machine which is undergoing trials this Spring.

Arthur Hollins was also a pioneer in yoghurt manufacture and with his wife May turned his farm into a dairy, produce farm, running his own stalls at Harrods and Selfridges in London.

The play, which will tour Shropshire, has been compiled by local broadcaster Chris Eldon Lee who first met Arthur Hollins seven years ago.

Visually, the play is very funny but the text has been carefully researched with the help of Acton Scott Farm Museum, two practising Shropshire farmers and Arthur Hollins himself.

It is set entirely in Arthur Hollins' old cow shed at Fordhall Farm on his 75th birthday next May with the guests at the party acting out his story.

Arthur's Plough can be seen at Shrewsbury Music Hall on March 1 and 2 at 8pm.

Other performances are Pontesbury Public Hall tomorrow, Newport City Hall on Sunday, Oswestry College Theatre on Tuesday, Bishop's Castle College on Wednesday and Market Drayton town centre building, on March 3, all at 8pm.

Seen here - three dairy maids played by Mandy Roud, Genevieve Tudor and Susan Mills.



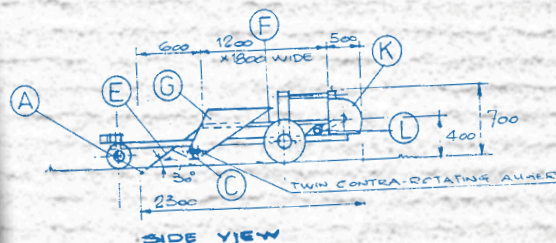
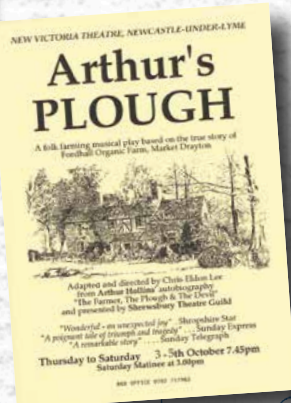
When 14-year-old Arthur Hollins inherited the tenancy of Fordhall Farm near Market Drayton in Shropshire in the late 1920s, the land was in ruins. Using his own 20th Century organic principles, Arthur spent 65 years pioneering new, "old fashioned" methods of cultivation. He paved the way for today's keen organic interest. He produced the UK's first commercial 'live' yoghurt and invented his 'CulturSeeder' ("Arthur's Plough") designed to revolutionize farming on poor soils.

In 1989 I interviewed Arthur for my lunchtime show on BBC Radio Shropshire. I felt that his autobiography would make a good play and (glossing over the fact that I'd never actually written one before) wrote "Arthur's Plough". The show

was given 14 performances by Shrewsbury Theatre Guild in 1991, culminating at the New Victoria Theatre in Newcastle Under Lyme. Arthur brought his second wife Connie and their wide-eyed children Ben (7) and Charlotte (9) to every night.

A year later the farm was under threat again. Now at BBC Radio 4, I produced the 40-minute documentary "A Tale of Two Yoghurts" on the delicate relationship between Arthur and his newly dominant neighbours, Muller. After that I kept in touch with Arthur by Christmas card - his normally arriving in late January.

There were further attempts to destroy Arthur's life work. Developers were keen to get their hands on Fordhall and an ultimatum



LEGEND

A	TWIN CONTRA-VIBRATOR BLADES
B	CULTIVATOR TYNE
C	SEED BOX - WITH TWIN AUGERS
D	SIDE CUTTING DISCS
E	INCLINED OSCILLATOR PLATE (PLATE)
F	SHAKER RAKING GRILLE
G	SEED HOPPERS
H	POWER TAKE OFF / DISTN. BOX
I	90° DRIVE BOX
J	GEAR BOX
K	CHOPPER / STREDDER
L	BLOWER UNIT
M	FIXED S/R FRAME
N	DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT

NOTE: MACHINE GUARDS NOT SHOWN - WILL BE FITTED WHERE NECESSARY.

NOTE: TRACTOR HITCH-UP & REVERSE LIFTING MECHANISMS NOT SHOWN SEE SEPARATE DETAIL

for the Hollins family to quit the tenancy inevitably came.

Ben and Charlotte - now of student age - loyally took up the gigantic fight to save Fordhall. Their success amazed everybody from Market Drayton to Mozambique, as Fordhall became the first organisation in England to place farmland in common ownership.

Meanwhile, they never forgot that play about their Dad. Early last year I bumped into Charlotte at a Satish Kumar lecture at Shire Hall, where I was promptly challenged to "do the play again". Faced with someone who'd just raised a million pounds against all the odds, it was difficult to say "no". But I imposed one condition; that I be permitted to up-date the play and portray them both on stage, at Fordhall, in front of the bedroom window where generations of the Hollins family had been born.

So, the 1991 play has been condensed into Act 1 of the new production and a wholly new Act 2 was written at the turn of this year. For dramatic effect, characters

have been combined, time has been rearranged and minor liberties taken. But it's still very much the true story. For authenticity, during the rehearsal period the actors playing Ben, Charlotte, Sophie and Connie all experienced David Attenborough-style encounters with their real-life counterparts. Connie very touchingly gave actor Allan Price one of Arthur's last hats to wear on stage.

One particularly poignant moment in this new show

- which we didn't have to handle in the original production - is the death of Arthur, which I've based on Ben and Charlotte's account of his passing. The choir will sing "On a Hill in Shropshire", which featured in the first show and was then played at Arthur's funeral in 2005. But our funeral scene has a twist to it of which, we suspect, Arthur would have thoroughly approved.



Arthur's autobiography *The Farmer, The Plough and The Devil* is now published by Ellingham Press. Ben and Charlotte's *The Fight for Fordhall Farm* is published by Hodder and Stoughton. Both books are on sale tonight.

Steve Ashley's song *Pancake Day* is published by Topic and is available on his *Family Album*.

Johnny Coppin's setting of Margery Lea's poem *On a Hill in Shropshire* is published by Red Sky Records and can be found on his *Force of the River* CD. The song featured in the 1991 production of Arthur's Plough and was played at Arthur's funeral in 2005.

