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# Mapping the Uncharted Territory of Folk Drama

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Mumming and guising plays are short verse folk dramas performed by ordinary people around pubs and houses at Christmas and certain other seasons throughout much of England, Scotland, parts of Ireland, and outposts in the Americas.



Heptonstall Pace-Eggers, Yorks., 2007 (above)  
Burton upon Stather PloughJags, Lincs. (below)



## Script Extract

King George.

In come I King George the man of courage bold  
with my broad axe and sword, I won ten crowns of gold  
I fought the fiery dragon and I drove him to the slaughter  
and by those means I won the King of Egypt's daughter.

Headman.

Come in Turkey Knight.

Turkey Knight.

In comes I Turkey Knight,  
come from Turkey land to fight,  
I'll battle against you King George the man of courage bold  
if thy blood be hot I'll quickly make it cold.

King George.

Woe, woe, my little fellow, thou talkest very bold  
just like those young Turkey Knights I have been told  
Mince Pies hot, mince pies cold,  
send them up to London nine days old,  
a battle a battle betwixt you and I  
to see to see which on the ground first you or I.

(King George and Turkey Knight do battle. King George gets wounded. Headman helps him, telling him to rise and fight again, when he outs the Turkey Knight.)

Headman.

Oh Doctor, doctor where be'st thee,  
that Turkey Knight is wounded through the knee,  
through the knee, and through the heart,  
the Turkey Knight is wounded in every part.

{Come in Doctor .}

Doctor.

In comes I the jolly noble Doctor  
who travelled far and near.

Headman.

Where didst thee travel then, Doctor?

Doctor.

Italy I, Pitaly, France and Spain  
now I'm back to old England again.

Cuddesdon, Oxon., 1914

## Similar Cast Lists?

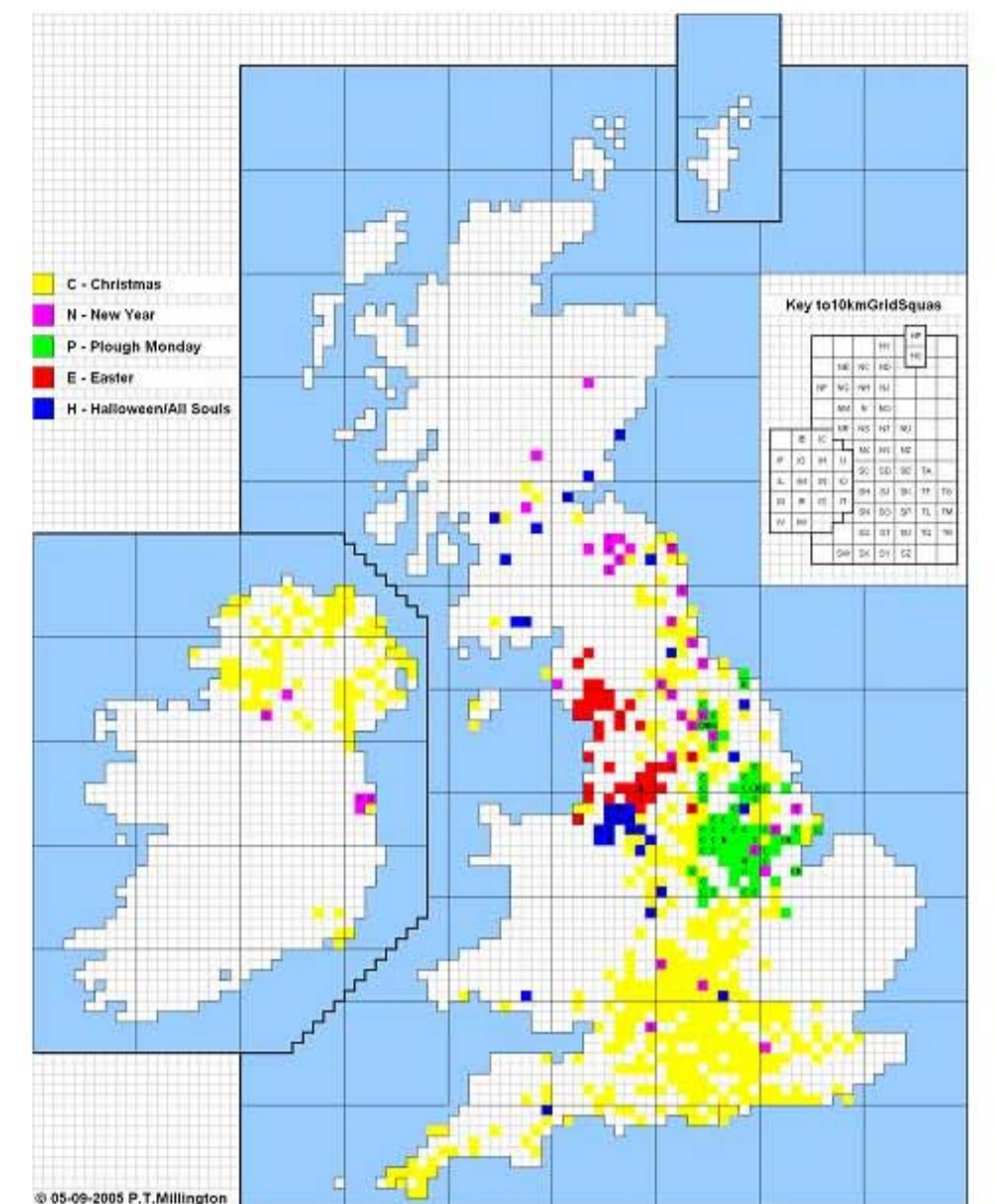
Romsey, Hants., England

Belfast, Northern Ireland

Father Christmas  
Saint George  
Turkish Knight  
Doctor  
Cut and Star  
Poor and Mean  
Bold Slasher  
Twing Twang  
Jolly Jack

[Introducer]  
Prince George  
Turky Champion  
Doctor  
St Patrick  
Oliver Cromwell  
Belzebug  
Devil Doubt

## Times of Appearance



## Research Difficulties

### Too much information

Thousands of performance locations

Hundreds of scripts

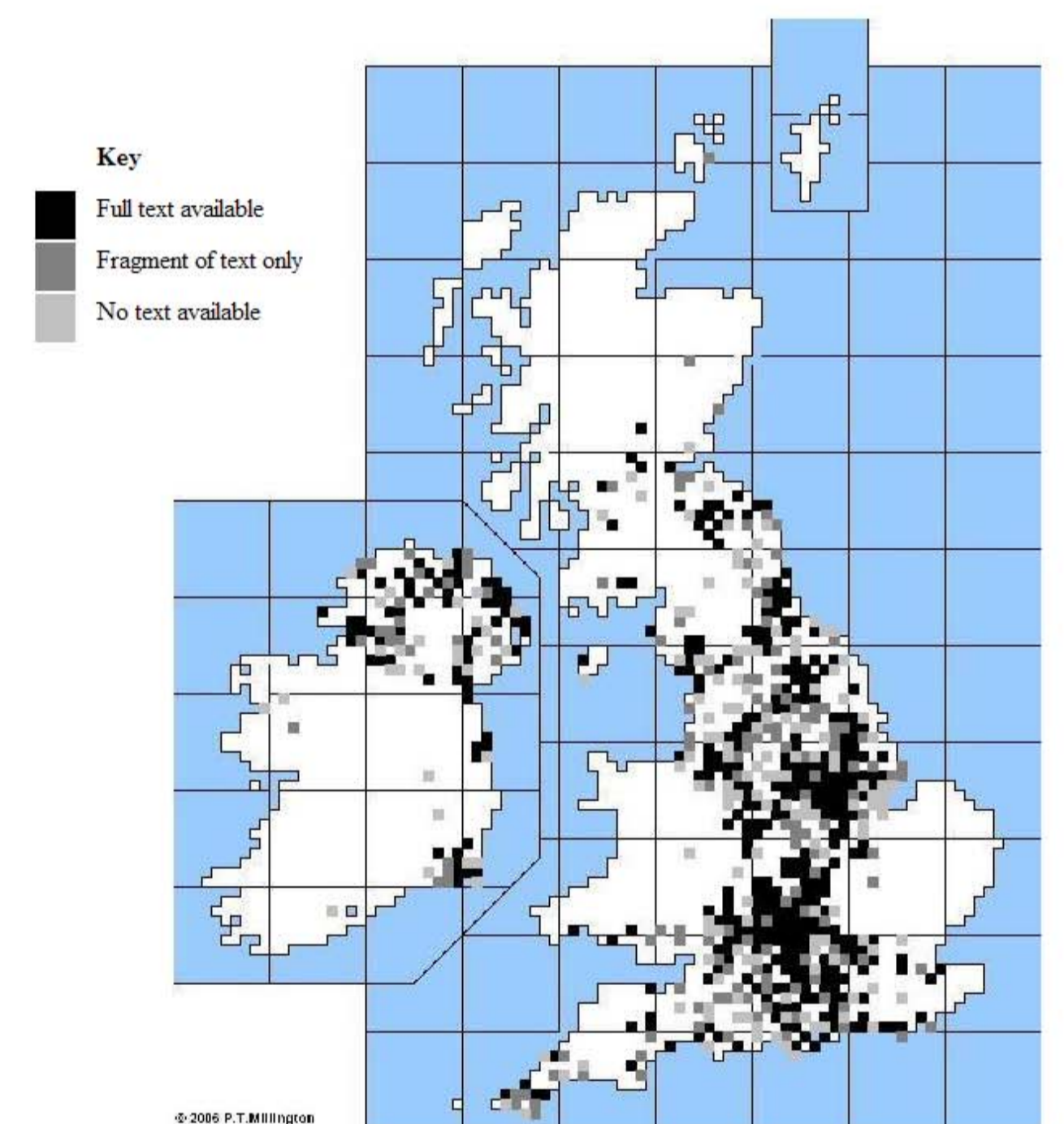
"...the texts obviously contain vital clues – if only we could just learn how to read them!"  
*E.Cass & S.Roud, 2002, p.18*

Tantalising textual similarities

Significant textual variation

### Where to start?

## Map of Best Text Availability



## Scripts Database

### Over 180 full scripts plus some fragments

Focused on the earliest texts

Geographical coordinates of locations

Aiming for uniform geographical coverage

### Digitally available as TEI-encoded texts

### Derivative database of lines

Normalised – lower case, no punctuation, etc.

Typology - Std IDs group similar lines

## Geographical Coverage of the Database



## Applications

### Scripts Explorer

Searching for lines

Investigating textual variants

Plotting distribution maps

### Typical Outcomes

"Trivial" variants are often shown to be significant

Some "ubiquitous" lines turn out to be localised

Cluster dates help assess the genealogy of scripts

### Online Resources

<http://www.folkplay.info/Texts.htm>

- The Folk Play Scripts Database

<http://www.mastermummers.org/scripts/explorer.htm>

- The Folk Play Scripts Explorer

<http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/13>

My PhD thesis, with methodology

<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/937/>

- The main thesis conclusions



Distribution of Father Christmas  
and the Turkish Knight  
Unexpectedly localised

## Some Variants of a Line

Oh here comes I Saint George a man of courage bold  
I am Prince George a champion brave and bold  
In comes I King George a man of courage bold  
I am Saint George the noble champion bold  
Here come I Saint George that valiant champion bold  
In comes Saint George the champeon bold  
Here comes Saint George the champion bold  
Here comes I Prince George a champion bold  
Here comes I Saint George that worthy champion bold  
Here am I Saint George that worthy champion bold  
I am Saint George that noble champion bold  
Here comes I King George a man with courage bold  
In comes I King George that man of courage bold  
Here am I Saint George the man of courage bold  
I am Prince George the champion bold  
In comes I Saint George that man of courage bold  
I am Saint George that worthy champion bold  
In comes King George the noble champion bold  
In comes I Sir George the champion bold  
In comes I King George with courage stout and bold