Records of drama and minstrelsy in Nottinghamshire to 1642

Among the shires whose dramatic records are not at present being edited is Nottinghamshire. The early Gough map shows half a dozen places in it, including the Benedictine monastery of Blyth in the north (a site for 12th- and 13th-century tournaments), Southwell Cathedral in the centre, the borough of Newark-on-Trent on the long eastern border with Lincolnshire, and of course Nottingham in the south. One other important borough, East Retford, lay north of Newark, and the old Archdeaconry of Nottinghamshire (part of the diocese of York) had many religious houses, such as those for Augustinian canons at Thurgarton, Newstead and Worksop, for Cluniac monks at Lenton Abbey, for Carthusian monks at Beauvale, and for Cistercian monks at Rufford. Since at least the 12th century the mother church for the whole Archdeaconry was at Southwell, not at York, and until the Reformation each borough and parish had to send representatives in procession to Southwell with offerings each Whitsun tide. The county was thus to some extent isolated from the rest of the diocese, particularly from York and Beverley, its eastern cathedral cities. This circumstance and the fact that Southwell was not a
borough (and lacked the wealthy craft guilds of Nottingham, a dozen miles south) may explain why the shire appears not to have staged Corpus Christi plays. However, its dramatic activities often resemble those in neighbouring Lincolnshire.

Ecclesiastical prohibitions give the first sign of local drama. John Thoresby, archbishop of York, issued on 18 April 1364 a general mandate against churchyard markets and games throughout his diocese.4 Thoresby's 'Constitutiones' of 1367 are more specific: they forbid 'mercata, placita, vel spectacula' and 'luctationes, sagittationes, vel ludi' in all consecrated places.5 Later ordinances show that there were grounds for including Nottinghamshire in these diocesan prohibitions. The Acts of Convocation of Southwell Cathedral (1248) forbid its canons the visiting 'tabernarum, et spectaculorum,' and in 1365 Thoresby ordered the parishioners of Worksop, about seven miles west of Retford, to stop wrestling, archery, dancing and singing in their churchyard.6

Two records of dramatic activity in the 15th century indicate what these early 'spectacula' and 'ludi' may have been. They could have been tournaments such as those at Blyth, sports like the compulsory baiting that had to be exhibited in the Nottingham market before the city's butchers could kill a bull,7 or even the morris dancing and folk games documented in Tudor times. On the other hand, drama was to be found in the county before itinerant interluders first turn up at Newark and Nottingham in Elizabeth's reign. The customs of Norwell, a manor several miles north of Southwell (which, as mentioned, was near 'spectacula' as early as 1248), include, for the reign of Henry IV (1399-1413), the following memorandum, as copied in the so far unpublished 'Liber Albus' of Southwell Cathedral. In return for mowing the lord's meadows in 'Northyng,' evidently in late spring, the twenty-four tenants of the manor are to 'eat in the Prebendal-house...and, after dinner, they are to sit and drink, and then go in and out of the hall three times, drinking each time they return, which being done, they shall have a bucket of beer, containing eight flagons and an half, which bucket ought to be carried on the shoulders of two men through the midst of the town, from the Prebendal-house unto the aforesaid meadow, where they are to divert themselves with plays the remainder of the day, at which plays the Lord shall give two pair of white gloves.'8 These 'plays,' of course, could be sports. Norwell, however, was Southwell's richest prebend, and accounts at Lincoln Cathedral from 1393 to 1561 recorded payment for several pairs of gloves for Mary and the Angel, and occasionally for Elizabeth and the prophets, in a Nativity play.9 One would like to know more about these and other manor customs.

The second record has just been noticed by Siegfried Wenzel. One William Brokshaw of East Retford, in his will dated 18 August 1499, bequeathed a gilded circlet to his guild for the image of the Virgin in the Corpus Christi day procession, at the festival of All Saints, and 'in ludo de Mankynd, et alis ludis.'10 St Swithun's, East Retford, was 'the centre of a rural deanery of sixty parishes, one of five deaneries in Nottinghamshire,' and its Corpus Christi procession was a considerable event in its area. By 1536 another benefactor, Thomas Gunthorpe, the parson of Babworth, a village just to the west of the city, had given a gilded shrine to be
carried on Corpus Christi. As well, the procession must have had music. The City's bailiffs, aldermen and townsfolk met Margaret Tudor, on her journey to marry James IV of Scotland, at the Rushey Inn, Babworth, and paid two minstrels to entertain her, probably the town waits, who may have been rewarded later at Nottingham in 1571-2. No discussion has yet appeared on the Retford 'Mankind' play, but at least superficially there are grounds for associating it with the version of The Castle of Perseverance described in its banns. The play's latest editor, Mark Eccles, thinks these banns are 'quite likely' the work of a second author, and they of course differ from the play-text in hinting that salvation of dead Humanum Genus (Mankind) will occur by the intercession of the Virgin Mary, and in not mentioning (what is in the play) the debate among the four daughters of God. Stanley J. Kahrl has shown that the drama of medieval Lincoln had a very strong Marian element, and Eccles, though demonstrating that the language and orthography of The Castle belong to a scribe from Norfolk, does not contradict W.K. Smart or Jacob Bennett, who observe that allusions within the play itself, particularly one to Canwick, the gallows outside Lincoln, link it at some point with that cathedral city. East Retford, just over twenty miles from Lincoln as the crow flies, probably saw players perform early in the reign of Henry VII a version of a Lincoln Castle of Perseverance. Possibly the play had something to do with East Retford's school, which dated from 1318 at least; for Christopher Say and Thomas Cooper, school-masters respectively after 1552 and in 1612, were termed 'ludimagister.' The terrible effects that plague had on the borough in both 1451 and 1485, years during which half the townsfolk died as a result, suggest that the 'Mankind' play of before 1499 may have moralized, like the Macro play, on sudden death and the ephemeral value of worldly goods.

The shire's other two important boroughs, Newark and Nottingham, give no sign of dramatic activity until the reign of Elizabeth. The Newark Trinity Guild account book, later the civic minute book, has payments in 1540 and 1542 to minstrels or 'histrionibus' (for 16d), and in 1540 also to a man who carried 'the dragon' and to a banner bearer, evidently for a procession and for a guild feast in the common hall. The corporation minutes provide for the annual wages of the town waits in 1565, as well as for their monopoly 'at any marriage or feasting,' but the first reference to players is in 1569. On 3 January the Newark minutes record orders that 'no players from henceforth shall playe in the Scole house' but ones licensed by the Alderman, and that the Alderman's assistants are to keep him company 'at any such playe interlude or tragedie.' Perhaps this set of orders was made to deal particularly with the appearance of the (first?) local troupe of players, those of Sir John Byron (an ancestor of the poet) at Newstead Abbey, about nine miles north of Nottingham. Byron's company, the first players mentioned in the Nottingham chamberlains' accounts (which go back irregularly into the 15th century), were paid there on 14 January 1569; a local historian's claim for 'numerous town pageants' does not seem well founded. Before 1569 Nottingham had only spectacular processions, folk dances and minstrelsy, as far as one can tell. Full accounts of the guild of St George in St Peter's church for 1459-1545/6
do not mention pageants, though payments are made for the cleaning of the armour of the image of St George (from 1465-6) and for gilded copper spurs and new stirrups for it (1465-6, 1470-1).20 This George, termed an 'image' in 1479-80, stood with an altar, curtains, lights and a casket for offerings, and was associated with feasts and processions. In 1472-3 the guild had a 'breakfast (jantaculum) of Saint George,' in 1489-90 a 'convivium' and in 1530 on St George's day wine was given to the aldermen and the choir singers ('cantantes chori'). Payments for torches to be carried on the feast of Corpus Christi began in 1473-4, both torches and banners are said by 1480-1 to be carried around the sacrement that day, and in 1484-5 and 1499-1500 one penny is paid to protect St George's armour from the torches carried then. The Corpus Christi payments end in 1524, those for the St George feast in 1537, and those for the upkeep of the armour only with the accounts themselves in 1546. The city seems, then, to have had a Corpus Christi procession, though the 1389 guild certificates for Nottingham have not survived.21 Like Newark, it also made regular provision for a Whitsun Monday procession to Southwell Cathedral for a Te Deum, the mayor and aldermen attending in livery. Charles Deering describes this ceremony briefly in 1751, long after its discontinuation, but a 1562 letter from the corporation of Newark to the earl of Rutland to plead for a stop to the annual payment to Southwell refers to a procession there with 'their crosse, banners, and such like.'22 In Nottingham, 'such like' occasionally meant music and dancing. The city paid the Leicester waits, perhaps as well as its own waits (who are recorded from 1464), to attend the mayor's procession in 1500, and both morris dancers and taborer travelled with him in 1530.23 Other ceremonials occurred, often with music. In 1446 the civic records refer to a procession at the mayor's election, and Deering says that the waits marched and played before the dignitaries as they went to St Mary's church.24 The mayor and aldermen also processed on All Hallow's, Christmas Day and Candlemas and Easter (1500), and May Day celebrations are recorded for 1530, 1541 (when 'we rode Mey' and the young men brought May in), 1569 (when 'dancers' brought May in) and regularly 1571-9.25 Deering also describes a mayoral procession, led by the town waits, on Monday in Easter week out of Nottingham to St Anne's Well (also called Robin Hood's Well) where a chapel, 'Victualling House' and arbors for feasting stood; and the civic chamberlains' accounts have payments to musicians on this occasion in 1547, 1558, 1569 and 1575-6.26 Finally, rewards are regularly given for drums and music at civic watches on Midsummer Eve and St Peter's Eve.27

As these local civic and guild activities gradually subside, buffeted by hostile government statutes and the increasingly puritan public conscience of post-Reformation England, local authorities are more or less forced, through courtesy or fealty, to finance national entertainers, players of no fixed address who are sponsored by the royal court or by an aristocracy with estates spread over many shires. (Thus gifts of wine by Nottingham officials to nobility in the 15th century become, a century later, payments to their players and minstrels.)28 This distinction between local and national activities has sometimes been elevated, not with very good effect, to one between medieval and Renaissance drama.29 Yet clearly
local entertainers and itinerant ones co-exist, in varying degrees, from the 14th century, and local activities go on well into the Jacobean period. As with other counties, Nottinghamshire records have been extracted so as to make this distinction sharper than it really is.

Three main groups of documents exist for Tudor and Stuart drama and minstrelsy in this county: (1) the Nottingham borough records, including court rolls or books 1303-1547, the Hall Books or town minutes c 1500-1642, the 15th-17th-century Quarter Sessions' rolls, and the many chamberlains' account books, 1464-1642; (2) the household accounts of the Willoughby family at Wollaton Hall near Nottingham, 1502-1602; and (3) the Act Books of the Archdeacons of Nottingham, 1565-1642. None has been exhaustively examined in this respect.

The old volume of Nottingham customs and orders, the 'Red Book,' was destroyed by fire in 1724, but other records, especially the chamberlains' accounts, are rich with information. Published extracts show the first itinerant entertainer, the king's bearward, paid in 1530, and afterwards about 230 entries appear regarding other bearwards, minstrels, jesters, trumpeters, waits, players and musicians from 1537 to 1642. These extracts, published in 1882-1900, are explicitly biased against local entertainers. W.H. Stevenson writes in his preface to the 1547-1625 excerpts:

There are numerous entries of rewards to various troops of players belonging to the households of the neighbouring nobility and gentry and to the surrounding villages. It has been found possible to print only a few of these entries. The payments to bearwards, cripples, maimed soldiers, refugees, and other unfortunates recorded in the following sheets in like manner represent only a small selection from the very numerous entries in the accounts.32

In 1896 John T. Godfrey, a local historian, excerpted sixty-three entries about players from Stevenson's edition (then up to 1625) and drew attention to the unedited material, but it was John Tucker Murray whose seventy-five extracts from Stevenson became the standard reference work. As Murray's work has been used for the standard histories of the English stage, 1558-1642, by E.K. Chambers and G.E. Bentley, some account of the serious deficiencies in Murray's selections may be useful. (1) Murray mistranscribes the players of 'Anslay' (Annesley) as ones of 'Austay' (1571-2) and omits the following entry for January 1615-16, 'Item payd to Maister Maior vpon a tickett, videlicet, to the Prynce's players, xxs.' Murray's grounds for selecting extracts are unstated: frequent inconsistencies tend to misrepresent a large number of entries as a quite small one. His first few extracts concern minstrels, morris dancers and Lockwood the Queen's jester, but he ignores many other similar items in favour of ones about bull-baiting and bearwards. Actually only two of these last are listed; bearwards of Henry VIII, Elizabeth, the earl of Leicester and other noblemen are also overlooked. (3) Stevenson's caveat about the exclusion of various dramatic entries from his extracts
is not mentioned. (4) There are, finally, no entries from the civic records for 1625-1702 (published in 1900). Though only four visits of players are missed, they are of some interest. Three of the payments are for 1627: 3s 4d to ‘foure players havinge a Commission, and there Company broken,’ 7s to ‘the King’s players of the Chamber of Bristowe in reward,’ and 6s 8d to ‘the players of the King’s Revells.’ The first entry may confirm Bentley’s view that the Palgrave’s Company broke up in 1626, and the second extends records of John Daniel’s company, the Youths of Her Majesty’s Royal Chamber of Bristol, by three years. The fourth payment to players occurs in a series of accounts and orders relating to the visit of Charles I and his queen to Nottingham on 4 August 1634 for five nights. The royal couple were met by the mayor, the aldermen and their companies at the ‘Coortt-gate,’ and an expensively apparelled Master Samuel Lightfoot, usher of the city’s free school, delivered a speech to them. Charles may have stayed at Nottingham Castle, near which the roads were repaired, but the entire city was extensively repaired and painted, and during his stay he visited St Anne’s Well. His trumpeters and players accompanied him and were rewarded by the city, respectively for 10s and 20s. Another payment of 13s 4d was made to the knight Marshall’s man and the trumpeter ‘for proclayminge the Clarke of the Marketts proclaymacion and prizes’, possibly a fencing match (or other sport) took place, as at Lincoln in 1617.

The seventy-seven bailiffs’, household, personal and estate accounts for the Willoughby family seats at Middleton, Warwickshire, and at Wollaton Hall, are now deposited among Lord Middleton’s manuscripts in Nottingham University Library. W.H. Stevenson printed them in his report to the Historical Manuscripts Commission, but he does not discuss which of the over 120 payments to entertainers were made at Wollaton and he may not have transcribed everything of interest. The most plentiful records are for 1520-7 and 1572-5.

The Act Books of the Archdeaconry of Nottingham, also deposited at the University Library, are records of all personal or official actions heard by the Archdeacon or his delegate in court. R.F.B. Hodgkinson’s extracts are based on his transcripts, in twenty-four volumes (with selections only after c 1630), of the original books, which run with some gaps from 1565 to 1642. Of entries relating to violations of church property and the Sabbath by entertainers, almost all concern local rather than itinerant players, musicians and dancers; and as court minutes by their nature are more circumstantial than accounts the former are important sources of information about strictly provincial activities. The Act Books appear to contain more than their secular counterpart, the Quarter Sessions Order or Minute Books, which survive nearly intact for 1604-42.

In these and other published Nottinghamshire records little new, beyond what has been already mentioned, is to be gleaned about the professional acting companies. Only one native county troupe can be added to those now known. Sir William Holles, whose seat was at Haughton Hall (about five miles south of East Retford) and whose musicians were paid three times from 1571-2 to 1578-9 at Nottingham, is said by his descendant Gervase Holles to have ‘alwais kept a com
pany of stage players of his owne wch presented him masques and playes at festivall
times and upon dayes of solemnity. In the summer time they usually acted abroad
in the country .... The other locally sponsored troupes include those of Sir John
Byron and of a Mr Marcham, probably Robert Markham of Cotham (about fifteen
miles east of Nottingham, where they were rewarded in 1572-3). To judge from
the Nottingham and Willoughby accounts, Nottinghamshire noblemen imported
players for entertainment rather than supporting individual companies. Other
records are consistent with this point. The three masques projected for the 1562
meeting of Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots at Nottingham Castle were being
organized by the Master of the Revels in London when altered circumstances
cancelled the plans. A full plot for these 'Devices' exists. When James I pro-
gressed from Scotland to London in 1603, the only important nobleman to wel-
come him in the shire was the 7th earl of Shrewsbury, and he came from Sheffield
to his house in the park near Worksop to do so. On 20-1 April James was greeted
there by huntsmen and a woodsman's speech before going to hunt, and perhaps
the only local people to take part were the 'six virgins' paid by the Worksop church-
wards when the king 'came to Worksop Manor.' These virgins may have con-
tributed the 'excellent soule-ravishing musique' that delighted him there. After
the death of Elizabeth, of course, all acting companies had to be sponsored by the
kind or a member of the royal family. Otherwise William Cavendish, 2nd duke of
Newcastle and a playwright himself, would doubtless have patronized a company
from his seat (after c 1618) at Welbeck Abbey, just a few miles south of Worksop.
Ben Jonson's *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, performed 21 May 1633,
cannot have drawn significantly on native actors. The same must have been true
of a minor piece like William Sampson's *The Vow-Breaker, or The Fair Maid of
Clifton*, the 1636 title-page of which notes, 'In Notinghamshire as it hath beene
divers times Acted by severall Companies with great applause.' This evidence,
together with Murray's information, represents our published records of visits to
the county by outside companies. Only one additional piece of information can
be noted at present. On 19 November 1580 the churchwardens of Lenton, now
quite near Nottingham University, were cited 'for sufferinge fightinge braulinge
and quarellinge in the church' and defended themselves by saying those responsible
were 'my L. Bartlettes players.' Lord (Henry) Berkeley's second company apparently
was a rowdy one; in July of the very next year it was jailed in the Counter
at London after fighting with Inns of Court men.

Itinerant companies with noble patrons by no means, however, presented all
or even perhaps (given Stevenson's remark) most plays in the shire. Parish drama
is frequently recorded, especially within fifteen miles of Nottingham. Willoughby
household accounts for 1524 have a payment to the players of Browton, possibly
Upper Broughton (at the border with Leicestershire in the southeast). Nottingham
rewarded players from Annesley (a town to the north, towards Mansfield) and
Cropwell (about seven miles to the east) in 1571-2, from Barton (five miles south)
in 1578-9 and from Selston (probably Selston, a town about eleven miles north) in
1579-80. The popularity of these local plays can be measured by the fact that
in 1625 and 1627 the county Quarter Sessions had to prohibit Sunday 'meetings of people in their own parishes for common plays or unlawful sports,' several decades after the 1603 national proclamation forbidding such Sabbath activities.\footnote{The Act Books record the chastisement of various spectators who were caught at these plays. On 26 March 1614 fifteen parishioners of St Peter and St Mary, Nottingham, were presented 'for beinge at a playe in tyme of divine service upon the Sabaoth daye,' and Alice Brittaine of Mansfield admitted on 17 November 1627 that on a Sunday night in the previous July she 'was at the play at Widow Doughties in Mansfeld.'\footnote{The Act Books record the chastisement of various spectators who were caught at these plays.}

Local minstrels, who thrived on the same kind of patronage as the acting companies and whose entertainment approached drama in type,\footnote{Local minstrels, who thrived on the same kind of patronage as the acting companies and whose entertainment approached drama in type,} were rewarded earlier than players. Sir Henry Willoughby paid minstrels of a Mr Strelley, probably John Strelley of Strelley (now in Nottingham District), in 1521, and of Sir Randall of Browton (Upper Broughton?) in 1522.\footnote{The city records add more sponsored minstrels: of Sir John Byron in 1537-8; of a Master Babentun (Babyngton) in 1547 and 1558, probably the predecessor of Anthony Babington, executed for treason in 1586, whose seat was at Kingston-upon-Soar, about nine miles south of the city, in 1558; of Sir Thomas Cockayne, its former mayor, in 1558 and 1571-2; and of a Master Stanhope, probably Sir Thomas Stanhope of Shelford, about six miles east of Nottingham, in 1569 (his waits were paid by the Willoughbys in 1573).\footnote{Before noble patronage was customary in the shire, musicians got employment as civic waits, as which, at Newark and Nottingham, they had wages and a monopoly in playing at marriages and other special events in the city. In Nottingham this trade was perhaps shared with the schoolmaster, termed 'ludimagister' in 1582-3: in 1611 he was ordered not to have his children go 'so oft playinge as heretofore they haue vsed,' not to play on any Monday, Wednesday or Friday, and not to play for marriages as up to then had been customary.\footnote{Less lucky musicians piped, harped and fiddled where they could. The Act Books present one Gervase Whitehead of Ruddington, four miles south of Nottingham, for profaning divine service by playing on the bagpipes at Clifton in 1613, and a host of presentments or indictments are recorded in the Quarter Sessions records for illegal music-making.\footnote{One old outlet for the impulse to music and semi-dramatic playing was May games and morris dancing. As early as 1530 Nottingham tamed these to the service of the church at the Whitsuntide procession, but that rural parishes in general financed their churches by such playing is shown in the churchwardens' accounts of Holme Pierrepont, several miles east of the city. An assessment was made on the parish in 1552 'because oyere gatherings wth hobbyhorse and lightes were layed downe.'\footnote{After Elizabeth came to the throne the morris men were back at Nottingham again. The dancers of Kinoulton came nine miles there in 1571-2, Clifton dancers gathered money there on the same day for building of a bridge, and the men of Stapleford travelled the six miles to Nottingham on the road past Lenton Abbey with their May game in 1582-3.\footnote{Increasing ecclesiastical interference with these folk events then develops. In 1585 the churchwardens of}}}}
Finningley were penalized for having morris dancers in the church and one Robert Dewyck of Boughton, south of East Retford, was presented for erecting a May pole in the churchyard; later Laxton, a few miles east of Boughton, regretted its Sunday May game of 1605. Several Wollaton men went with morris dancers to neighbouring Trowell on a Sunday in 1618, when half a dozen Bradmore men, as many miles from Nottingham, were likewise guilty of Sabbath piping and morris dancing.

No ceremonia, procedures for the management of entertainments, have showed up for the county, but one neglected semi-dramatic fragment, a speech by the presenter of a Twelfth-Day 'pastime,' the choosing of a King of Wassail, suggests that one private household of the early 17th century may have had a ceremonia.

This thirty-two-line 'carlel' is written on the first leaf of the Archdeacon of Nottingham's Act Book for 24 October 1622 - 21 June 1623, which has 'the entries of the courts held before the Commissaries of the Archbishop during one of his Visita-
tions.' Evidently the Archdeacon or his officials saw this pastime on 6 January 1622 or 1623 when they were touring his jurisdiction, and a clerk copied the speech as follows:

Farewell good Christmas
adue adue due
For now wee must leave you
& looke for a new
For while thou returneth
Wee linger in paine
Wee Carre not how
quickly thou comest againe
or eare thou departest
wee purpose to see
what pleasure & pastime
this daye will showe mee
the king of our wassel
this day wee must chusse
or else the whole costom
wee Carelesly loves
the Wassell well spiced
about shall goe round
thought cost my good master
best parte of a pound
the mede in the Buttrye
stands reddy to fill
with noping good licoure
with part & good will
to well commusse frendly
my Mr. stands by
& tells us in frendshippe
one tow three goes dry
His Beare to drincke freely
to pleasure a frend
& soe for the twelft daie
my cariel doth end

This song may reply to one by Christmas, who sings the carol, 'Here have I dwellyd with more and lasse / From Halowtyde till Candylmas' (16th century), as he departs from one lord of the hall and his guests.63 The Wassail ceremony, however, is not necessarily dramatic. An early Tudor ceremonial for the king's voidée and wassail on Twelfth Night directs that 'the chapell to stonde on the one syde off the hall & when the steward comyth In att the hall dore with the washill he must cry iij tymys wassayll wassayll wassayll & then the chapell to Answere with a good song.' The second Northumberland household book has a similar but more detailed order for an earl's Twelfth Night in which the chapel is to 'sing bitwixte the wassaill and the voidy for a passe tymes such carralles as they be purveid of.64 In these circumstances the speaker of the Nottinghamshire carol would probably have been the hall steward, but the reference to the 'costom' of the Wassail King suggests a folk celebration involving the tenants of the manor as well as the household. Here, as elsewhere, the Lincolnshire records may be helpful. In 1555, at Hagworthingham, the churchwardens noted a receipt for money gathered by 'the young men called the Wessell.'65

At this point the printed materials from which this report is drawn run out. A fresh search of the manuscripts behind them and of other, undiscussed records should yield new evidence and rectify the errors that are here inherited and (doubtless) committed. The Nottingham, Newark and East Retford records will add something, and the Archdeaconry muniments also have promising libels and depositions from 1563 and churchwardens' presentation bills from 1596.66 Southwell Cathedral Library holds much of interest: its 'Liber Albus,' accounts for 1455, visitation books for 1563-95, chapter minutes for 1590-1616, chapter registers for 1570-1567 and court act books for 1563-95.67 The County Record Office has various early churchwardens' accounts, and those for Nottingham St Mary's, 1582-93, are at the Nottingham Public Library.68 Family collections of possible use include the Holles papers in the Newcastle manuscripts (University of Nottingham), the Savile of Rufford household accounts from 1596 (County Record Office), and the Thoresby Park papers (British Library Egerton MSS 3516-3660). Court rolls and probate documents are very numerous.69 More items could be added at this point, but the records editor would be better advised to start fresh with the standard county bibliographies by J.P. Briscoe and M.W. Barley for printed material and at the county repositories themselves for surviving manuscripts.70

NOTES

1 R.T. Timson (ed), The Cartulary of Blyth Priory, I, Thoroton Society Record Series XXVII
2 Only Nottingham, Newark and East Retford represented the present shire at an assembly of wool merchants at York in 1322; and by 1377 the county population was about 50,000, with under 3,000 persons at Nottingham and about 2,000 at Newark (A.C. Wood, _A History of Nottinghamshire_ [Nottingham, 1947], 73, 99).


5 Wilkins's _Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae ab Anno MCCCCL ad Annum MDXLV_ (London, 1737), 68. These may be translated as 'markets, assemblies or spectacles' and 'wrestling, archery or games.'

6 Leach, _Visitations_, 208; _Victoria History..., Nottingham_, II, 57. The cemetery of South Leverton parish church was used for shooting and 'jocos alios' in 1289-9 (The Registers of John Le Romeyn, Lord Archbishop of York 1286-1296, Part II, and of Henry of Newark, Lord Archbishop of York 1296-1299, Surtees Society CXXVIII (Durham and London, 1917), 280.

7 Charles Deering, _Nottinghamia Vetus et Nova_ (Nottingham, 1751), 125.

8 William Dickinson, _Antiquities, Historical, Architectural, Chorographical, and Itinerary, in Nottinghamshire, and the Adjacent Counties_, I, part 2 (Newark, 1803), 151; the translation only is given. Separate rewards for the autumn mowing (152), which had no 'plays.' 'Northyng' is probably Northfield Ho, about a half-mile north of the present town.


10 `An Early Reference to a Corpus Christi Play,' _MP_ 74 (1977), 393-4.


12 Jackson, _History of Retford_, 12, W.H. Stevenson (ed), _Records of the Borough of Nottingham Being a Series of Extracts from the Archives of the Corporation of Nottingham_, IV (for 1547-1623) (London and Nottingham, 1889), 140 (these 'Weytes of Ratford' are unlikely to be from Old Radford, in present-day Nottingham). Hereafter the latter is cited as _Records_, IV; also, II, for 1399-1485 (1883), and III, for 1485-1547, ed W.H. Stevenson (1885); V, for 1625-1702, ed W.T. Baker (1900). See also E.L. Guilford, 'Extracts from the Records of the Borough of Nottingham,' _Transactions of theThoroton Society_ 26 (1922), 18-35; 27 (1923), 53-72; 28 (1924), 73-95; 29 (1925), 27 (1923), 53-72; 28 (1924), 73-95; 29 (1923), 68-89; 30 (1926), 108-36; 31 (1927), 85-104.


14 _Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire_, xii-xiii; _Macro Plays_, xi-xv.

15 Jackson, _History of Retford_, 9; Grounds, _History of King Edward VI Grammar School_, 44-6, 49.

16 Cornelius Brown, _A History of Newark-on-Trent_, I (Newark, 1904), 248, 252.

17 Brown, _History of Newark-on-Trent_, II (Newark, 1907), 10-11. The Newark waits were at Nottingham in 1571-2 (Records, IV, 137, 140).

18 Brown, _History_, II, 11.

19 _Records_, IV, 132; Duncan Gray, _Nottingham Through 500 Years_, 2nd edition (Nottingham, 1960), 39. He also refers to 'many town pageants' associated with the crafts and names 'the Midsummer Night pageant, with morris dancers,' 'the raising of Lazarus, or St George and the Dragon' (40-1, 44), evidently in misunderstanding the introduction to Hodgkinson's _Account Books_ (see next note).


22 Deering, Nottinghamia, 124; Brown, History, II, 8.
23 Records, III, 71, 362-3; II, 379.
24 Records, II, 424; Deering, Nottinghamia, 106-7.
26 Deering, Nottinghamia, 78, 125; Records, IV, 91, 117, 133, 163.
27 Records, III, 361; IV, 117, 135, 143, 151, etc.; cf Deering, Nottinghamia, 123-4.
29 See, for example, Giles E. Dawson (ed), Records of Plays and Players in Kent, 1450-1642, Malone Society Collections Volume VII (Oxford, 1965), where, though 'medieval drama' is defined as 'what lay behind 1450' and Renaissance drama (the volume's interest) as what follows 1450, the main text includes only records of 'public entertainers of any kind who travelled,' excludes evidence about town waits (who elsewhere provide music for civic pageants) and separates as Appendix B the records for 'Town Plays and Shows produced at Home' ([vii]-viii, 188-211). As Dawson notes, this last material is left incomplete: 'The extracts that follow do not include single entries of payments for home plays which are scattered through the ordinary accounts of the four towns,' Canterbury, Lydd, Maidstone and New Romney (188). The implication appears to be that plays produced locally after 1450 are the business of medieval rather than Renaissance drama historians.
30 Records, I, viii. A schedule of extant documents can be found in the introduction to each volume.
31 Records, III, 363.
32 Records, IV, viii. Some omitted entries have been transcribed by Walter L. Woodfill, Musicians in English Society from Elisabeth to Charles I (Princeton, 1953), 287-91.
34 Records, IV, 347.
35 Records, V, 121.
37 Records, V, 165-9; PRO, Declared Accounts, Treasurers of the Chamber, E.351/545, mb 5r.
38 Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire, (London, 1911), 327-452 (hereafter cited as Report). This apparently does not include the accounts of the entertainment of Queen Anne at Wollaton in 1603 (now Nottingham University Library MS Mi Av 1).
42 Records, IV, 148.
44 John Nichols, The Progresses, Processions, and Magnificent Festivities, of King James the First, 1 (London, 1828), 85-7 (from STC 17153); Robert White, Nottinghamshire, Worksop, 'The Dukery, ' and Sherwood Forest (Worksop, 1875), 18, 334-5. The king's older children stopped there c June 20, and Prince Charles still later on 10-13 August 1604: music was provided on both occasions (HMC, Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury ... at Hatfield House, parts 15 [London, 1930], 143, and 16 [London, 1933], 227).
48 Report, 379.
49 Records, IV, 140, 183, 194.
50 Nottinghamshire County Records, 53; Chambers, The Elizabethan Stage, IV, 335.
51 Hodgkinson, ‘Extracts,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 30 (1926), 44; and 31 (1927), 143.
53 Report, 336, 346.
54 Records, III, 377; IV, 90, 117, 137; Report, 433.
55 Victoria History... Nottingham, II, 224, 227, Records, IV, 302.
56 Hodgkinson, ‘Extracts,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 30 (1926), 44; Nottinghamshire County Records, 53.
58 Records, IV, 140, 200.
59 Hodgkinson, ‘Extracts,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 29 (1925), 58; and 30 (1926), 42-3.
60 Hodgkinson, ‘Extracts,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 30 (1926), 46.
61 Hodgkinson, ‘Extracts,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 29 (1925), 19-20; and 30 (1926), 55-6.
62 Possibly the Archdeacon’s Visitation Call Books (at the Nottingham University Library), beginning 1609-10, would note the court’s location on these dates.
64 British Library Add MS 4712, f 12r; Bodleian Library MS Eng. hist. b.208, f 42v (see D.M. Barratt, ‘A Second Northumberland Household Book,’ The Bodleian Library Record 8 [1968], 93-8).
66 Nottingham City Libraries acts as the City Record Office. The Gilstrap Public Library, Newark, has accounts for 1392 of the Guild of the Holy Trinity and extracts from the church accounts from 1609 (‘Manuscript Sources of Nottinghamshire History,’ Transactions of the Thoroton Society 47 [1943], 48-9; continued from 46 [1942], 18-26). See also W.D. Macray, ‘The Manuscripts of the Corporation of Newark,’ 12th Report, HMC, Appendix, Part IV (London, 1891), 538. East Retford corporation records were mainly destroyed in 1651 (Jackson, History of Retford, 17), but the Fiercy MSS have some antiquarian copies. (Public Libraries at Mansfield and Worksop may also have some useful records.) For the Archdeaconry records, see the Church of English Pilgrim Trust Report for Southwell diocese, the University of Nottingham, Report of the Keeper of the Manuscripts, nos. 1- (1958/9); and J.H. Hodson, ‘A university archive repository: the University of Nottingham Department of Manuscripts,’ Archives 5 (1962), 145-50.
68 The accounts in the Record Office include ones for Bingham (from 1598), Blyth (from 1559), Coddington (from 1630), Edwinstowe and Ollerton (from 1626) and Upton (from 1600): see F.A. Kennedy, Guide to the Nottinghamshire County Records Office (Notts County Council, 1960), and the Report of the County Archivist (1961). Adrian Henstock, ‘The Archives and Local History Departments of Nottingham Public Libraries,’ Bulletin of Local History: East
69 For example, the University has court rolls of East Stoke for 1393–1624 and court books of
Newark from 1575. Archdeaconry probate records are at the County Record Office and the
Borthwick Institute: see Wills and Where to Find Them, comp. J.S.W. Gibson (British Record
Society, 1974), 100-3.
70 Nottingham Free Public Reference Library, Class List No. 14, Nottinghamsire Collection,
comp. John P. Briscoe (Nottingham, 1890); and Nottinghamsire: A catalogue of the county

Research in Progress

R.W. INGRAM

Once upon a long time ago, in 1963, I decided to write a short book about medieval
dramatic entertainments in Coventry. Primarily, I wished to examine the dramatic,
religious and social importance of the Corpus Christi cycle when it was seen as
part of the year-round dramatic activity of a city. The production and performance
of the cycle would be set against a background of civic pageants and shows offered
to royal and noble visitors, the processions and celebrations of religious feast-days,
the midsummer and holiday festivities, and special local festival events — installing
the mayor, beating the bounds, honouring local heroes and occasions.

I chose Coventry because of its centrality to English civic drama, because I was
born and educated there and was familiar with its names, places and history, and
because it offered a rich but finite amount of material. The basic research had been
done (by Sharp, Halliwell-Phillipps and Harris chiefly) and on manuscripts now lost
or destroyed. Much of the material Sharp used in his Dissertation on the Pageants
or Dramatic Mysteries, Anciently Performed at Coventry passed, eventually, to the
Birmingham Reference Library where it was lost in the 1879 fire; of what was left,
more was lost in the air-raids on Coventry in 1940 and 1941. I assumed that few
manuscripts useful to my purpose remained and that archival research of any scope
was out of the question. Thus ignorantly assured, I began to check what remained
in Coventry in 1964. Never was a false assumption more firmly or satisfyingly
corrected. Despite great losses, much remains in original manuscripts and in copies
of manuscripts now destroyed or lost. Most of the extant original manuscripts are
at the Coventry Record Office; others are in Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon,
Lichfield, and London; in all these places, plus Birmingham, Edinburgh and Wash-
ington, DC, are copies — at second- and third-hand — of manuscripts now gone. My
collections from all these places will form the third volume for R.E.E.D., Dramatic
Records of Coventry, 1392-1642. It will more than double the amount of material