

THE HOLTON MUMMERS PLAY

Collected from Mr Percy Fonge of Holton, Oxon., on Tuesday 17th November 1959. Mr Fonge, who is 61, was taught the play when he was 14, in 1909, from the gypsies who moved around Worminghall, where he then lived. He never saw them perform it in public, being too young. On moving to Holton, he introduced it there. All the other actors were killed in the Great War. The last performance was in Wheatley 8 years ago (1951), when the cast was as follows:

Father Christmas	Arthur Fonge
King George	Ernest Cross (known as Wiggy)
Turkish Knight	George Washington
Valiant Soldier	Arthur Knight
Doctor	Percy Fonge (pronounced Funge)
'a'n't been 'it	Paddy Sullivan (O'Sullivan?)

F.C. In comes I, Old Father Christmas, Welcome - or welcome not
Sometimes cold and sometimes hot
I hope old Father Christmas will never be forgot.
I say pass around these tables, chairs and stools For after me come men so cruel
And if you don't believe all this, I say,
Step in King George and clear the way.

K.G. In comes I, St George, that man of courage bold, With my broad sword I won ten tons of gold
I fought the fiery dragon and brought him to the slaughter
And by which means I wished to win, the King of Egypt's daughter.

T.K. In comes I, the Turkish Knight, From the Turkish land to fight
And if King George have courage bold If his blood is hot I'll soon turn it cold.

V.S. In comes I, the Valiant soldier, Bold Slasher is my name
With sword and buckle by my side
I'm bound to win this game.
Only me, and seven more,
Fought and killed eleven score.
How broad you stand your house of old Appear like me so strong and bold.
Twice through the head I have been shot My brains are boiled just like a pot
And if King George shall have his way
You Turkish dog I'd sooner slay.

T.K. For what sir, for what sir,
Have I done you any harm?
V.S. Yes, get you gone, you saucy cock.

T.K. Saucy cock, saucy cock.
Draw your sword, you ought to be stabbed.
V.S. Stab for stab, I have no fear
Appoint me a place - I'll meet you here
Across the water between four and five
And I'll be there if I'm alive.

FIGHT

V.S. Now, King George, see what I've done
I've knocked him down like the evening sun!
And is there a doctor to be found

While the body lies bleeding on the ground?

D. Yes, yes, there is a noble doctor to be found
As you shall plainly see
I've been a doctor both on land and sea.
My father had seven sons
One of the seven sons were I
But none of them could cure such wonderful cures as I.

K.G. What can you cure, Doctor?

D. I can cure the hipsy, pipsy, palsy or gout
A strain within or a strain without
And if this man's neck be broken, I will set it again
Or I will not charge one farthing for my fee.

K.G. Set to work (?Get about your job)

D. Ladies and gentlemen, you see I have a little bottle of pills called snip-snap, snip-snap, snappum. I place one in the young (old) man's throat. See, it shakes warm breath all over the whole body. I also have a little bottle of medicine called the Golden Syrup. I place one spot in the young (old) man's throat. See - he kicks a leg already. Now help me raise this young man to life. (Someone helps)

There, ladies and gentlemen, you plainly see what I have done before your eyes - and if you can't believe your own eyes, it's a very bad thing.

A'n't been in it

In comes I as aren't been hit
With big head and little wit
My head's so big and my wit's so small
And I'll play you a tune to please you all.

Copied by BCT from original signed AJE (Tony Edwards) and 'subject to correction' 17/11/59

Addendum

Mr Fonge frequented the King and Queen public house in Wheatley. It was there that the meeting on November 17th 1959 took place. It was also where the first 'revival' performance was given in December 1959, by the Oxford University Morris Men, together with Tom Hassall, and with Mr Fonge present. The actors then moved on to other public houses in Wheatley, and finished at the Manor House.

Tony Edwards 15/9/02

SRP saw the mummers, with Tom Hassall, at the Manor House in 1961