We first heard of the Preston Candover Mummers in 1977 when Miss G. M. Coakes, long-time resident of the village, sent us a text as written down by her mother, probably at the dictation of one of the participants. Miss Coakes put us in touch with Bill Hopkins who was apparently the last surviving member of the gang and we visited him several times in the Old People's Home in Basingstoke where he was living at the time. Bill died in April (?) 1980. Further information regarding the play came to us from Mrs. K. Butcher (née Nicholson), of Crawley, Hampshire, whose father and brothers used to be in the Mummers and who used to help her mother make the costumes. The material from all three sources is now lodged in the Road/Narsh Collection.

The gang in which Bill Hopkins took part was formed from members of the Preston Candover Boy Scout troop, sometime between 1905 and 1910, at the instigation of General Hope of Preston Grange. The boys were taught by a Mr. Nicholson (father of Mrs. Butcher), who had been in the 'old' village gang. The Scout team included Bill, two of Mr. Nicholson's sons and one Dick Chivers (son of the local carrier), the youngest being ten years old. They apparently borrowed a donkey on which the youngest member used to ride when on their rounds. Being young, the gang did not visit local pubs, but confined their visits to the 'big houses' of the area. Among the places mentioned by Bill as being on the gang's regular circuit area: Wooston, Worting School, Alresford, Steventon Manor, Preston House, Houndsmere and Herriard Park. Several of these were also visited regularly by the Mummers from North Waltham. Bill knew of the latter gang but said that the Preston Candover people preferred their own team because the North Waltham men had a reputation for being a rough, drunken lot. However, none of the North Waltham men that we have met have mentioned the Preston Candover gang at all. Bill carried on with the gang after the Scout Troop itself became defunct, but sometime after the First World War the Mummers faded out:-

"We picked up a few from the different villages, but it didn't last long - they all got tired of it, I don't know why - well, they don't get together like they used to..." (BH)

General Hope was keen on reviving the play in later years, but could never muster sufficient enthusiasm in the village to raise a new gang. Bill, however, used to visit him occasionally at Christmas to recite parts of the play and sing the carols to him.

"You want somebody to be able to say the dialect - you know my meaning - 'tisn't common words - not ordinary speaking what - well, what I mean - what causes the fun - it's the way it's spoken - you know my meaning.....It's an 'alf an hour - good 'alf an hour's play..." (BH)

With regard to the costumes, Mrs. Butcher commented that they were made basically of cambric (pronounced as in Cambridge) - tall cardboard hats - wallpaper stripes - Father Christmas had a beard and Johnny Jack had dolls on his back. Miss Coakes wrote that 'The characters were dressed in streamers, goodness knows why. They usually wore wide straw hats with coloured streamers, and also streamers attached to their clothes'. Miss Coakes' mother pencilled the following note on the same text: "King George dressed in sahaja. Doctor in red. Shirts with ribbons over two or three waistcoats - braces on top. Stripes down the trousers!"

Bill Hopkins described the costumes as follows: "...Father Christmas used to have an old coat covered with wallpaper, and streamers, and a wide-brimmed hat - any old straw hat...streamers hung down you see, down the sides...only Father Christmas had wallpaper (on his clothes) the other was sahaja...one over each shoulder and pinned here (at each side of the waist, with the ends hanging loose, and a rosette at front and back where they crossed)...and the hats...stiff cardboard done round the shape of your head, see, but it went off flat at the top...went to a point like that... (a tube which fitted over the head, squashed front-to-back at the top, so that it looked roughly rectangular from the front, but pointed from the side)...quite tall, see, and that was covered with different streamers (sic) off of crackers...or you could get patterns off wallpaper and paste it all
The text and carols which follow are reproduced as faithfully as possible from the manuscript provided by Miss Cookes, including spelling, 'stage directions' and length of lines.

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

POOF
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 so 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 leave this

BOLD ROOMER
Hope so Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS
What's thee know about it?
(stops & turns to the people)
In comes I, poor old Father Xmas
As I welcome, or as 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 pudding 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 straie beer
Aye, a cup of the best
May God in heaven send thy soul to heaven to rest
And if't 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 St. Garge & my two sons
Walk in here St. Garge

St. GEORGE
In steps I St. Garge
St. 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
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 ROOMEY

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

ST. GEORGE

I'm 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 go away

BOLD ROOMEY

No satisfaction at all St. Garge
For in less than three minutes, I take thy life away

ST. 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 ROOMEY

Thee shain't neither hag me nor jag me
Ner have me for to know
Thee bist the King of England
Before the lets me go
Battle to battle to thee I call
To see which on this ground shall fall

ST. GEORGE

Battle to battle to thee I play
To see which on this ground shall lay
Mind thy hits & guard thy blows
Likewise thy face & eyes also
(They fight. G. pricks his & Bold R. goes down)

FATHER CHRISTMAS

There thou best alone one on 'im

ST. GEORGE

And I'll do thee directly Father

FATHER CHRISTMAS

Ah! I don't know so much about that
I'm too old & 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-beerbottles or black beetles

BOLD SLASHER

My head is made with iron
My body lined with steel
Brass from my arms to my knuckle bones
I'll fight thee St. George, all in this battle-field

ST. GEORGE

I'm 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
I'll have some satisfaction of thee this night
Afore I go 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

ST. GEORGE

Mind thy hits & 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 sons
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 supper

(Enter Doctor)

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Oh doctor! doctor! Is there a doctor to be found
That can cure my two sons that 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?

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
Nokum-Pokum, Elecampaime

FATHER CHRISTMAS
Elephants brains! Thee'd best give me a smell of that
stuff Doctor
(Doctor lets him smell it & he is overcome)
Pouf! That's some real 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 St. Garge
Like a man of courage bold
Let thy blood run ever so hot
I'll quickly fetch it cold

St. GEORGE
In comes I St. Garge
From over the sea I came
My name it is St. 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 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
(Fight & St. George wounds the Turkish Knight)
TURKISH KNIGHT
Down on my bended knee I pray
Spare but my life, & I'll be the Turkis slave

St. 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 goin' 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
Gibble-Gobblin' about
What thee cann't do, and what thee can't
These worse 'an my old Grandmother Sarah
She's forty year older and tougher in the gizzard an I be
Down on thy knees beggin' & prayin'
About what thee'at do & got done already
I thought the 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 sea
I'll fight the French & the Spaniard
Although my name is little Jackie John
If there's ere a man wants to fight
Let him come along
I'll hang him, I'll jag him
And after I've done
I'll fight the best man under the sun

FATHER CHRISTMAS
I'll have a cut or two at ee
(They fight & Father X falls down)

JOHNNY JACK
Ladies & gentlemen see what I've done
Knocked down poor old Father Christmas (?)
Likewise the evening sun

FATHER CHRISTMAS
A sun rises, so do I

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

CAROL I
(10)

How many have a-daunted
The city so dear
The people from all parts
No lodgings were there
O Joseph and Mary were thinking no harm
All on the next morning
Our Saviour was born
So therefore be merry
Set sorrow aside
Our Saviour Christ Jesus
Was born at this tide
God sent down an angel
From the heaven so high
To protect those poor people
Down in that village lies.
How many have a daunted
The baby so sweet
And in an ox-stall
They laid him to sleep
So Joseph & Mary, their substance so small
All in that fine city
No lodging at all
So therefore be merry etc.

CAROL II

There are six good days all in a week
All for the labouring man
But the seventh is to serve
Our Lord Jesus Christ
Both father and the son
The fields are so green, as green as can be
As green as any leaf
Our Lord our God he has watered them
With the heavenly dew so sweet
In hell it is dark, in hell it is dim
In hell it is full of noise
And that is the place where all wicked ones must go
When they part from Jesus Christ.

CAROL III

God bless the master of this house
With great prosperity
For whether his body wakes or sleeps
God sends his soul to rest
God bless the mistress of this house
With a gold chain round her neck
For whether her body wakes or sleeps
God sends her soul to rest
No mortal man can remember this
When Jesus Christ was on this road
'Twas through our sins and wickedness
Christ shed his precious blood
No mortal man can remember this
When Christ was crucified
He was crucified betwixt two thieves
And crowned with a crown of thorns
No mortal man can remember this
When Christ was rolled in clay
He was buried in some sepulchre
Where never no man lay.

CAROL IV

O fair Jerusalem
When shall I come to thee
When shall my labours have an end
Thy joy when shall I see?
On Sunday goes to church
Down on our knees must fall
And there we must pray to the Lord Jesus Christ
He will bless and save us all
O God eternity
With thine almighty hand
Who maketh the Sun, the Moon & the Stars
The water & dry land.
Bill Hopkins insisted that they used to say King George all the way through, and Miss Cookes also uses King in her letters. Bill also commented: "We always said 'In comes I'".

Bill consistently said this as: "Ah me little fellow..." (which agrees with many other North Hants. versions).

Bill pronounced 'purse' as 'pus' (to rhyme with 'bus').

As Note 2

Bill added the line: "What canst thee cure?" to Father Christmas's speech here

Bill said: "Okun pokum..."

Bill said: "Father Abrahams", instead of "Father Christmas" in this line, which again agrees with other local versions

According to Bill, Johnny Jack sits on Father Christmas's knee at this point.

According to Bill, these lines were sung by all the performers

These carols would be sung at the end of the play although Bill commented that, depending on the venue, time available, and wishes of the hosts, all four carols were not necessarily sung at each performance.

I have not been able to trace any other version of this carol

The three verses used at Preston Candover are included in a much longer carol noted by Godfrey Arkwright in KINGSCLERE (Hants. SU 5258) and published as "Hampshire Mummers Christmas Carol" in the Journal of the Folk Song Society Vol. I No.4 (1902) pp. 178-9.

Miss Cookes writes: "As I remember it: Verse 4, line 4 "And crowned ed with the thorns" and Verse 5, line 3 "They buried him in some sour-pulcoir".

R. Vaughan-Williams noted a significantly different version from Daniel Wigg of Preston Candover in 1909. Published in Journal of the Folk Song Society Vol. III No.13 (1909) pp. 261-2. Bill Hopkins knew Daniel Wigg but did not know whether the latter had ever been in the Mummers. Similar versions to that used at Preston Candover have been noted at the following places:

TWYFORD (Hants. SU 4824) : Journal of the Folk Song Society Vol. II No.7 (1905) pp. 130-1.

COMPTON (Sussex SU 3429) 1911/12 : (Clive Carey MSS, Vaughan Williams Memorial Library, London : Carey ref. Sx 327C)


Another version in the Carey MSS (ref. Sx 3) is entitled "Mummers Christmas Carol" noted from William Lemming of TERWICK (Sussex SU 8223) Another song noted from the same man (ref Sx 2) has the note "Learned from Tipteerers at Brandean". I have not been able to locate Brandean. Mummers at OVERTON (Hants. SU 5449), NORTH WALTHAM (Hants. SU 5646) and VERHAM DEAN (Hants. SU 3456) all used the "God bless the master..." verses to open their play. Frank Bond of North Waltham can be heard singing the song on the L.P. record Songs & Southern Breezes (Topic 12T 317 1977). Mummers at LONGPARISH (Hants. SU 5444) also knew the song.

Mummers at CHITHURST (Sussex SU 8425) apparently used the "No mortal man..." verses (Clive Carey MSS ref. Sx 59).

I have found no other version having these three verses as a separate song although, as mentioned above, they do turn up in variants of The Moon Shines Bright.
REPORT ON THE FOLK PLAY INDEXING WORKSHOP, 24th JANUARY, 1981

Peter Millington

The first "Folk Play Indexing Workshop" was held in Long Eaton, nr. Nottingham on 24th January, 1981 and was attended by Duncan Broomhead, Idwal Jones, Peter Millington (organiser), Steve Roud, Doc Rowe, Derek Schofield, Paul Smith and Peter Stevenson. The purpose of the workshop was to finalise the procedures and practices of the Co-operative Folk Play Indexing Scheme first presented at the "Traditional Drama 1979" conference and to set the scheme in motion.

The session on indexing practice clarified several ambiguous points and led to a number of changes. These included an improved design for the indexing worksheets and the simplification of one or two of the guidelines. The new worksheets have since been circulated to the participants.

In discussing administration, it was generally felt that some form of semi-formal organisation was required for the scheme. As a first step, it was decided that a corporate name should be adopted and, after discussion, the name "Traditional Drama Research Group" was chosen. Initially, the group will be responsible for the production of "Traditional Drama Abstracts" (the main purpose of the indexing scheme) and the maintenance of a central collection of source material covered by the abstracts.

When the various format options for "Traditional Drama Abstracts" were discussed, it soon became apparent that we do not have at present the resources to produce a printed version of the abstracts. In the short term, therefore, group members will be sent photocopies of the completed worksheets plus periodic indexes. This material may also prove useful ammunition when seeking a publication grant at a later date.

The discussion regarding the availability of "Traditional Drama Abstracts", and access to the central collection, was perhaps the most controversial of the day. The purpose of the scheme is to make information on folk plays readily available to anyone with a serious interest. Several participants, however, expressed reservations over unrestricted access, having previously had unfortunate experiences with unscrupulous or insufficiently skilled individuals. In the worst cases this had led to the alienation of informants, abuse of copyright, etc.

It was decided, therefore, that there would have to be a certain amount of control over access to the collection, not only to safeguard the rights and legitimate interests of the participants in the scheme, but also those of informants and non-participating contributors who add their material to the collection. This will probably be done by requiring users to sign a declaration, in which they agree to observe a code of good and reasonable practice regarding acknowledgement of sources and approaching of informants. Drafts of suggested policies will be discussed at the next meeting and all the participants were aware that these should be kept to a minimum, otherwise the work of the group might be overwhelmed by procedure.

NOTES AND QUERIES

A Battle Amongst the Christmas Mummers (cont.)

The newspaper cutting quoted in ROOMER Vol. I No.1 (concerning the battle between the Melksham and Wraxall Mummers) has now been identified. It comes from The Wiltshire Times, 23 Dec. 1965, p.8, and reprints the story which first appeared in the same newspaper on 23 Dec. 1865, p.3c.

Mumming Plays in the Isle of Wight

A preliminary checklist of references to Isle of Wight plays is available from Steve Roud, 22 Adelaide Road, Andover, Hants.

**PUBLICATIONS NEWS**

**Recent Publications**

*Handlist of Papers of Professor M. W. Barley*, (Nottingham, Manuscripts Dept., University of Nottingham, N.D.). Pages 4 to 10 includes a list to Professor Barley's collection of materials relating to Plough Monday plays.


Julia Dietrich, 'The Folk Drama and the Liturgy of Sacrifice', *Kentucky Folklore Record* 25 (1979), 37-45.


**PERIODICAL AND NEWSPAPER SEARCH**

Newspaper Library Newsletter

Readers will be interested to know that the British Library Reference Division (Newspaper Library) has commenced publication of a newsletter. The first issue (No.1 Autumn 1980) contains many items of interest including details of local newspaper indexing projects and the revival of the Bibliography of British Newspapers Project. The newsletter is to be published twice a year and is available free of charge from the British Library Newspaper Library, Colindale Avenue, London. NW9 5HE
Journals Search

We would be grateful to hear from anyone who has checked all, or part, of the following journals for traditional drama and folklore material.

Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society, (continued as Derbyshire Archaeological Journal).
Trans. of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society.
Devon and Cornwall Record Society.
Trans. of the Devonshire Association.
Dorset Natural History and Antiquarian Field Club.
Trans. of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society.
Archaeologia Cantiana.
Northamptonshire Record Society.
Shropshire Archaeological Society.
Somersetshire Archaeological and Natural History Society.
Somerset Record Society.
Sussex Archaeological Collections.
Wiltshire Archaeological and Natural History Magazine.

The Observer

Phyllis Crawford in In England Still (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1938), p.215 comments:

'.... when Mr. John P. Fletcher asked readers of The Observer to tell him where the Mummers' play had been given that year, answers came from Chipping Campden, Eyensham, Sunningwell, Lower Whitley, Appleshaw, Rochester, Boxgrove and Broadway ....'

The Alex Helm manuscripts give a date for Mr. Fletcher's article as 1936. He did not however, appear to have located the exact dates within that year. Before I search through back copies of the newspaper, has anyone come across this reference in The Observer?

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ROAMER: AN OCCASIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR RESEARCHERS IN TRADITIONAL DRAMA

Research in any field is, as often as not, hampered by the lack of communication between individual researchers, and Traditional Drama is no exception. We are acutely aware that there are many people doing valuable work who have little or no contact with others in this field and, consequently, no opportunity to compare notes or air their views.

ROAMER then is designed to fill this gap by providing an informal forum. It includes notes and queries, details of publications, out-of-the-way texts, information on work in progress, in fact anything that may be of interest to those working in the field of Traditional Drama. As such it relies heavily on participation by subscribers. Therefore, if you have any potential contributions we would be most grateful to receive them.

In addition, we plan to prepare a series of occasional publications dealing with various aspects of Traditional Drama research. Suggestions for suitable topics or items for inclusion in this series are most welcome.

We hope you find this issue of ROAMER useful. If you would like further details please contact the editors.

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Paul Smith, 2A Westfield Road, Bramley, Rotherham, Yorkshire. (0709-548426)