The Congleton accounts: further evidence of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama in Cheshire

Last summer, while conducting my research into the influence on Elizabethan and Jacobean drama of schoolmasters and household tutors in the northwest of England—viz, Cheshire, Lancashire, Shropshire (Salop) and Westmorland (Cumbria)—I came across some evidence of dramatic activities in Congleton that I believe are as yet undocumented but are significant in several respects. Since it was a chance discovery right at the end of my stay, what is presented here is only a cursory examination of the records, not a thorough and complete study.

In the Cheshire County Record Office, I had occasion to consult Robert Head's *Congleton Past and Present*, published in 1887 and republished presumably as a centenary tribute in 1987, and *History of Congleton*, edited by W.B. Stephens and published in 1970 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the town's royal charter. 1 Although my immediate concern was with the history of Congleton Grammar School and any possible dramatic activity connected with it, I was struck by references to the town's notorious week-long cockfights and bearbaitings, and the even more intriguing assertions that the cockpit was usually in the school and that the schoolmaster was the controller and director of the pastime, reclaiming all runaway cocks as his own rightful perquisites.

Head's book gave an entry from the borough's accounts: `1601. Payd John Wagge for dressyige the schoolhouse at the great cock fyghte...0.0.4d'. Because the aforementioned sports and pastimes were said to have drawn all the local gentry and nobility to the schoolhouse, the schoolmaster might also have undertaken some dramatic activities; the town could have attracted touring companies at such times. However, this particular book gave only some rather late evidence of a company of players, noting that in 1631 there was

Geoven more unto the company of Players towards there charges, M' Deputie Wagge and 2 justices would not suffer them to play on y Saboth daye vidi

Though this reference was not too promising, it was clear that when the book was written in 1887, the author had had recourse to borough accounts. These were not listed in the County records; however, thanks to one of the county's archival assistants, they were located in a specially constructed cabinet in the Town Hall strongroom at Congleton, a moderate-sized market town in East Cheshire. Among many other documents, the handlist included the borough charters 1272–1810, the Order Books of Assembly Books 1554–1861, and the Accounts 1584–1867.

The books, in good condition and quite legible, are extensive and detailed, but the early entries seemed only marginally promising. Accounts for the second quarter of 1558 noted a visiting trumpeter and payment for a 'sett of Rounds', which could mean anything from a set of rungs for a ladder to a set of dances or songs sung in canon.

There were abundant references to cockfights and bearbaitings, and some very interesting references to the schoolmaster, but it was not until the entries for the third quarter of 1589 that there was a clear reference to a company of players. Rushbearers were also paid, and since rushbearing ceremonies often were associated with the wakes or annual celebrations of the local church's dedication day, I wondered if the Congleton wakes might be the occasion for the visit of players but could find no immediate connection between rushbearing entries and visiting companies.
Having worked from time to time in the papers of J. P. Earwaker, the 19th-century Cheshire historian (whose papers, bequeathed along with his library to the Chester Archaeological Society, are kept in the Cheshire City R.O.), I thought perhaps something further about these records might be found there. In fact, ‘W.H.T.’ had transcribed many entries from the Mayor’s Books and the Accounts on sports, festivals, pastimes, the election of officers, and the hiring of schoolmasters and had sent them to Earwaker. The items that follow, therefore, are from this transcription. I had sufficient time to verify only the earliest items, which were accurately transcribed from the Accounts books. Further research will also determine whether or not the following references to dramatic activities are all that the several Congleton records contain. However, these at least provide evidence to add to the case I am close to making, that Cheshire was a centre of significant Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatic activity. As well, they raise other provocative questions which I will address later in this paper.

2nd Quarter, from Midsummer to Michaelmas, 1588

Itm payd Wyllm Wyttacars Inn’ [innkeeper] for goeynge into Sutton to speke wyth a badger there that had lost his lycence w’hwas found here uppon a stranger beyng a trompeter iiid

3rd Quarter, beginning the Feast of the Annunciation, 1589

payd for the lorde of myssreules gowne xiii s vi d
payd for tallow and bestowed on the Rushbearers iii s
payd that was geven toy e lord darcyes players iiis vi d

Murray supposes from the limited records he examined and the places he visited that the first Lord Darcy’s company must have disbanded around 1578 and were not reconstructed until 1591. Given the restricted years of his study, he of course missed the fourteenth and early fifteenth-century references to companies under this titular patronage. Chambers doesn’t mention them at all, and even REED’s several editors give no references to this particular Darcy company before 1591, when they are found in both REED’s Newcastle and Coventry. They are not listed in REED’s York until 1593, so this 1589 reference seems to indicate that they were operational again at least two years before they were previously known to have been.

2nd Quarter, beginning Christmas – January, 1589–90

payd y’ was geven the Lord Darcyes playes v s

4th Quarter, ending Michaelmas, 1591

payd y’ was geven to y’ earle of Wosters players iii s iv d

This company was at Shrewsbury sometime after June in 1591 (Murray) and at Newcastle the second week of September 1591 (REED), so Congleton would seem to be part of the company’s northern swing that year. By November 11, they were down in Southampton, and after February 10, 1592, the date of their passport, at least four players — Browne, Bradstreet, Sackville, and Jones — left the company for an extended tour of the continent.

2nd Quarter, beginning the feast of the Nativity, 1592

payd that was bestowed uppon the L. Admyrrals man [sic] that playde here an other tyme vii s

3rd Quarter, ending St John the Baptist, 1595

payd that was bestowed upon the Rushbearers xii d
4th Quarter, ending Michaelmas, 1602
payd Roger Stopporte for drumynge before Rushbearers & clensynge the pryson howses

2nd Quarter, ending the Annunciation of BVM, 1603
Gyven the Queenes players by consent of the overseers and others

Here the transcriber uses a new heading, 'Extracts from the Congleton Borough Accounts', and begins back at 1583 again. He repeats some of the above references but includes a new one for Lord Darcy’s players in 1592, and two new ones for the Queen’s players in 1597 and 1600/1. A reference to an unnamed company of players appears to explain the above Lord Admiral’s man’s return shortly after a previous performance because the two references are now placed together.

4th Quarter, 1592
Payd that was geven to the Lorde Darcyes players

2nd Quarter, 1592
Payd that was bestowed uppon players at one tyme

(The next item follows immediately in the transcription.)

payd that was bestowed uppon the L. admvralls man that playde here an other tyme

However, if the ‘players’ refers to the Lord Admiral’s players, then it is strange that the solo performance of one of them, when he played again, received more reward than the whole company did before, unless ‘man’ is an error for ‘men’.

1st Quarter 38 Elizabeth, 1595
payd Roger Stopporte for goeynge w`hhys drumme to a muster to Ruddheath

Though not for a dramatic activity, this entry confirms that Stopporte was the town’s drummer for all occasions.

2nd Quarter, Annunciation of BVM, 1596
payd that was geven my Lord Stafforde his players

This seems to be the company of Edward Stafford, 12th Baron Stafford, who was part of the extended Stanley family by virtue of his marriage to Mary Stanley, sister of Henry 4th Earl of Derby. He was, therefore, the uncle of Ferdinando Stanley, Lord Strange, Shakespeare’s patron, and of William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, a central figure in my research.

3rd Quarter, Feast of St John the Baptist, 1596
payde for wyne bestowed upon the rushbearers

1st Quarter, 39 Elizabeth, 1597
payde that was geven the Quenes players

This is a company reference that the transcriber omitted earlier.

5
4th Quarter, 1599
payd that was bestowed in wyne upon those that brought
Rushes to the Chapple out of Buglawton

1st Quarter, 1600/1
payd that was geven the Queenes players

3rd Quarter, 1601
payd for Cakes and dryncke that was bestowed upon
the Rushbearers the Saterdaye the xxvii"d daye of June
1601

vi s

Here the inserted extracts end, and the transcriber continues as before.

3rd Quarter, 1603, beginning Annunciation of BVM
payd that was spent upon the Rushbearynge

ii s iv d

payd Thom’s Parnell for gunpowder bestowed at
the Rushbearynge

xvi d

payd to Rog’ Stopporte & Hugh Chesphord for plaing before the Rushbearers

vi d

2nd Quarter, beginning Christmas 1606
payd that was bestoed & given the Earle of Darbye
his players the 4th May 1607

x s

This is the first reference to William Stanley’s company, though from henceforth they
are the most frequent visitors to Congleton.

4th Quarter, ending Michaelmas 1607
Itm bestowed at the Rushbearinge in wyne ale & cakes

vi s viii d

Payd to Tho. Parnell for gunpowder at the rushbearinge

ii d

In 1603, he had been paid xvi d for this, so the payment may be a column error for ii s.

4th Quarter, beginning Midsummer 1609
Itm geven to my Lo: of derby his players

v s

There is now an unexplained gap.

1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1613
Itm geveen to the dewke of Lyneox his honors
brothers playors for rewarde

v s

This reference is somewhat ambiguous, but the most likely probability is that the players
were those of Esmé Stuart, brother of Ludovic Stuart, second Duke of Lennox, cousin
to the King, and Seigneur d’Aubigny. This latter title gives some trouble to recorders,
who style him Obigney, Abonye, Abne, Awnbney, Aboyne, and even Albany. In 1607,
the King gave him the portion of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, Clerkenwell,
that had been used for the Revels Office and the personal dwellings of its officers since
1560.6 He was Jonson’s patron for a while, for there is an epistle to him in Sejanus
(1616). Of his players Chambers and Murray say nothing; REED’s Coventry notes them
in 1614; and REED’s Norwich notes, remarkably, that in 1609/10 they were paid £2 not
to play and then on 18th April 1611, they were paid only £1 for playing. The only
connection with Cheshire I can find other than this reference is that in 1609 Esmé Stuart was made High Steward of Grafton, Cheshire, which is a tiny township near Malpas in West Cheshire and part of Tilston parish; however, there was likely no residence connected with the title, since Grafton Hall was owned and occupied by Sir Peter Warburton Knt, one of the justices of the Court of Common Pleas.

1st Quarter, 12 James (1614/15)
geven to the Queens ma’res players x s

2nd Quarter, 1615
geven to his ma’res players and servants x s

3rd Quarter, 1615
payd to the Ryngers when my Lord of Essex came xviii d
given to my lord of derbye his players x s

1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1615/16
paide to the Lorde of Derbeys players x s
Bestowed upon the princes players xx s viii d
Bestowed to the Lord Duddleys players iii s iii d

These are undoubtedly the players of Edward Sutton, Lord Dudley, who was also part of the extended Stanley family in that he was a contemporary and cousin of William Stanley 6th Earl of Derby, whose players are the most frequent visitors to Congleton. Sutton’s mother was Lady Jane Stanley, daughter of Edward 3rd Earl of Derby, William Stanley’s grandfather. His dates 1567–1643 closely match William Stanley’s 1560–1642, as does, in some respects, his personality. By 1615/16 a Mr Disley is Dudley’s chief player, yet no one has been able to trace him. Perhaps he comes from the manor of Disley-Stanley, which is in East Cheshire, next to Lyme Park, home of the Leghs, who also had players, with whom a neighbouring Disley might be found. Curiously, another East Cheshire family of Suttons, possibly related, were of Sutton manor near Macclesfield, and they were known for centuries as the Suttons of Sutton and Disley. Their manor is only five miles from Congleton. So the Sutton-Stanley-Legh-Disley connection may be another instance of the Elizabethan and Jacobean clan system of preferment at work.

Though Edward Sutton’s family seat was Dudley Castle in Staffordshire at this time, the Suttons alias Dudley were an ancient Cheshire family with several branches. They were Barons of Malpas in West Cheshire until Sir Edward Sutton in 19 Henry vii sold 5/8 of his moiety and his son sold the rest. That particular Sir Edward’s uncle John was the ancestor of both the Earl of Warwick and the Earl of Leicester, so all the Dudleys are offshoots of the original Cheshire family.

1st Quarter, beginning Michaelmas 1616
paid to the queenes plaiers xx s

2nd Quarter, January 1617
given to the Erle of Derbies plaiers for a reward vi s

Quarter beginning 31st October 1617
paid to the Queenes plaiers xi s
paid more to the Queenes players xiii s iii d
drinke bestowed upon Lawton people that brought a Rushbearinge iii s x d
There is a village of Lawton in Cheshire, but here, as before, I think Lawton is the short name for Buglawton, the neighbouring village previously mentioned in connection with rushbearers.

1st Quarter, 1620

Sept 25  Geeven to the Kings players that were heare on the Election day with consent of the ow'seers x s

Oct 10  geeven to a servant of the Earle of Derbies comminge to o' Towne to shewe ffesates of Activitie with consent to M' Drakeford and Wm Knight overseers iii s iii d

Nov 27  Geoven to the Kings players wth consent of the overseers x s

Dec 14  Geoven to the princes players wth consent of the overseers vi s viii d

2nd Quarter, January 1620/1

Feb 13  Geoven to a man to fetch a Canopie from Brereton for the schollers in y' play ii d

Feb 14  Geoven to Calis the musitian wth consent of the fower overseers for his paynes in comminge from Chester & playinge for the Schollers in their play on Shrovetuesday xx s bestowed on them a pint of wyne ffor Neales to sett up the scaffold for the schollers to play on viii d

April 5  Geoven to Cales the Musitian of Chester when the Townesmen played their play in M' Greenes court, at thintreatie of M' Oldfield and wth consent of M' Edw Drakeford & M' Greene two overseers iii s iii d

4th Quarter, 1621

Rec'd of M' Alderman Hobson & M' Thomas Greene (when I gave Calis the musician xx' for playinge when the schollers played their play) toward y' money ix s

1st Quarter 1621, ending 30th January 1622

paid to the princes plaiers which was bestowed upon theym xx s
Bestowed uppon the kings ma't5 players and the Lord of Derbies paid to M' Edward Drakeford which he laid downe to the players in M' Ald Parnells maiortie vi s viii d

2nd Quarter, ending April 1622
geven to the ladie Elizabeth her players by consent x s
Queen Anne had patronized three companies, one in London called the Revels Company, and two provincial companies which performed until 1624 and 1625 under her name, though she had died in 1619. Which of these companies is combining with Derby’s here is not clear. However, since after May 1622, there is no record of a London Queen’s company, these players could be from the London Revels company.

Bestowed upon the Ladie Elizabeths players who then shewed theire aucthorytie from the Kings ma{te} and Counsell by consent of the overseers

Bestowed upon prince Charles his plaiers the xx{th} daie of January by consente of the overseers

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One cannot be sure which company of King’s players would be touring in 1623 because, though the London company made provincial tours until around 1622/23, in 1622 a separate provincial company appears to have been formed under Richard Errington. However, since a King’s company had visited once in 1615, twice in 1620, and once again in 1621, it seems reasonable to assume that it was the same London company as first came, especially since they joined forces with the Earl of Derby’s players for the Congleton repertoire. A newly-formed company would be less likely to be able to do so. It is clear, moreover, that Congleton was a regular stopover for all the royal companies, the King’s, the Queen’s, the Prince’s, and the Princess Elizabeth’s, so this probably is the London company of the King’s Men.

Bestowed upon the Kings players and the Earle of Derbeys the xiii{th} daie of december who played at the Swanne

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Sir John Brereton came to town as part of a royal Commission and stayed at the Swan where he was entertained by the corporation.

4th Quarter, 1624
Bestowed by consente upon S' John Brereton and the reste of the gentlemen then in Towne when the piper was heare

There is another unexplained gap in the records, or perhaps only in the transcript, until the 1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1626. There is no mention of plague in these years, whereas at other times there are several accounts giving, in pitiable details, a graphic portrait of the town suffering from the plague. The worst years for plague were 1559, 1603–4, 1641–2.

4th Quarter, 1627
paid for a pyper or musitioner who played before the Rushbearinge by consent of M' Maior and the overseers

1st Quarter, 1627
Delevered to M' Deputie maior the 27th of October for to bestow upon the Lord of Darbies players by consent of the overseers
Geven to the Kings Players the 10th of December by consent of the overseers

Soon after his accession, Charles I had given his patronage to his father's players in terms of a new licence of June 24, 1625.

4th Quarter, 1628
bestowed upon the Lord of Derbies players
paid to Thomas Spencer which was bestowed on the [sic] them with came with the Rishburinge

1st Quarter, 1630
Bestowed upon the Ladye Elizabeths players by consent
Bestowed upon the Earle of Derbye his players by consent
Bestowed upon the Kinges players by Consent

2nd Quarter, 1631
Geven unto the players that were heare the last of January 1631
Geven more unto the same companye of players being heare agayne the 5th day of feb 1631 towards their Charges in regard M' deputie Wagge & the 2 Justices would not suffer them to play on y' Sabath day

The wording transcribed here is slightly different from that quoted from Mr Head's book earlier.

Geven unto the players that were heare the last of febr & first of March 1631
2nd Quarter, 1633
Bestowed upon the Earle of Derbeys playes

4th Quarter, 1633
paid M' fforde for gunpowder had at the Rushberringe

4th Quarter, 1634
Bestowed in Ale and bread upon those that brought Rushes
out of Buglawton at the Rushberringe
Bestowed upon the Drummer for drumminge at the
Rushberringe and at the wakes
Bestowed upon the players beinge servauntts to the
Kinges ma`te Revellores by Consentt

This is the first time that the term 'Revellors' has been used. If it refers to the children, it is not clear which of two King's Revels companies this was. In 1629, two were formed, one to play in Salisbury Court Theatre, another to tour the provinces. The latter visited Reading, Leicester, Coventry, Doncaster and Norwich, and were known to be in the north in 1632. However, it may simply be a repeat visit of the King's players. It is not likely to be the new King's Revels company licenced in November 1634, because the 4th Quarter dates, beginning in Midsummer and ending at Michaelmas, 29th September, precede that licence.

1st Quarter, 1634
Bestowed at this quarters account upon the Lord Strange
his players

This is the first reference in any records that I know of to a company under the patronage of James Lord Strange, son of William 6th Earl of Derby. REED's Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire (CWG) shows that they were paid at Kendal on 25th October 1636 and by the Curwens of Workington on the 3rd October 1636/7. James appears not to have had anything like the passion for drama and the arts in general that his father had, but it is clear from such sparse records as these that he did at least continue the family tradition of patronising companies.

4th Quarter, 1635
paid to George fford for gunpowder y' was spent at the
Rushberringe
paid to Thomas Newton and John Hall for the putting downe
and makinge up the said hedges and for looking to
the said ground and to William Browne for drumming
at the wakes

1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1635
Bestowed upon the Lord of Darbyes players by consentt
whoe played in the Towne

3rd Quarter, 1636
Bestowed upon the players by consent of the overseers
Bestowed upon another company of Players by consent
of the overseers

1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1636
bestowed upon the plaieres by consent who came to the Towne
1st Quarter, Michaelmas 1638

Imprimis for entereyment of S' Edwarde fitton his Ladie, father in lawe, mother in lawe and divers other gentlemen who accompanied him and his bryde when the firste came to Gawseworth and brought his Ladie thither the barber beinge sente before from S' Edwarde to the said maior and Aldermen to intreate him and the reste to bidd them welcome unto the Towne the some of xii s iii d

Hereafter the town suffered an extended period of calamitous plague followed by the upheavals, quarterings and provisionings of the Civil War, and so there are no more signs of entertainments.

Overall, there are a few points worthy of note in these records.

1. In working with school, family and town records in the northwest, one notes the ubiquitous influence of the Earls of Derby, who held quasi-regal sway over the counties Palatine of Lancashire and Cheshire. Their household was the equivalent in size and in particular offices of the royal court itself. Their influence on learning, their claim to the throne, their control of the courts and militia, their close relationship with all the influential families of the region, and their patronage of the arts need to be much more fully appreciated; thus anything that adds to our understanding of that family is important because their own records and their library were destroyed at the siege of Lathom in the Civil War. The extent of their influence in the northwest is incalculable. I believe that we cannot have a complete picture of drama in this region without filling in many of the gaps in our knowledge of the Stanleys and their extended family, because they are to this region what the Court was to London.

These records do fill in one important gap: they give us clear evidence that William Stanley, 6th Earl of Derby, kept a company of players all through the later years of his life, perhaps even up to his death in 1642, but certainly after he had handed over almost all the responsibilities of the earldom to his son James, the Lord Strange. Prior to the publication of REED's CWG in 1986, it had been assumed that his company disbanded in 1617/18, the last date Murray, Chambers, and REED's Coventry show for them. But now we have quite a different picture, and it raises several interesting questions.

We know that, in 1623, at age 63, the Earl started to withdraw from public life into semi-retirement on the banks of the River Dee in Chester. He began to relinquish control of the Isle of Man and several other responsibilities to his son James. He abdicated control of his estates to his wife in 1625, but when she died in 1627, he gave more and more control of them to James, who became in most respects thereafter the acting Earl of Derby.

We know that William, 6th Earl, was a poet, musician, and writer of plays. Indeed, the discovery by James Greenstreet in 1891 of the intercepted letters of Catholic agent George Fenner, which allude to the fact that William was not interested in furthering Catholic hopes that he would press his claim to the throne, but was "busied only in penning comedies for the common players"15, gives some credibility to those many scholars and literary sleuths who believe William Stanley to be William Shakespeare.

Traditionally, the Stanleys and most of their direct relatives had patronised companies of players long before William was born, so it had always been a staple part of his upbringing. His grandfather Edward 3rd Earl of Derby was patron of one company; his father Henry, 4th Earl, even when he was only Lord Strange and heir apparent had his own company that became the Earl of Derby's men when he assumed the title. His older brother, Ferdinando, in turn both as Lord Strange and briefly as Earl, was a great patron of the players; it is his players who went on to dominate the London scene for a decade and performed more than any other company at court, and it is almost certainly in his company that Shakespeare is first heard of as a dramatist in 1592.11
Like his grandfather, father, and older brother, William Stanley also had his own company, which, on his brother's death and William's accession to the earldom, became the new Earl of Derby's company, the one that appears in these Congleton accounts. Thomas Heywood the playwright was connected with this company circa 1598–9, so it seems likely that they acted sometimes in London, though they are frequently mentioned in the provinces before 1617/18.

Also, like his father-in-law, Edward de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford (another major and more currently touted candidate for Shakespeare's laurels), William may have been the patron of a company of boys known as 'M' Standleyes Boyes' who played at court on Jan 9th 1585/6. He was certainly connected with the revival of the children of Paul's, because in a letter dated 13th November 1599, Rowland Whyte wrote to Sir Robert Sidney that 'My lord Darby hath put up the playes of the children in Pawles to his great paines and charge.'

Though the whole Stanley family and extended family had an unequalled interest in drama, William in particular seems to have been a fanatic. Elizabeth, his wife, in about 1600, echoes Rosencrantz's words to Hamlet in a letter she wrote to her uncle Sir Robert Cecil on behalf of William's company, saying: 'Being importuned by my Lord to intreat your favor that his man Browne, with his company, may not be bared from ther accoustomed plaing, in maintenaunce wherof they have consume the better part of ther substance...for that my Lord taking delite in them, it will kepe him from moer prodigall courses.' Having been brought up with her father's 'prodigal courses' and his delight in his playing companies, she clearly understood the importance of them to her highly literate and equally prodigal husband.

Thus, given the family tradition and William Stanley's consuming interest in drama, what the Congleton records reveal is that his interest apparently did not wane in later life. They confirm his continuing patronage of a company of players long after his phased withdrawal from public life in the mid-1620s. However, it is reasonable to suppose that his players, if they served him in his retirement and if he called upon them frequently in the manner that the Prince did in 1623, confined their visits after 1618 to Wales and the local counties of Cheshire, Shropshire and Lancashire to be on hand when he needed them; that would perhaps explain why they were hitherto undetected.

In light of the recent revival of interest in the authorship question and two very high-profile 'moots' in Washington and London concerning the claims of the Earl of Oxford, these Congleton accounts may also add fresh fuel to the Derby/Shakespeare authorship/collaboration controversy. As we see, in 1621/2 and in 1623, the date of publication of the First Folio of Shakespeare's plays, the King's Men – which according to a Livery Allowance List (1621), the Folio (1623), Nicholas Tooley's Will (1623), and the King's Funeral List (1625), still numbered Hemings and Condell among its actors – played in Congleton in combination with the Earl of Derby's players. The earlier reference to the two companies together in the 1st Quarter 1621/22, and the relatively large amount paid them, suggests a joint performance and the possibility that they may have travelled together to other local towns and households for a short time to continue their provincial tour. The Derby/Shakespeare faction may now add to their claims that there would have been an opportunity, if Hemings and Condell were on tour in Cheshire with the King's Men, to consult with William Stanley himself about the 'new' texts and the revisions of old texts found in the Folio, if he indeed were connected with Shakespeare's plays at all as either author, collaborator or stand-in for their most important early patron.

As previously indicated, there is some doubt about the make-up of the King's Men as a provincial touring company. Nevertheless, despite the fact that after 1622 a regular provincial King's company was formed under the management of Richard Errington, the frequent visits of all the royal companies to Congleton argue for the London company's continued presence after 1622, and so there is some possibility that Hemings
and Condell could have discussed the publication of the First Folio with William Stanley on these visits of the King's Men to the northwest. The Earl's continuing patronage of drama is clearly confirmed and will encourage such speculation. Moreover, now we know he was still interested in drama even when the Second Folio was published in 1632.

2. In terms of my immediate research, the reference to the scholars' play on Shrove Tuesday and the importation of Calis the musician from Chester to play for both it and the townsman's play in 1620/1 are interesting in two respects. First, this is the only reference I have come across to a professional musician's being brought in from so far away for a school play. Second, it would seem that the music was a major part of the production in that Calis was paid 20s for the school performance but only 3s 4d for the townsmen's play. Some difference may be attributable to his initial travelling costs from Chester, but, compared to the small amounts normally paid for councilmen to travel to Chester on borough business, the difference is still very significant. There is a possibility, though not a probability if Calis was a professional touring musician, that he stayed in the town from February 14 to April 5 to perform at both plays, which may help to explain the relatively large initial sum of 20s, the same amount that was paid to the two joint companies of players, the King's Men and the Earl of Derby's.

The third and likeliest possibility, however, is that, just as many dramatic accounts are paid to a named individual for the performance of the company he leads, this 20s may be for a whole company of musicians and the subsequent 3s 4d may be for the individual, Calis himself, who later performed alone in the townsmen's play. REED's Chester shows how prevalent the Calis family (alias Calie, Calley, Callies, Callie, Callis, Cally, Callye, Callyes, Calye, Kalle, Kally, Kelley, Kellies, Kellye and Kellyes) is in Chester's dramatic entertainments. Though Robert Kelly seems to have been chiefly responsible for numerous solo musical performances by a Kelly, it seems that frequently he played in concert with his brothers or other relatives because of the many references to 'the Kellys'. For instance, in 1610/11 on St Martin's day, we find 'Item Geven to Roberte Kelly and his Companye for musicke at the same dynner...ii s vi d, and, almost directly after, there is 'Item paide to the Kelleys... ii s' (264). Because Kellys always appear in the Cordwainers and Shoemakers records, they are almost certainly members of that company. These entries sometimes refer to Robert Kelly alone, sometimes to Kelly and company, at other times to the Kellys, and at other times to other single members of the company such as George, Peter, Richard (much earlier) and Roland. Most references to them involve induction of new members into the Cordwainers and Shoemakers company. I conjecture, therefore, that these Congleton references are to Robert and company first, and then to Robert alone second.

3. Two other points are worth making in regard to the potential of future research. First, Congleton is surrounded by the estates of great Cheshire families. Second, it is within a very short distance (5 and 10 miles respectively) of two other more important Cheshire boroughs – Macclesfield and Stockport.

The records of the great families of the area – the Fittons (of Dark Lady fame, whose grounds include a tilt-yard), the Leghs (who, we know, had a company of players), the Ardernes, the Savages, the Davenports, the Stanleys of Alderley (who were related to the Earls of Derby) – need to be searched for evidence of dramatic activity because it is quite likely that, since so many of the touring companies were either royal companies or servants of the Earl who administered the county, they would have been entertained privately.

Macclesfield and Stockport borough records need to be searched because, if the royal touring companies stopped at Congleton, they would almost certainly stop at the other two towns as well. However, a transcript of the Macclesfield records in the County Record Office begins only in 1619 and concerns only stallage payments in the market. Stockport's records for the period don't appear to exist at all and may have suffered a
fate similar to those of Stockport Grammar School: they were burned in the religious disputes the town had with the Goldsmiths Company in the nineteenth century.

Nevertheless, there is one teasing piece of evidence which suggests that further research on these neighbouring towns and families is justified. In the Earwaker files for the borough of Macclesfield is a piece of parchment headed "The accounts of Sir Edward Fitton, knight, taken the second day of October, 1601." Sir Edward Fitton was mayor from 1599–1602, so the manuscript could be from the borough accounts, as the file listing suggests. It records the following:

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...Disbursed as followeth to the Queens majesty players x s
...Paid to Symcockes players x s
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The name Symcookes is particularly interesting in that the only reference I can find to the man, apart from several guildsmen performing in Chester in the 1560s, is from Henslowe's Diary, which Chambers, Nungezer, Murray, and others briefly allude to. It is an undated reference that Murray, using Greg's edition (p 160), supposes to be circa 1604–5, and from which he thus infers that Symcookes was a member of the Duke of Lennox's company. That company appears to have been formed from Queen Elizabeth's ubiquitous provincial company, which still called itself the Queen's Men, directly following her death. The first reference to them is found at Canterbury in 1603/4. From the separate mention of the 'Queen's majesty players', a few items above the reference to Symcookes, however, it is fairly clear that Symcookes was not a member of the Queen's Men in 1601. His association with the Duke of Lennox's men depends entirely upon this entry by Henslowe:

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Lent unto frances henslow to goyne wth owld garlland & symcookes & savoray when they played in the duckes nam at ther laste goinge owt the some of vii li I saye Lent vii li
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However, both Garland and Francis Henslowe (Philip's nephew) had been Queen Elizabeth's men and may well have been at Macclesfield or the Fittons' just prior to Symcookes, who from this record, seems to have had his own company; indeed, they were paid the same 10s as the Queen's Men were.

There is one other reference to a Symcock, though he is probably not the same man. In the Kendal records found in REED'S (CWG) (183–4) is an entry:

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payed per mr Aldermans Consent and mr wilkinsons with the rest of ye companye unto one Symcoock and frennerton two of his majestis ushurs of the gard when they cam to the towne for looking for housses to intertayne ye king 2–0–0
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If this is the same man, he has gone up in the world since 1601; however, I can find no connection between the two.

4. In summary, one can reasonably infer, even from these as yet not completely verified accounts, that the county of Cheshire outside Chester was a region of considerable dramatic activity. My own researches indicate a few promising school connections with drama in Cheshire. There is, for instance, evidence, which I have verified in the original school accounts, that Sir John Deane's Grammar School owned a playhouse which
provided part of its revenue; however, the playhouse was most probably in Chester, not Northwich where the school was.  

I have also quite incidentally come across several other references to drama in Chester that are hitherto undocumented. In fact, I am beginning to realize that, after the prohibition of the mystery plays, there was much more drama in Chester than we have realized, despite the ban of 1596 and the subsequent lack of official payments. For instance, it is hard for me to believe, as someone keenly interested in the Earls of Derby and in William Stanley the 6th Earl in particular, that, when William the drama enthusiast took up residence in semi-retirement in Chester in the mid-1620s, his own company never played in public there; that they didn’t entertain the king on his 1617–18 tour of Chester when the Earl bore ‘the Cheker sword’ before him;  

that they didn’t entertain the Duke of Tremoille, Lord Strange’s mother-in-law, when she came to Chester in 1630–1 to be greeted by ‘all the gentry of Cheshier flinshier & denbighsier’, together with at least 600 horse and a platoon of artillery, so that it was reported ‘that so many knights Esquires & gentlemen never were in Chester to gether no not to meet king James when he came to Chester’;  

that they didn’t entertain the Earl’s daughter Anne, Countess of Ancram, in July 1634–5, when all the great ladies of the county assembled in Chester for her visit; or later that same month, that they didn’t entertain the Earl of Bridgewater, the new lord president of the marches, when he and his wife visited Chester and were given ‘great entertainaynment’, the guild companies standing in their livery on each side of Bridge Street, all the way down to the bridge. Since we now know that the Earl’s company were still extant after 1617/18 and operating in Cheshire, we can reasonably assume that they would have performed in and around Chester when he lived there from the mid-1620s to his death in 1642. After all, as his wife said, he was likely to find ‘more prodigal courses’ if his players could not perform for him.

Obviously, Chester in West Cheshire is already well known for drama. However, if the records of Stockport and Macclesfield and those of the Fittons and other families can be investigated, there is a good chance that all of East Cheshire too will prove to be an equally important area of provincial dramatic activity. Nor should we forget that there is plenty of evidence of drama in mid-Cheshire as well. For instance, we know from the Shuttleworth Accounts that town players came to Smithils from Nantwich. We know from Murray that in 1588/89 Sir Thomas Venables, Baron of Kinderton (whose estate was close by Middlewich) had his own company that travelled as far as Exeter and Gloucester. We know from William Hinde’s biography of that famous puritan John Bruen of Stapleford that the Duttons of Dutton not only maintained their ancient privilege of licensing minstrels in Cheshire, but also had entertainments in their own home, which had a minstrel’s gallery, and that John Bruen himself learned to dance there before his conversion. We know further from Bruen’s biographer that the Tarvin Wakes annually drew players until Bruen took his none-too-subtle countermeasures.

At the very least, I think that these Congleton records and future research in Cheshire will mean that the Cheshire section of REED’s map of players on tour will shortly have to be redrawn.

NOTES

1 Robert Head, Congleton Past and Present (Congleton, 1887 and 1987); and W.B. Stephens (ed), History of Congleton (Manchester, 1970).
2 Head, 69.
3 The dating in these accounts is sometimes quite problematical. Usually, however, they conform to a mayor’s term of office, beginning and ending at Michaelmas (29th September). Thus, the numbering of the 2nd Quarter in 1588 is probably an error.
Some chamberlains list the quarters by feast days, others by months, beginning, or end dates. There are also frequent switches from accounting year to regnal year. In general, the quarters are as follows:

1st Quarter  Michaelmas Day (29th September) or 1st October to Feast of the Nativity (25th December) or 31st December or Winter Solstice (21st December).

2nd Quarter  Feast of the Nativity or 1st January to Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Lady Day) (25th March) or 31st March.

3rd Quarter  Annunciation (25th March) or 1st April to St John the Baptist Day (24th June) or Midsummer Day (21st June).

4th Quarter  St John the Baptist Day (24th June) or Midsummer (21st June) to Michaelmas Eve (28th September) or 30th September.

There are obviously exceptions in these records. In 1617 the first quarter begins explicitly on 31st October not Michaelmas Day, and in 1621/2, the first quarter ends on 30th January not 31st December or on Christmas.


6 For an account of this and subsequent Revels Office allowances, see The Malone Society, Collections xiii (1986), 164–5; and Chambers i, 102.

7 Murray, i, 205.

8 Murray, i, 155. Chambers appears to lose interest in them after Shakespeare's death.

9 Stephens, 57.


11 Prof E.A.J. Honigmann is the latest to argue this in Shakespeare: the 'lost years' (Manchester, 1985). Though the case he makes for the necessity of Shakespeare's having become attached to Lord Strange's company is plausibly argued, the contortions he has to go through to equate William Shakeshafte with William Shakespeare are as bad as most of the cases made for the rival Shakespeare claimants, involving as they do the deliberate adoption of a pseudonym by an inconsequential Stratford boy for self-protection. His 'Shakespeare as Catholic recusant' premise also is very doubtful because my research shows clearly that Ferdinando Lord Strange, in the years in question, was a zealous prosecutor, not a protector, of Catholic recusants; indeed, he was commended by the Privy Council for his rigor and he strongly criticised his father's ambivalence in the matter. His zeal may in the end have cost him his life. The irony mocking Prof Honigmann's whole attempt to explain how Shakespeare of Stratford could have acquired the patronage of Lord Strange and been Shakespeare the author, of course, is that William Stanley is already the one best placed to accomplish everything Honigmann wants Shakespeare to have been able to do. In this respect he has unwittingly done the Stanley/Derby/Shakespeare claimants a service.

12 HMC, Lord de L'Isle and Dudley (Penshurst Place) ii, 415.

13 Hatfield mss, xiii, 609.

14 Chambers points out that though Hemings is described as 'stuttering' in 1613 and cannot positively be shown to have acted since the Catiline of 1611, he is always prominent in the business affairs of the company. Indeed, he is named first in the King's Funeral List in 1625. Condell, Chambers thinks, appears to have given up acting about 1619. However, both are named in the Livery Allowance List of 1619 found in the papers of
Earl de la Warr at Knole Park, Kent. For a comprehensive chart of information about the King's Men, see Murray i, opp. 172; see also Chambers, ii, 219.

15 Murray, i, 155.
16 Malone Society, Collections vii (1965), 18.
19 Chester, 306.
20 Chester, 398.
21 Chester, 418.
22 Murray, ii, 87.
25 Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Players on Tour: New Evidence from Records of Early English Drama' in The Elizabethan Theatre, x (Port Credit, Ontario, 1983), 66.

W. G. COOKE

Queen Elizabeth never slept here: Cassandra, Duchess of Chandos, as an authority for royal progresses

Cassandra Brydges (1670–1735), Duchess of Chandos, was the daughter of Francis Willoughby of Wollaton, Notts, and Middleton, Warws, and sister of Thomas Willoughby, first Baron Middleton. She compiled (in John Coldewey's words) a 'lively and personal' manuscript history of her father's family (Nottingham University Library: MSS ML 26 & 27), based on an extensive collection of family papers, not all of which have survived. This has provided some useful references for Professor John Coldewey's REED collection for Nottinghamshire, now in progress. It also appears, at a first reading, to be a valuable source for reconstructing the movements of Elizabeth I and James I on progress; but research done as part of the checking process for Professor Coldewey's collection has shown that in these matters Cassandra's history must be used with caution.

In the reigns of Elizabeth and James, as in Cassandra's own time, the Willoughbys owned two main houses: Wollaton Hall in Nottinghamshire and Middleton Hall in Warwickshire. The head of the family in Elizabeth's time was Sir Francis, who is famous today chiefly as one of the early entrepreneurs of coal-mining and as the builder of Wollaton Hall, one of the grandest Elizabethan country houses extant. There, according to Cassandra, he entertained Elizabeth in 1575; and as evidence she cites a letter from Sir Francis Knollys, vice-chamberlain of the Queen's household:

I shall here Copy a Letter from Sir Francis Knolls to Sir Francis Willughby to give him Notice of the Queens coming to Wollaton/

Letter

Her Majesty is determined to Tary two days at youre House that is to say tomorrow Night & Thursday all day, whereof I thought good to advertise you betimes/ wherefore I think it best for you not to defray her Majesty, but