



Preston Candover Script



The Full English

The Full English was a unique nationwide project unlocking hidden treasures of England's cultural heritage by making over 58,000 original source documents from 12 major folk collectors available to the world via a ground-breaking nationwide digital archive and learning project. The project was led by the English Folk Dance and Song Society (EFDSS), funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and in partnership with other cultural partners across England.

The Full English digital archive (www.vwml.org) continues to provide access to thousands of records detailing traditional folk songs, music, dances, customs and traditions that were collected from across the country. Some of these are known widely, others have lain dormant in notebooks and files within archives for decades.

The Full English learning programme worked across the country in 19 different schools including primary, secondary and special educational needs settings. It also worked with a range of cultural partners across England, organising community, family and adult learning events.

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Preston Candover Script

From the Steve Roud & Paul Marsh Collection

A manuscript text sent to us in 1977 by Miss G.M. Coates, long-time resident of Preston Candover, as written down by her mother, probably at the dictation of one of the performers. We then met Bill Hopkins who had been in the local gang from about 1905 onwards. Bill recited the whole play, and filled in many other details.

Bill started in the gang made up of members of the Boy Scouts, put together at the instigation of General Hope of Preston Grange, and they were taught by a member of the previous, adult, gang. Bill's team carried on until after the First World War and then faded out, and later attempts to revive it in the village came to nothing.

Bill's recited text differed in a few places from the manuscript, and in these cases we have normally followed his words. The only important difference is that the manuscript has 'St. George' throughout whereas Bill (and other locals) always said 'King George'.

The text is quite typical of Hampshire plays, which tend to be longer than elsewhere, with more than one combat. The comic knockabout sequences between Father Christmas and other characters are more pronounced than usual, and Bill stressed that the somewhat overdone dialect pronunciation was an important part of the performance.

Costume was also typical of the area, being primarily streamers of wallpaper or cambric, tall hats with tinsel and other Christmas decorations, but the combatants also wore sashes over both shoulders, with a rosette at front and back where they crossed. Little Johnny Jack, as always, had two or three dolls strapped to his back. The only other props mentioned are wooden swords and the two little bottles carried by the Doctor.

A word of caution

None of The Full English materials have been censored. The contents do not reflect the opinions and views held by the English Folk Dance and Song Society, or any of The Full English partner organisations.

Mumming Play used by men of Preston Candover, Basingstoke, Hampshire

FOOL In comes I who have never been before
With my merry actors at the door
They can act and they can sing
With your consent they shall come in
Stir up the fire and make a light
And see this noble act tonight
If you don't believe the words I say
Step in Bold Roomer and clear the way

BOLD ROOMER In comes I, Bold Roomer
Bold Roomer is my name. Give me room to rhyme
I'm come to show you merry sports & pastime
To pass away the winter
Old activity, new activity, such activity
As never was seen before, and perhaps
Never will no more
Walk in old man (*To Father Xmas*)

FATHER CHRISTMAS
In comes I Old Father Xmas. I've been in many
a hard fought battle and never been knocked down

(Bold Roomer pushes him and he falls)

BOLD ROOMER Thee bist now Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS
And so will thee bist, when thee gets as old and tough as I be.
Seems pretty slippery and greasy about here as if zo there's
been some pot liquor or strong beer throw'd about here.
I'm open (or 'opin') to taste a drop on it afore we leaves here

BOLD ROOMER Hope zo Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS

What's thee know about it?
(stops & turns to the people)
In comes I, poor old Father Xmas
Am I welcome, or am I not?
I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot
Christmas comes but once a year
Ay, and when it comes it brings good cheer
Roast beef, plum pudden and Christmas pie
Who likes that any better than I?

BOLD ROOMER I do Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS

I've travelled a great many miles both far & near
And now I've travelled just here
And .I'm open to taste a cup of thy stray beer
Aye, a cup of the best
May God in heaven send thy soul to heaven to rest
And if it should be a cup of the small
Bad luck to it both cup and all.
There's rooms and rooms and gallons of rooms
All in this room there shall be shown
The dreadfulest battle that ever was known
Betwixt King Garge & my two sons
Walk in here King Garge

KING GEORGE In steps I King Garge
King Garge it is my name
With my right hand & glittering sword
I won ten crowns of gold
'Twas I that fought the fiery dragon
And brought him down by slaughter
And by those means I won the prize
The King of Egypt's daughter
So grand and bold it doth appear
With my bold tribes & Britons

I come to close thy ear [the year?]
Old England's right, old England's wrong
Old England's admiration
If I draw out my English weapon
Is there a man in all this room before me stands
That I may not cut him down
With my created hand?

BOLD ROOMER Oh yes! Oh yes! there is a man
Who in this room before thee stands
That thou canst not cut him down
With thy created hand

KING GEORGE Ah me a little fellow.
Thee talks pretty bold
Like some more men as I've been told
How cuts thy capers?
Pull out thy rusty raper
Likewise thy sword & fight
And thy purse & pay
For some satisfaction I'll have this night
Before I goes away

BOLD ROOMER No satisfaction at all King Garge
For in less than three minutes, I'll take thy life away

KING GEORGE I'll hag thee, I'll jag thee
And have thee for to know
I be the king of England
Before I lets thee go

BOLD ROOMER Thee shain't neither hag me n or jag me
Not have me for to know
Thee bist the King of England Before thee lets me go
Battle to battle to thee I call
To see which on this ground shall fall

KING GEORGE Battle to battle to thee I play
To see which on this ground shall lay
Mind thy hits and guard thy blows
Likewise thy face and eyes also

(They fight. George pricks him and Bold Roomer goes down)

FATHER CHRISTMAS
There thou best adone one on 'im

KING GEORGE And I'll do thee directly Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Ah! I don't know so much about that
I'm too old and tough in the old gizzard for thee
If thee thinks thee's such a goose as all that
I'll bring another little fellow for thee yet
And if he can't much about warm thee
I'll much about warm thee
Walk in Bold Slasher

BOLD SLASHER In comes I Bold Slasher
Bold Slasher is my name
From those Indian Wars I came
Me & myself & seven more
Fought & killed eleven score

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Eleven score of what?

BOLD SLASHER Eleven score of brave fighting men father

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Eleven score of ginger-beer bottles or black beetles

BOLD SLASHER My head is made of iron
My body lined with steel
Brass from my arms to my knuckle bones
I'll fight thee King Garge, all in this battle-field

KING GEORGE Ah me little fellow, thee talks pretty bold
Like some more men as I've been told
How cuts thy capers? Pull out thy rusty raper
Likewise thy sword and fight
I'll have some satisfaction of thee this night
Afore I goes away
Battle to battle to thee I call
To see which on this ground shall fall

BOLD SLASHER Battle to battle to thee I'll play
To see which on this ground shall lay

KING GEORGE Mind thy hits and guard thy blows
Likewise thy face & eyes also

(They fight & Bold Slasher falls)

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Oh! thee good-for-nothingest villain
Thee ben & ruined me & my two zons
I never had but two in all my life
And there lies fifteen on 'em
I'll have some satisfaction on thee
Before thee goes to zupper

(Enter Doctor)

Oh doctor! doctor! Is there a doctor to be found
That can cure ray two zons lies bleeding on the ground?

DOCTOR Oh yes there is a doctor to be found
That can cure your two sons that lies bleeding on the ground

FATHER CHRISTMAS
What's thy fee Doctor?

DOCTOR Ten guineas is my fee, ten pound I'll take of thee
Being a poor old friend of mine

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Thee calls I poor. Baint I as fat as thou bist?
What canst thee cure?

DOCTOR

I can cure the itch, the stitch, the palsy, gout, the
raging pains goes in and out
Sides all these I can maintain
If thee breaks thy neck I can set it again
And charge thee nothing but the pain.

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Where's thee ben to learn all this Doctor?

DOCTOR

I've been to England, France, Scotland & Devon, Canterbury
and all the wide world over. Bring me an old woman
four-score years & ten (scarce ere a tooth in her head)
I'll raise her up same as she'd never been dead

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Thee bist a main clever sort of an old quack doctor!

DOCTOR

An arm broke or a leg broke, all these things I can maintain
If thee breaks thy nose I'll stick en up again
I've got a little bottle in my waist-coat pocket called
Okum-Pokum, Elecampaine

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Elephant's brains! Thee'd best give me a smell of that stuff Doctor

(Doctor lets him smell it & he is overcome)

Pouf! That's some rum sort of stuff Doctor
That's 'nough to knock anybody down, let alone
raising of 'em up

DOCTOR

I've got another little bottle in my waistcoat
pocket, what they calls Dragon's Blood
(Father Christmas smells it & is again overcome)

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Thee'd better try thy skill Doctor

DOCTOR

Drop on the skull bone, drop on the touch-bone
Drop on the heart
Rise up you bold champions
And fight for your part

(Both get up and return to former places)

TURKISH KNIGHT In comes I the Turkis (sic) Knight

Against old England for to vight
I'll fight thee King Garge
Like a man of courage bold
Let thy blood run ever so hot
I'll quickly fetch it cold

KING GEORGE

In comes I King Garge
From over the sea I came
My name it is King Garge, & I'll appear the same
First I fought in France, then I fought in Spain
Then I came on to this land to fight the Turks again
I saw a Turk a standing by
Swearing oft that I 'ud die
But sooner ner never I wud be beat
I'll tramp the enemy under my feet (stamps)

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Very well brave souls

ALL SING

There's many's a man has lost their lives
Left their children & their wives
But still we'll have another try
The English swears the Turks shall die

(They fight & King George wounds the Turkish Knight)

TURKISH KNIGHT Down on my bended knee I pray

Spare but my life, & I'll be the Turkis slave

KING GEORGE Arise, arise thou Turkish Knight
 And go home to thy land & fight
 Go home to thy land & tell
 That British men in England dwell
 Likewise the champion Garge

TURKISH KNIGHT Now I'm just a gooin' home
 I've got my free discharge
 God bless the King of England
 Likewise the champion Garge

FATHER CHRISTMAS
 Get off home wi' 'ee
 Come all the way from Turkey land
 Gobble-Goblin' about
 What thee canst do, and what thee casn't
 Thee's worse 'an my old Grandmother Sarai
 She's forty year older and tougher in the gizzard an I be
 Down on thy knees beggin' & prayin'
 About what thee'st do & got done awready
 I thought thee was a little more good than that
 Get off home wi' 'ee (Gives him a push)
 I've got a little fellow about here
 Somewhere what they calls Twing Twang

JOHNNY JACK In comes I Twing Twang
 Left hand, press gang
 Come to press you bold fellows & send you to zee
 I'll fight the French & the Spaniard
 Although my name is little Jackie John
 If there's ere a mem wants to fight
 Let him come along
 I'll hag him, I'll jag him
 And after I've done
 I'll fight the best man under the Zun

FATHER CHRISTMAS

I'll have a cut or two at ee

(They fight & Father Christmas falls down)

JOHNNY JACK

Ladies & gentlemen see what I've done
Knocked down poor old Father Abraham
Likewise the evening zun

FATHER CHRISTMAS

A zun rises, zo do I

JOHNNY JACK

In comes I little Johnny Jack
Wife & family at my back
My wife is large & my family small
Now I thinks I'm the best man of them all

(sits on Father Christmas' knee)

Here I zits & takes my ease
Ladies & gentlemen give me what you please
A cup of your stray beer
Will make us merry & zing
A sovereign in our pocket & God save the King

ALL SING

We have sung our song, we must be gone
No longer can we stay here
So God bless you all both great and small
And God send you a Happy New Year

(The performance was then rounded off with the whole team singing carols)



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