

'Ow our Harold found't Neutron*

Nah, tha may 'ave 'eard tell of the Neutron
Which 'as been causing us all such to do
They said 'twere James Chadwick as found it
In Nineteen Hundred and Thirty Two

Nah, that's the version from 'istory
B'r if tha believe it, tha'rt a reight chump
Our Harold found't Neutron in Poolsbrook
On't corporation rubbish dump

'E were cycling home in the twilight,
and was passing the said rubbish dump,
When 'e saw somat theer shining and brilliant
As made 'is heart falter and jump

He went back theer early next morning
To check as 'e wasn't mistook
After lookin' a bit 'e found just what 'e wanted
And that it a stroke of good luck

It were round, 'twere bright and 'twere shiny
'Bout eight or ten inches across,
and 'e thot "What a reight bobbydazzler!
I'll tek it to Ernie⁺, the boss"

When 'e tried to uplift this 'ere neutron
By gum, it were 'evy as lead
But wi' leverage 'e got it in't handlebar basket
Cycled home, and went straight off to bed

The following morning, 'e set off for Cambridge
Wi' 'is bicycle, neutron an' all
It took 'im twelve hours as it usually did
But now't untoward did befall

Now Ernie were reight pleased to see it.
'E wanted to show it around
'E showed it to Cockroft – and Walton,
'oo tapped it, just to check it were sound

'E showed it to Peter Kapitza
'oo thought it were smashin, just fab.
He said “We could flog it at Christie’s.
It’ll ’elp us to pay for’t new lab”.

Ernie said “It’s ’bout same weight as a proton
Bur’ I don’t think it’s got any charge”
On ’earing this Kapitza pricked up ’is ears, and said
“Ow much do they usually charge?”

Well, Ernie had reached a decision.
“An experiment’s exac’ly the thing”
So he sent to’t co-op shop for equipment
Treacle tins, sealing wax, string

'E needed a very big ’ammer,
and a very hard chisel an’ all
an’ ’e took ’em along wi’t neutron
to’t theatre for’t technician to install

So, on the appointed occasion
All’t researchers were duly assembling
With Ernie wi’t neutron at rostrum.
You could see ’e were nervous and trembling

The neutron were fixed in a G-clamp
and Ernie rose to is full Kiwi height
'E picked up sledge ’ammer and chisel
and banged t’neutron with all of ’is might

There were an enormous blue flash in’t theatre
But when’t commotion had cleared
They saw Ernie wi’t neutron. ’Is eyebrows was singed
But there warn’t nothin’ worse, as they’d feared

The 'ammer were broken in pieces
The chisel were shattered to flinders
The rostrum were battered, but still ready for use,
And t'floor it were covered with cinders

But when they examined the neutron
Not a scratch, not a blemish were seen
It remained in its pristine perfection
With its beautiful silvery sheen

Now Ernie recovered is coolness
'E said "I'd been led to suspec'
That I were a quite irresistable force,
But this 'ere's an immovable objec'

We'll submit a short Letter to 'Nature' –
or maybe we could mek it an Article
To describe as what we've just discovered:
A new fundamental particle."

But Cockroft, 'e raised an objection
"They ain't nobut just one o' them theer
If we were to submit it to ' Nature'
They'd think that a little bit queer."

So then they all fell to discussin'.
At last Walton ventured "I find
It a bit premature to publish,
If it's the only one of its kind"

So Ernie sent letters t'world over
"As 'owt like this ever been seen?"
He wrote letters to Christchurch and Montreal
But nowt like it 'afore 'ad there been.

They were then in a bit of a quandary
And didn't know what to do next
"What should we do wi'this ere neutron?"
said Ernie, a trifle perplexed.

Nah't date were't 19th October
Our Harold looked thoughtful and coy
'E said "Tomorrow's James Chadwick's birthday.
We could gi' it t'owd lad as a toy."

So they wrapped it up nicely, and on't 20th
October nineteen thirty two
They give it James Chadwick, wi't message inscribed,
"Best wishes, Happy birthday to you"

and the rest (as they say) "is history"

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*acknowledgements to Stanley Holloway

+Ernest Lord Rutherford of Nelson