

play (or whatever it was at the time). Over time, as the memory of the plundering faded and the process of oral transmission continued, the villagers lost the point of the lampoon and turned it back to Blunderland, Thumberland, Umberland – or even Cumberland.

The topicality of the Duke of Plunderland lampoon implies that it must have been incorporated into the village Mumming custom at the time, in the winter of 1643-4, clearly well before the currently accepted date of the mid-eighteenth century for the origins of Mummers' plays. The evidence from south Northamptonshire of the Prince's activities just prior to his elevation to the Dukedom provides strong support to his being a hate figure for the villages in that area. If further similar examples can be found in the Oxfordshire villages around Banbury, the additional weight of evidence for him being the inspiration for the Duke of Cumberland character in their village performances may be the first step in pushing the history of Mummers' plays back another one hundred years.

