

BEMBRIDGE

SZ 6488

1. Collection Stephen Roud : Letter from Frank O'B. Adams, 10.5.1977 :

"I was born and lived in Bembridge, in the Isle of Wight, and remember when very small 'The Christmas Boys', but it was in 1911 when I took part, and although some of the characters are forgotten, some of it still remains.

Firstly, there was no written script. It was handed down, year after year by word of mouth. Of those characters I remember there were the Doctor, Turkish Knight, Johnny Jack and his wife, St. George, and others - about eight or nine altogether dressed in home-made costumes.

In 1911 I was St. George, and as far as I can remember my part was

In comes I, St. George, tonight
The man that wears the stars so bright
I come here tonight to save that pretty maid
And kill that Turkish Knight
With my glittering sword and spear I won ten crowns of gold
I fought the fiery dragon and brought him to a slaughter
By means of which I won the King of Egypt's daughter
Where is that Turkish Knight?

(Enter the Turkish Knight)

What was said then I don't remember but there was a clash of swords and he was killed. St. George was dressed in a suit covered in coloured frills, sewn on, with a helmet with a pampas grass as a plume. Turkish Knight had baggy trousers and blouse, with fez. The Doctor, with a top hat and black bag, had pills and medicine, and in his dialogue

I can cure the itch, stitch, palsy or gout
Or any rheumatics that go in and out
Broken legs or broken arm
I can very soon cure the pain

Little Johnny Jack was dressed non-descript, with a bag of dolls on his back - his family....

In comes I Little Johnny Jack
With wife and family at my back
They are large and I am small
But I'M the best man of them all

His wife, with a broom, came along sweeping, saying

Sweep, sweep, all I find I'm going to keep

Johnny turns and says

What did you say, you dirty old faggot?
I'll give you a warming

And they have a row.

It was great fun, I know that, especially spoken in dialect. For instance it was never Turkish Knight. It was 'Turkey Snipe'.... if it was being played in one of the village inns, the Doctor or Little Johnny Jack would enter the scene with one of many

