

in 1453-4 and 1454-5 (pp. 74, 93); the seizure of the goods of John Skelton, minstrel, who murdered his wife in 1462-3 (p. 106); and granting of waits' livery in 1486-7 (p. 188). See also pp. xvii, xxx-xxxi, xxxiv, xxxvii.]

- 259 'York High Commission Causes and Act Books'. *Borthwick Institute Bulletin*, 2, no. 2 (1980), 75-98. [Games-playing in Cawthorne church in 1596-7; and damage to the organ of Pocklington church in 1635 (pp. 87, 96).]

JOHN C. COLDEWEY

Some Nottinghamshire waits: their history and habits¹

It has long been the rule, rather than the exception to the rule, for historians of the drama to neglect or ignore the part that musical activities played in the unfolding of the early English dramatic tradition. For whatever reasons this has occurred – lack of information or lack of interest – it is fast becoming clear that the habit cannot continue. Recent studies of the liturgical drama have stressed the crucial interdependence of music and text;² likewise, recent work on later civic and local drama has begun to explore the variety and kinds of musical entertainment that can be found both within medieval and renaissance play texts, and that which existed side-by-side with dramatic productions.³ In this paper I want to highlight the musical activities in a single county, Nottinghamshire, using some of the records of the drama which I have just finished collecting there for the REED project.⁴ I will focus in particular on the waits, or liveried town musicians, who flourished or who visited the county from the late middle ages until 1642. In doing so I hope to shed some light on the customs, duties, and traumas of these colourful figures who piped and fiddled in the shadows of our drama. I want also to suggest that their activities and those of musicians generally were, in Nottinghamshire at least, so extensive and frequent that they are of more importance in assessing the dramatic tradition of that county than the drama itself; furthermore, that if music was the main form of performing arts in Nottinghamshire, the 'players' there were not as often players of plays as we should like to believe.

Literally hundreds of references to waits survive in the civic documents of Nottingham and Newark, two of the most populous towns in the county during the medieval and renaissance periods. In both places the earliest and latest entries regarding entertainment of any kind in fact refer to waits. Indeed, entries chronicling their fortunes continue well past 1642.

In Nottingham, waits appear in the earliest surviving Chamberlains' accounts in 1461, although it is clear from other sources that they existed during the first half

of the century.⁵ They were apparently always valued — originally as musical watchmen — although the price paid for their services fluctuated with the times. In 1461 the waits were paid an annual wage of 20 s to be split amongst them. It was bare subsistence pay, but it did not preclude their earning a living as musicians elsewhere. In addition, they were provided with new town liveries each year; in the fifteenth century these cost 15 s. They were also issued expensive gear: escutcheons, or large metal badges enamelled with the town device, and chains, or ‘collars’ with which to hang them.⁶ These remained city property and had to be sworn for, or bonded, by some substantial citizen for each wait.⁷ By the end of the sixteenth century, the standard complement of waits in Nottingham increased from three to four.⁸ Their wages, never constant — or at least not regularly recorded — had reached £1 apiece by 1571.⁹ Then, in 1576, the wages ceased altogether, although the waits were still retained by the town and annually provided with liveries. In the seventeenth century their wages were reinstated, and a complex system of supplementary payments through contribution was established.

In the Newark records, which begin to refer to waits in 1538, a variety of terms is used for the musicians who receive liveries there.¹⁰ There were evidently two waits until 1561, then three, and from 1583 on there were four of them.¹¹ Like Nottingham, Newark provided its waits with new liveries every year and in 1562 they were furnished with escutcheons.¹² Newark supported its waits in two ways: it ordered an assessment be paid by each townsman according to his status, and it gave the waits a virtual monopoly on music in the town. The order accomplishing this, in the Corporation Minute Book, is dated 29 September 1565:

Item yt is ordein'd that *euery person* now inhabitinge or which hereafter shall inhabit within this Towne of Newarke and liberties of the same, shall paye toward the wages of the waites, that now be and that hereafter shalbe appoynted in that Rowme such some or somes of money, as shalbe assessed and set vpon hym or them, by the Alderman and assistantes of the same Towne of Newarke for the tyme being or the more parte of them, vppon payn of imprisonment, or fyne, at the discretion of the same Alderman and Iustices of peace within the said Towne or three of them at the least wherof the said Alderman to be one // And further That no *person* nowe dwelling or which hereafter shall dwell and inhabit *within* this Towne of Newarke and shall marie within the same, shall at eny such mariage hyer Reteayne or have eny musicions or mynstrells other then the [waites] ^ 'inhabiters' of the same towne for the tyme being vppon payn to forfett and pay for *euery* default doing the contrary such fyne shalbe assessed by the said Alderman and assistantes or the more parte of them.

(ff 41v–42)

There is no evidence that Newark ever spent any of its own money on the waits' wages; since the Council could assign fees in any amount they pleased, this should come as no surprise. The order originally specified 'waites' as being the only musicians entitled to play in the town, but that word was crossed out and 'inhabiters' substituted in its place. It is not clear when that emendation took place, but the

emendation makes it clear that there were other musicians in Newark, rivals of the waits, whose livelihoods were threatened by this order.

In passing, we might remark that playing at weddings would normally be, for the waits at Newark and at Nottingham, too, employment beyond their ordinary duties, producing income beyond their ordinary wages. Doubtless they had to count on this work, since they received precious little from town coffers. Before turning to the question of why they worked for such meager rewards, perhaps we can determine in more detail precisely what services they performed for a town. In a presentment to the Nottingham Sessions Court, dated 24 April 1615, one of the duties expected of waits – quite possibly their original duty – is clearly laid out: the ‘comon waites’ were presented ‘for thatt they doe not goe their wattch in the day tyme on Tuesdaies, Thurrsdaies and Saturdaies, as their predicessors have vsed, and as they are therevnto sworne.’¹³ Thus, in Nottingham, waits were still responsible for keeping the watch on certain days – although their music must have preceded them in their turn around the town. In addition to this duty, we discover in various other records that they were expected to attend the Mayor and his Brethren on their numerous full-dress processions on All Hallows day, Christmas, Candlemas, Easter, the ‘Middleturn Walk’ to St Anne’s Well on Black Monday (a perambulation of the borough boundaries), the long march to Southwell Minster on Whitsun Monday to bear the pentecostal offerings, and others. The waits played regularly at special feasts – sessions dinners, opening of assizes, the sheriff’s dinner (shortly after St Bartholomew’s Day) – and at celebrations on May Day, at the opening of fairs, at the occasional celebrations prompted by visiting dignitaries, noblemen, the king or queen, and at those times of the year, such as Twelfthtide or Midsummer, when every day was holiday.¹⁴ The waits were, in short, an integral part of a thousand moments of pomp and benediction in the daily, weekly, and seasonal life of the town.

They also toured around the country, playing when and where they could. The income this produced, though, was hardly reliable, as the following entry in the Nottingham Common Council Minutes indicates. It is date 7 February 1617:

ytt is agreed by this companie thatt the [waig] waytes in regard of therre povertye and for thatt their gratuities abrodd in their travells are nott soe beneficiall as heretofore they have beene, shall have [yerely] this yeare 40 s wages amongste them to be payed them by the Chamberlaines quarterly as the officers receive their wages and this to contynewe vpon there good deservinge.¹⁵

We should note, by the way, that the recent failure of the waits to carry out their duty less than two years earlier may have been on the minds of the Council members who insisted on a year-by-year basis for payment rather than a guaranteed annual wage. In any case, the waits could hardly have taken much satisfaction from the reinstatement of these wages: per man, it came out to only half of what they had been paid annually more than forty years earlier. Still, no complaints are recorded, and the Chamberlains, as directed, allocated the money to the waits on a fairly regular basis over the next ten years.

In 1628, however, a new and complex arrangement for paying the waits, over and above their wages, was put into effect. This arrangement, similar to the 'tax' Newark levied on its townspeople in 1565, here involved an actual schedule for payments based upon degree. The rate for the Mayor and Aldermen was 4 s apiece; for the Coroners and Sheriffs, 3 s; for members of the Council 2 s 6 d; and so on, down to the commoners, who are urged to donate 'whatt they are wele pleased to geve or allowe to the poore men accordinge to their free and willing disposition.' The effect of this order was to guarantee substantial annual payments to the 'poore men,' and to ensure that the waits, on their part, would 'doe their duties and services accordinge to their oathes in walkinge and playinge with their Instrum^ents assigned therevnto as well in the day as in the nighte for the Credite and worshipp of the towne as hath been Antiently vsed and accustomed.'¹⁶ The new assessments would in fact provide the waits with six or seven pounds a year, plus whatever the 'comoners of the better sort and Rancke' and 'of the lower Rancke or degree' might contribute. This money, when added to the basic allotment of 10 s per quarter, plus liveries (each now worth well over a pound a year), apparently gave the waits some comfort during their hard times. Indeed, as we shall see, it may have proved too generous.

Perhaps the most grisly occurrence involving a wait in Nottingham is attested to in the Sessions presentments of 1521. Here, Richard Johnson, 'late won of the Sergi^ents,' was charged with 'wylfull murthur done apon Edmond Chameley, late won of the weytes.'¹⁷ Edmund Chomley was probably the son of William Chomley, a Nottingham wait in 1502.¹⁸ The father, in fact, may have fled town after the death of his son to become the London wait William Cholmley who retired in 1526.¹⁹ I cite this case not to illustrate the courage it took to wander the streets in 1521, or even to point to the London professional connection, but rather — a much more mundane matter — to note that the Chomleys, father and son, both waits, represent a familiar pattern among medieval and renaissance musicians, where the musical profession itself was the family business. Quite often, sons joined their fathers' companies, carrying the work of one lifetime forward into another. This is true for the Awkland (or Lawkland) family in Newark: Thomas Awkland appears on the earliest document listing waits' names in 1557; he is joined by George Awkland in 1562; they continue together until 1573.²⁰ Among their replacements are Anthony and John Ringrosse, from another family of musicians.²¹ In Nottingham, members of a family named French seem to have been active as waits for three generations — more than half a century. Thomas French had a company of musicians who played for the town at various times from 1558 to 1588. His son William was one of the Nottingham waits from 1577 until 1590; his son, Roger, became a wait in 1586 and remained one until 1627, the year before the special assessment (referred to above) was ordered by the Town Council.²²

Another family of musicians, the Cogges, should now be introduced. Humphrey Coggs is listed as one of the Nottingham waits as early as 1597;²³ his father may well have been the 'Cogges' referred to as 'Mr. Stanhope's man,' apparently head of Lord Stanhope's musicians in 1573.²⁴ Now, Humphrey Cogges had a son, William, who was also a musician, as we might expect. He was not, however, a wait. By 1628,

when the special 'tax' was passed to support the waits, Humphrey Cogges was probably the oldest wait in the company, having served in that capacity for thirty-one years. As he neared retirement, Humphrey no doubt wished his son to take his place, especially if the position were now more secure and lucrative than at any time in the past. It would have been only natural for him to entertain this hope. But somewhere along the line something went wrong. Perhaps the other three waits — Richard Pierson, Solomon Sebastian, and Richard Storr — could not get along with young William; perhaps they believed him an incompetent or had their own plans; perhaps old Humphrey was getting cranky. What is certain, though, is that trouble had been brewing for some time when in 1632 the bickering became public. The day after Michaelmas election, when town officials customarily took their oaths of office, Humphrey Cogges was not sworn in like the other waits; instead, the Mayor and Aldermen were given notice 'thatt the waites have agreed to geve to homfrey Cogges xx li to leave his place so thatt they make choice of another waite or waites.'²⁵ It was, of course, an enormous sum: a rare, and probably accurate measure of the actual worth of the position; perhaps an even more accurate measure of the other three waits' desperation. They proposed to give £5 at once, £5 at Candlemas (2 February), £5 at Midsummer, and £5 the following Michaelmas. But Cogges short-circuited the arrangement — or the waits failed to make their second payment, for on 4 February Humphrey was sworn in.²⁶ In addition, he apparently convinced the other waits to give his son a chance; eight months later, at the 1633 swearing-in, William was at last allowed to take his own oath and his father's place among the other waits.²⁷

It was not, one might say, a marriage made in heaven. There was a brief honeymoon, squabbling and jealousy, and ultimately a quick divorce. The accusation of 'playing around' surfaced in a shockingly short time. On 25 February 1634, less than five months after the swearing-in, all the parties involved went once more before the Common Council for guidance. The Council agreed that:

whereas the waytes and homfrey Cogges and *William Cogges* his sonne haue ahad manie differences aboute their places and havinge referred them selves and their severall busynes amongste them to the iudgment and order of this Companie, the companie doe order thatt from henceforth both the Cogges shalbe separated from the other waytes and nott be reputed as the waites of this towne And in lewe thereof *Richard* peirson, *Salomon* Sebastyan, and *Richard* Storr shall allowe vnto homfrey Cogges duringe his lyefe iij li yearely to be from henceforth quarterly paied him and the same waytes shall lykewise pay vnto *William Cogges* xx s yearely to be paid quarterly lykewise duringe the pleasure of this Companie, butt vpon Condition thatt the saied Cogges and his sonne shall nott play with their *Instrumentes* in this towne when the other Waytes are in the towne, unlesse they be invited to play att Weddings or Churchinges, and they are nott to were anie of the townes liveryes nor be reputed as the waytes from henceforthe, nor they nott to goe into the Countrie as the townes waytes, and thatt the bonds by them

taken from the yonger Cogges for payment of 3 li shalbe nowe delivered in to the saied Cogges together with soe muche monee as they have received in parte thereof allreddy. and the saied William Cogges to deliver in his Scuttlecheon. presently. the bondes are delivered and cancelled.²⁸

This was only the first round – a trial separation, as it were.

At the next swearing-in, in October of 1634, John Marshall replaced William Cogges; three months later, Thomas Stanley replaced Richard Pierson, who was evidently retiring.²⁹ In March, the entire group again appeared before the Common Council, clearly with new gripes and accusations. The Council itself must have begun to weary of the struggle; certainly the tone of their decision is one of patient exasperation:

Vpon the hearinge of the differences the second tyme amongst the waites, [they] and Homfrey Cogges, for the fynall endinge of all the differences and obiections amongst them they have nowe refered themselves and their saied busynes to the fynall hearinge and endinge of this companie. Whoe doe nowe order and agree thatt Salomon Sebastyan, Richard Storr and Thomas Stanley shall from henceforward pay vnto the saied Homfrey Cogges ^rand William Cogges his sonne¹ yearly duringe [his]the naturall lyefe ^rof Homfrey Cogges onely¹ the some of iiij li by quarterly paymentes, [to]gea and noe other allowance to him and his sonne or either of them. And in lewe and recompence thereof the saied Homfrey nor his sonne shall nott weare their coates, of the same colour the other waites doe, nor shall nott play in this towne when the other waites are in towne vnlesse [ytt] they bee invited to weddinges Churchinges or other meetinges, And the saied Homfrey Cogges nor his sonne shall nott goe [into abroad] abroad or into the Countrie to the preiudice of the saied waites to play with their instrumentes, [And nor] and when the other waites have a purpose to travell to london or ellswhere as vsually they have done, thatt then Homfrey Cogges nor his sonne shall nott travell thatt way to forstall them vntill a fortnighte after they be gone att the leaste. And thatt yf anie differences shall hereafter growe or arise on anie partt touching this order the same differences and questyons to be allwayes heard ended and determined by this Companie as their shalbe cawse. And thatt Salomon Sebastyan, Richard Storr and Richard Pierson shall pay vnto the saied Homfrey Cogges and his sonne before Easter next xxx s of the monie due to Cogges vpon the last agreement. and to be discharged of the remaynder forever yf they doe before Midsomer nexte bringe certificatt or make ytt appeare in this companie thatt Cogges or his sonne or bothe have nott performed the former order on their parte. and the former order to be dissolved al this being Read vnto [by] the waites they are well content to performe the same; butt Cogges will nott stand to this order.³⁰

The reason for this anticlimax may well be that it finally dawned on Cogges how

high the stakes had become: he would have been, by signing this agreement, publicly subscribing to an express monopoly of services by the existing waits, both in-town and abroad, thus cutting himself and his son out of all but the occasional piece of work. Still, they had lost the battle.³¹ At Michaelmas next, Humphrey settled for freedom and a nominal fee — the best he could hope for under the circumstances:

30 September 1635 The Waytes and Homfrey Cogges are thus agreed thatt all orders formerly made amongste them shall be disolved and thatt they Waites shall pay him L s thus *videlicet* xxx s in hand ^ and' xx s [ath] after Christmas nexte. And Cogges to be att libertie to play where hee will or can and when hee will.³²

Implicit in the foregoing struggle between the Cogges and the town waits are a number of details and circumstances which require further comment. Let me remark briefly on three. First and foremost is the threatened monopoly of town business. We should recall that in Newark since 1565 (and elsewhere in England as well) a monopoly by the waits was already an accomplished fact.³³ This was no idle threat. Second, the return of the liveries and the escutcheon, an apparently minor bureaucratic detail, in fact lies at the center of the problem. The livery allowed musicians to travel with relative ease; it was a clear mark of distinction, achievement, and preferment, all of which translated into opportunity and higher fees in other towns. Since Humphrey Cogges knew, from his own past experience, the routines and itinerary of the appointed waits — and was himself undoubtedly known in the towns along the way — it was an easy, if audacious, matter for him and William to dress in blue and leave a few days early. Who could guess they were bogus? Who would care — except the real waits who followed in their tracks? No wonder the Nottingham waits took the matter up at home with the Common Council.

Travelling on tour, then, was essential to the livelihoods of these and most other waits, and of independent musicians as well. Certainly there seems to have been no shortage of them — and that is the third point to be made about the Cogges case. An underlying cause of strife on both sides throughout the struggle was an abundance and an availability of musicians, local and otherwise, in Nottingham. And indeed, as we can gather from the records, the town was simply swarming with them.

If we leave aside the Nottingham waits and simply tally the waits who visited Nottingham, we may be able to get some idea of what alternative musical talent was available to the town from elsewhere. During the sixteenth century alone, waits from thirty-nine different towns played in Nottingham. This is well over half of the seventy-three towns to have waits as listed by Woodfill (pp 293-5); Nottingham, in fact, provides the only evidence for fourteen of these seventy-three companies. Rather than run through a long and repetitious chronological count of waits visiting Nottingham, let me list those who appeared during the course of one accounting year and let that stand for many. In 1587-8, the Nottingham records indicate that in addition to providing support and liveries for their own waits, the town paid various sums to the waits of Blyth, Lichfield, Rotheram, Grantham, Boston, Lincoln (twice), Wigan in Lancashire, Retford, Leicester, Coventry, Shrewsbury, Newark,

and Burton-upon-Trent. An abundance of talent, surely. But to put even this extraordinary profusion of waits into perspective, we ought also to note that the town rewarded, that same year, the following separate musical groups: 'Mr. Candish Musicians,' Thomas the blind harper, 4 musicians, Sir Thomas Stanhope's musicians (twice), 4 'musions,' 4 musicians and minstrels, the Earl of Sussex's musicians and players, the Earl of Essex's musicians and players (twice), Sir George Hasting's musicians and players (twice), 'Mr. Ferres' musicians, 2 poor minstrels, 3 musicians, 'Mr. Werlers' musicians, 3 musicians, 2 muscians, 3 musicians, 4 musicians, 'Mr. Ambrose' musicians, Mr. Varnes' musicians, 3 musicians, 3 musicians, Sir John Munson's musicians, 3 other musicians, '3 musicians more,' 3 musicians, 'Thomas French' musicians, 3 musicians of Chesterfield, 2 musicians, and 'Mr. Dutton of Dutton musicianers.' That year the Earl of Leicester's players and two bearwards appeared as well.³⁴

The activities of the waits, then, were only part of a vast array of musical entertainments in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. At the start of this paper I suggested that waits and musicians had special importance in assessing the dramatic traditions of this county. And my final observation is really quite simple. The musical activities here, for the whole of the time we have records, virtually eclipse the drama. Because of this, the prevailing frame of reference in the records themselves is musical, no matter what terms are used. Thus, early accounts in Newark use 'ministrallis,' 'musicionis,' 'histrionis,' and 'tibusinariis' in precisely the opposite way that we, as historians of the drama, would hope: these terms all refer to waits.³⁵ Thus, too, Nottingham Chamberlains refer repeatedly to 'players'; but the likelihood is that these players quite often played instruments rather than plays. Sometimes the evidence for this is incontrovertible. In 1591, for example, 'musicians dwelling in Rotheram' are paid, and, in the entry immediately following, 'other plaiers' receive payment.³⁶ But most of the time the context does not make a 'players' function clear, and we are, I would suggest, in serious danger of distorting the evidence. The Nottinghamshire waits and musicians can teach us, I hope, that there is no standard or formula to 'fix' the often quite distinct dramatic traditions of English counties. They are as diverse and unpredictable as the society they mirror, and must finally be taken on their own terms.

NOTES

- 1 A version of this paper was read at the 16th Congress on Medieval Studies, the Medieval Institute, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 1981.
- 2 For a survey of scholarship to 1975, see C. Clifford Flanigan 'The Liturgical Drama and Its Tradition: a Review of Scholarship 1965-1975,' *RORD* 18 (1975), 81-102; 19 (1976), 109-36.
- 3 See, for example, JoAnna Dutka, *Music in the English Mystery Plays* (Kalamazoo, 1980), and Carole Janssen, "The Waytes of Norwich and an Early Lord Mayor's Show," *RORD* 22 (1979), 57-64.

- 4 John C. Coldewey (ed), *Nottinghamshire*, Records of Early English Drama (Toronto, forthcoming).
- 5 Nottinghamshire Records Office (hereafter NRO) MS CA 1660a, f lv. The Nottingham waits were paid in York in 1448: see Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), *York, Records of Early English Drama* (Toronto, 1979), p 133.
- 6 The waits' escutcheons were newly enamelled and their collars repaired in 1495-6: see NRO MS CA 1605, f 2v. The chains for their escutcheons are referred to in 1543-4: see NRO MS CA 1607, f 13.
- 7 The bonds are first recorded in 1502 (NRO MS CA 3352, p 1). In records of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries such references become commonplace.
- 8 Starting in 1587-8, four waits' liveries were issued, although only three men are named as waits in the Chamberlains's Accounts (NRO MS CA 3369, f 2v, p 38). Four men are first named as waits in 1598-9 (NRO MS CA 3377, p 2).
- 9 NRO MS CA 1612, f 2.
- 10 See the Trinity Guild Accounts in the Newark Corporation Minute Book (hereafter NCMB), now at Newark Town Hall, ff 1-20, *passim*.
- 11 See NCMB, ff 5, 13, 246, where these numbers of waits are first recorded.
- 12 Newark Museum (hereafter NM) Bundle D.675/C 9.
- 13 NRO MS CA 67, rolls 15, 24.
- 14 For reference to these celebrations and the waits' attendance at them, see NRO MSS CA 4770, p 12; CA 1608, f 4v; CA 1610A, f 3; CA 1601B, ff 8v, 9; CA 1629, p 11; CA 1631, pp 33, 37; CA 1634, f 8.
- 15 NRO MS CA 3392, f 29v.
- 16 NRO MS CA 3402, pp 60, 61.
- 17 NRO MS CA 23a, rolls 5, 6.
- 18 NRO MS CA 3352, p 1.
- 19 See Walter L. Woodfill, *Musicians in English Society from Elizabeth to Charles I* (Princeton, 1953 [rpt New York, 1969]), 247.
- 20 NCMB, ff 220, 234.
- 21 NCMB, f 235.
- 22 For the first and last appearances of Thomas French, see NRO MSS CA 1610B, f 8v, and CA 1627, p 19; for those of William French, see CA 3362, p 4, and CA 3371, f 2v; for Roger French, see CA 3368, f 2v, and CA 3401, p 2.
- 23 NRO MS CA 3377, p 2.
- 24 In the Middleton Accounts: Nottingham University Library MS Mi A 57, f 14v.
- 25 NRO MS CA 3407, p 46.
- 26 NRO MS CA 3407, p 2.
- 27 NRO MS CA 3408, p 3.
- 28 NRO MS CA 3408, pp 56, 57c.
- 29 NRO MS CA 3409, p 5.
- 30 NRO MS CA 3409, p 48.
- 31 But not the war. The waits were disbanded during the turbulent 1640s. When in 1653 the town agreed once more to have its own waits, William Cogges was one of them. He continued in that capacity until 1675. See W.T. Baker, *Records of the Borough of Nottingham* (London, 1900), 432-7, *passim*.
- 32 NRO MS CA 3410, p 64.
- 33 The waits of Lincoln, Leicester, Manchester (and neighbouring Salford), Westminster, Beverley, Norwich, and no doubt many other towns where records have not survived, all enjoyed mono-

polies. See Woodfull, 99–104, 119

34 NRO MS CA 1627, ff 6–14.

35 See NCMB, ff 4, 5v, 7, 9v, 12, 14, 16v, 19v.

36 NRO MS CA 3372, p 21.

DAVID MILLS

Edward Gregorie — a ‘Bunbury scholar’

‘A narrow vol., rebound in vellum and kept in a case, pp. 194 parchment (numbered 1–192 due to omission of pp. between 119, 120) pp. 4 paper’ is the description in the catalogue of the Cheshire County Record Office of ‘Bunbury Register 1559 to 1653,’ the title embossed in gold on a red background on the cover of the volume. The volume contains principally the records of the baptisms at the parish church of St Boniface, Bunbury, Cheshire, between 1598 and 1653; marriages between 1593 and 1653; and burials between 1559 and 1649.¹

The registers have particular interest to students of medieval drama in view of the colophon to the Huntington manuscript of the Chester Mystery Cycle, HM2. This reads:

Deo gratias, This ys the laste of all the xxiiii^{te} pageantes and playes
played by the xxiiii^{tes} craftsmen of the Cytte of Chester, wrytten in
the yeare of our lord God 1591 and in the xxxiiiith yeare of the reigne
of our soveraigne Ladye queene Elizabeth, whom God preserve for ever.
Amen. Finis. By me Edward Gregorie, scholler at Bunburye, the yeare
of our lord God 1591
Edwardus Gregorie.²

F.M. Salter questions the authenticity of the colophon.³ R.M. Lumiansky and I have indicated our dissent from his view, comparing the practice in MS Bodley 175 and the difficulties raised by his thesis.⁴ But in 1980 we had still not identified the scribe named.

In 1607 the minister at Bunbury, Richard Roe, initiated a new copy of the church records left by his predecessor, Philip Street.⁵ The authenticity of the new copy is validated at regular intervals — usually at the foot of each page — by some formula such as ‘Collatum cum exemplari Philippi Street et comprobatum per nos’ (p 81) or ‘Concordat cum originali, test.’ (p 147) followed by the names of the vicar — eg, ‘Riccardum Roe, Minist. de Bunb.’ (p 95) — and of his two church wardens — ie, ‘Ed. Gregorie, John. Stockton, gardianes.’ The names are not signatures. Since the 1608 record of baptisms also bears these names (p 10), Gregorie and Stockton were evidently the ‘guardians’ for that year and were then released from office.

The records themselves contain only two references to Edward Gregory. Under