ject seemed so much more possible with Arthur and David lending their seniority to
the venture. I was then in my mid-thirties.

His *Norwich 1540–1642* volume established REED's credentials as a source for Renais-
sance theatre studies. The earlier volumes had published the records of the towns with
the great medieval plays, giving the false impression that the project was a medieval one.
With the publication of the *Norwich* volume, the Renaissance drama world began to
take notice of us. It had been David who insisted that we choose 1642 as the end date
for the volumes rather than 1558 or 1600. Our experience over the last twenty years has
proved him right. A surprising amount of activity continued in the provinces during the
reign of Charles I and, as we are discovering, into the Commonwealth period as well.

His great love was for the language of the drama. For him, the records provided not
only evidence for theatre history but also a unique witness over the centuries to the
language of the dramatists. He delighted as much in the words and cadences of the
records as in what they said.

David was a member of the Executive Board of REED from the beginning until his
death and, as long as he was able to attend the meetings, served as chairman. He presid-
ed over the long and often boisterous debates with grace and wit. We have missed his
good advice during his illness and, sadly, will continue to do so. He was a good friend
and a valued colleague. REED would not have come into being without his support.

Alexandra F. Johnston

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**ANDREW GURR**

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**The loss of records for the travelling companies in Stuart times**

The *REED* records dig so deep that any lateral review must seem shallow in comparison.
Making generalisations between one set of records and another must also seem uncom-
fortably provisional so long as the coverage is still so far from complete. But my trawl
through the last eighty or so years of the period that the *REED* materials cover has turned
up enough in the way of fresh considerations to summon at least a few cautionary and
preliminary general influences about what might be done with the evidence. Some of it
seems to call into question just how positive much of the evidence itself, particularly
about the professional playing companies on their travels, might turn out to be.1

The records of visits to municipalities by the companies of professional travelling
players seem quite thorough for the period from 1559 to 1603, but after that they be-
come distinctly patchy. By the 1630s the majority of entries about playing companies
take the form of notes about payments to leave without playing. The use of civic records
as the basic evidence for the spread and the frequency of visits by professional playing
companies under the Stuarts ignores a long-running contest between the players and
the civic authorities, and disregards some consequential shifts in what the municipal
records show. These shifts affect the records in distinct ways, and it is to these effects
that this paper is addressed.

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The classic test for this body of evidence comes in the final period, the records made under Charles I up to 1642. The King’s Men and the other companies that travelled in those years appear in the records most frequently as getting payments 'for there forbearing to play in the City' (Canterbury 9 March 1629), or ‘to send them out of this City’ (Bristol March–June 1630). That happened to companies of King’s players at Worcester in 1630–1 and 1632, at Norwich on 6 July 1633, at Southampton on 27 March 1634 and in 1634–5, at Bristol in June–September 1635, and at King’s Lynn in May 1636. The same thing happened to Elias Guest and his travelling company using a Queen Henrietta’s licence at Reading in 1631, and at Norwich on June 1633 and 13 September 1634. George Sturville’s King’s Revels company at Norwich on 10 March 1635 appears in the records only because the men were ‘absolutely forbidden to play any longer in this City’. On 3 September 1635 William Daniell’s group got ten shillings from Norwich in return for a ban on his company’s playing there. Joseph Moore’s King and Queen of Bohemia’s company’s main appearances in the records are for when they were paid not to play, at Reading on 24 December 1629, at Coventry in June 1630, and at Reading again on 13 August 1631. Southampton banned all playing in the town hall after 6 February 1633, and the only subsequent payments to players are ‘to rid them out of town’. This evidence is in conflict with other indications which suggest that the frequency of visits was if anything increasing in these years. Companies were now regularly visiting towns and playing at inns as a matter of routine without first securing leave from the mayor, or at least without receiving any payment, so that the accounts take no note of them. A number of shifts in practice influenced the character of the civic records through the final century.

Many apparently rather remote factors have to be taken into account. Technically, Elizabeth’s Proclamation of 16 May 1559 requiring mayors to censor plays before they could be staged to the common people of their towns was the basis for all the subsequent entries in civic records. But its power expired at her death in March 1603. In one of his first Proclamations, on 7 May 1603, for instance, James ordered the abolition of all monopolies and grants awarded by Elizabeth. The Proclamation declared:

we doe expressly charge and command all persons whatsoever, That from henceforth they utterly desist and forbear to use or execute any manner of Charter or Grant made by our late Sister the Queene deceased, of any kind of Monopolies, or of any power or Licence to dispence with, or discharge any manner of penal Lawes ... untill such time as the same charter or Grant shall be examined & allowed of us.

Royal proclamations were personal to the monarch. This Proclamation, printed by the royal printer Robert Barker, was specific to one of the most pressing troubles that Elizabeth had left for James. Monopolies were a subject of special concern, and by May James was already wincing under the constant pressures that his new subjects laid on him to protect their privileges in trade. The assumption that lies behind this and all the other royal proclamations is that statute law prevailed, but royal proclamations lasted only for the life of the proclaimer.

The 1559 Proclamation was never formally renewed by the Stuart kings largely be-
cause by 1603 it had been to a great extent overtaken by a new system of control, whereby the Master of the Revels authorised all companies and all plays. Although the civic authorities did continue to grant permission for companies to give performances in their municipalities for some decades after 1603, it is not easy to see whether in doing so they were simply hanging on to a by then long-running practice, or more positively clinging to their privilege of controlling the plays to be offered to their citizenry in spite of the centralised controls that now existed. Under James, with the Master of the Revels taking over censorship and licensing of plays, they soon gave up the privilege of a mayoral performance for censorship purposes, but they did try to retain the authority to allow performing for only a limited time in their own territory. Plague was one ample reason for retaining that control. The risk of disorders, particularly when the performance times ran on into the night, was another. A further and not always mute factor that was certainly present was that they clung to their powers in the hope that they might still be able to check the onset of such repulsive pastimes as playgoing in their bailiwicks. That, however, gave little reason for making payments to the players; so, after 1603, entries in the financial records began to disappear.

Elizabeth’s Proclamation was detailed and wholly specific, especially in its attitude to any Catholic enactments in dramatic form:

Forasmuche as the rhyme wherein common Interludes in the English tongue are wont usually to be played, is now past untill All Hallouyde, and that also some that have ben of late used, are not convenient in any good ordred Christian Common weale to be suffred. The Queues Majestie doth straightly forbyd all maner Interludes to be playde eyther openly or privately, except the same be notified before hande, and licenced within any Citie or towne corporate, by the Maior or other chiefe officers of the same, and within any shyre, by suche as shalbe Lieuetenauntes for the Queues Majestie in the same shyre, or by two of the Justices of peax inhabyting within that part of the shire where any shalbe played.

And for instruction to every of the sayde officers, her majestie doth likewise charge every of them, as they will aunswere: that they permyt none to be played wherin either matters of religion or of the governaunce of the estate of the common weale shalbe handled or treated, beyng no meete matters to be wrytten or treated upon, but by menne of aucthoritie, learning and wisdome, nor to be handled before any audience, but of grave and discrete persons: All which partes of this proclamation, her majestie chargeth to be inviolably kepe....

And further her majestie gyveth special charge to her nobilitie and gentilmen, as they professe to obey and regarde her majestie, to take good order in this behalfe wyth their servauntes being players, that this her majesties commaundement may be dulye kepe and obeyed.3

The chief aim of this Proclamation was a broad sweep across all the current uses of drama for religious or political expression of any kind. Mention of things derogatory to the Book of Common Prayer in ‘Interludes, plays, songs rhymes, or by other open words’ had already been forbidden in the Act for the Uniformity of Common Prayer passed
the week before the Proclamation. The local guild tradition of staging Corpus Christi plays was the obvious target, but professional travelling companies were not omitted from the concerns of the Proclamation.

As time went on the guild traditions died their death, but the professional companies were another story altogether. It is to them that Willis's famous summary of the procedures that developed under Elizabeth applies:

IN the City of Gloucester the the manner is (as I think it is in other like corporations) that when the Players of Enterludes come to towne, they first attend the Mayor to enforme him what noble-mans servant they are, and so to get licence for their pub-like playing; and if the Mayor like the Actors, or would shew respect to their Lord and Master, he appoints them to play their first play before himselfe and the Aldermen and common Counsell of the City; and that is called the Mayors play, where every one that will comes in without money, the Mayor giving the players a reward as hee thinks fit to shew respect unto them.⁴

There is reason to doubt how widespread this version of the procedures adopted in obedience to the 1559 Proclamation really was. The city of Leicester, for instance, regularly noted that its payments to the companies were 'more then is gaythered', which suggests that they allowed the players also to collect at the door for the mayoral performance. There was bound to be a lot of variation, as there was in the willingness of towns and of individual mayors to welcome the professional companies.

In the years following the 1574 inhibition on guild playing, with the number of travelling companies who offered secular plays showing that they were likely to grow unmanageably, the government started imposing more centralised forms of control. By the Acte for the punishement of Vacabondes' of 1574 they restricted the number, or rather the ranks, of the nobles who could run such companies. The Earl of Leicester started the process of securing central written authority for the companies in 1572 with the first royal patent licensing his own company. After 1578 the Privy Council augmented the powers of the Master of the Revels to control and censor plays for the stage. Tilney developed his role in ways that appear to have been aimed quite explicitly at supplanting the mayoral function of censoring plays.

Many other factors influenced this pattern of gradual change. There was for instance an apparent increase in hostility to playing, which among civic mayors in the Stuart years seems to have reached a level at least comparable to that consistently shown by the Lord Mayor of London. This, however, is not so clear-cut an influence on the records as it might appear from the REED evidence. The difficulty in making the assumption that mayors became more and more hostile to the professional companies is one of the central issues considered here, since hostility to players is chiefly registered by the number of towns through the 1630s that only noted the arrival of professional companies in the form of payments to leave without playing. That notation leaves out of account the number of times that, since the Elizabethan procedure had fallen into abeyance, a company might have arrived to play without being prohibited and therefore without any civic note being made of the companies playing in the town will be offered below.
One implication from the evidence must be that the civic records become less adequate as records of visits as the successive Masters of the Revels made improvements in their centralised control of playing. The Master was an agent of the Privy Council, and the Council found it easier to impose its control through him than through the local authorities. Within five years of his appointment in 1578 Edmund Tilney had begun the process of taking from the local mayors the control and censorship of plays that the Proclamation laid on them. As time went on, especially under the first Stuarts, the process of authorising companies to travel by royal patent became the Master’s and the Privy Council’s chief instrument of control. It often brought the visiting professional companies into conflict with the local authorities, and seems to have given them an extra incentive to ignore the corporations and play in their towns without first seeking their authorisation. That was a spiral leading straight down into departure from the civic records.

The complicating factor in this is the way in which the evident growth of hostility among members of various corporations under Elizabeth might have manifested itself in a refusal to allow their guildhalls, designed for solemn and judicial purposes, to be used for such common acts as staging plays. There was less likelihood of a company being registered for payment if it had not used the official civic venue. The use of guildhalls for plays, implied in the Proclamation, became an issue on its own that augmented some of the civic hostility to the companies. Under Elizabeth the accountants frequently noted play performances as causing damage to the furniture, and especially to doors and windows. After the first decades of the necessary use of guildhalls for the official performance, the opinion can be seen growing in several town councils that plays belonged not in guildhalls but in common inns. That is certainly where they moved under the Stuarts.

The uncertain factor is whether their departure from the guildhalls was a cause or an effect of the loss of mayoral control over the travellers, and the disappearance of the obligation to censor performances.

The exact place of the guildhalls in the development of Elizabethan professional playing is a story yet to be told. It seems evident from the REED records that the travelling companies started playing indoors at civic halls in the towns long before they first got access to play indoors at the Blackfriars hall in London. To a large degree the London practice of using the open suburban amphitheatres must have felt to the professional players like a reversion to market-place playing. The 1559 Proclamation gave the players access to the largest room in town for their performances, and they exploited this privilege to the full under Elizabeth. That helps to explain why they clung so tightly to playing at city inns in London up to 1594, once they had become used to playing indoors in all the regional towns. Guildhalls were even better than inn rooms. To have the largest enclosed room supplied free for performances in any town was an obvious advantage to the playing companies. They could charge at the door of an enclosed hall much more efficiently than from a scaffold in the market place. The companies that were recorded playing in Shrewsbury at ‘the aple market place’ and on ‘a scaffold put vp in the cornemarket’ in the 1580s must have felt that they were in the decidedly second-best locations.

The privilege of access to guildhalls faded when the 1559 Proclamation lost its force after 1603, and in some places before then. More and more the travelling companies had to find their own venues, usually the town’s inns. A note in Bath’s accounts for 1616–17
even records that, far from being given to the companies free for a privileged performance before the mayor, the guildhall was actually rented out to Queen Anne's Men on a visit that year at a charge of 3s 4d. This does not indicate a completely new kind of relationship between the civic authorities and the playing companies, since there are records going back to 1538–9 at Stratton in Cornwall of the 'churchowse' being rented to players. The Wimborne Churchwardens' accounts in Dorset have a receipt for hiring the church hall for a play in 1589–90, and the same thing happened when the Queen's Men visited Sherborne in Dorset in 1598 and 1599. These quasi-civic rentals probably imitated the players' standard practice when they would hire an inn in town for their performances. Inns replaced guildhalls as the standard venue for plays under the Stuarts. In the process, the travelling companies largely slipped out of the civic records.

One small test of the records as applied to the use of the guildhalls for plays might be found in the evidence for the damage that playing caused. Bristol has an entry in its accounts for 1577 about damage to the guildhall door, which had been broken once already during a visit by Tarlton and Sussex's Men. An entry in the 1577 mayor's accounts notes a payment of 3s 6d for 'mending the borde in the yeld hall and dores there, after my Lord of Leycesters players who had leave to play there'. Windows were broken in the guildhall at Abingdon on a visit by Queen Elizabeth's players in 1586–7. Swansea's only notes about playing relate to unspecified 'stadge players' whose performances led to the mending of the windows in the town hall six times between 1622 and 1634. Damage to the guildhall doors for access to see Tarlton is understandable. Presumably the windows at the other places were broken by outsiders trying to see something of the performance without having to pay for it. That was the price of playing in enclosed spaces. Since the players gained the benefit from that and the corporation had to pay for the repairs, it was not a system likely to persist for long once the expectation that corporations should give the players use of the guildhall had gone. Apart from the isolated case of Swansea, such entries as these are all confined to the period covered by the 1559 Proclamation.

The Bath rental charge for the use of its town hall of 1616–17 indicates if nothing else that by then the municipality had either forgotten or felt that it had been released from the obligation set down in Elizabethan's Proclamation to approve all plays before they could be performed in the town. The notes about playing companies in the Bath financial records in 1610–11. For Oxford town they stop in 1616–17. The difficulty here is in deciding whether they stopped because of a change in the financial procedures over mayoral expenses or for more positive reasons relating to the growth of hostility to professional playing, or simply because the Proclamation no longer applied and so the towns did not have to finance an initial performance. Under Elizabeth the civic records often include payments for food and drink, which indicate a more hospitable reception than do the later bans, but they might equally have been simple marks of respect for whoever's livery the players were wearing. It is difficult to see how any of this range of possible motivations can be measured, given the inevitability of individual variation in attitude. The records at Weymouth in Dorset for 1597 show the mayor giving the Queen's players ten shillings as a fee with another half-crown 'bestowed in wine' on them, an act of generosity which the auditors subsequently disallowed. Whether they did so for his
extravagance in hospitality at large or his warmth towards players in particular is not stated. The note 'Not to be Allowed' on a grant of 20 shillings to Queen Anne's Men at Rye in Kent in April 1617 raises the same unanswerable question.

On the whole the banning of plays from guildhalls seems chiefly to have been produced by animosity. The use of guildhalls for plays was banned in Norwich in 1589, in Great Yarmouth in 1595, Durham in 1608, and Chester in 1614. At Bristol an order of 1585 banning plays from the guildhall was sternly renewed eleven years later. But there was not much consistency even observing this kind of rule. The 1596 Bristol Order, which said 'there shall not be any players interludes suffered at any tyme hereafter to play in the yeald hall of Bristol beinge the place of Justice', was issued in February. Although it imposed a fine of £5 on future mayors who broke the ban, to be deducted from the mayoral fee of £40, Derby's Men appear in the records receiving thirty shillings that July and Queen's £2 in August, both for playing 'in the Guildehalle'. There is no indication that the guilty mayor lost his £5. Chester's mayoralty was always hostile to the professional companies, and its bans on plays in its guildhall were imposed so frequently that one wonders if it were not a declaration honoured in the breach more than in the observance.6 On the other hand, the conversion of an inn at Wine Street in Bristol into a playhouse in 1604, the short-lived conversion in York of about the same time, and possibly the Lancashire village playhouse built in the 1590s probably reflect a fairly widespread demand for new theatre accommodation now that guildhalls were closing against the players. After 1603, once the 1559 requirement that mayors gave their own licence to players had sunk out of sight, banning them from the guildhalls became much easier. Certainly there is ample evidence that inns came to supply the want that the banning of plays from guildhalls had created in Norwich and Oxford, as well as the conversions at Bristol and York.

The bans on using guildhalls set up a further question that looms over this one. A town ordinance at Bridgnorth in Devon, dated 4 December 1601, is an exemplar. It declares 'that from hencefurth no playors of commedies Tragedies or other stage playes shallbe permytted to be played in the Counsell howse or Towne Hall, but that the play-ors therof may playe in their Innes, ye yt so please them'. This appears to be not quite the kind of sanctimonious ban on the misuse of official buildings that Bristol announced in 1585 and 1596, but rather a relaxation in the process of civic control. In 1601 the terms of the 1559 Proclamation still held, even though the Master of the Revels was now in full control of the professional companies. Whether the Bridgnorth ordinance came from the same animosity to professional players that appears elsewhere, or whether it was simply a grateful acknowledgment that bureaucratic rigour could now be relaxed, is a question that needs to be clarified. It relates to the awkward question of how far-reaching was Tilney's authority by 1601, and whether he controlled all of the travelling companies with the same rigour that he now applied to the London-based companies.

Bureaucracy was as subject to slippage in Tudor times as it is anywhere. Tilney's appointment in 1578 to control playing companies was the first of a series of steps that shifted control from local authorities to central government, but the shift was gradual and not very consistent in the way it was seen as superseding the Proclamation. The
civic authorities in Leicester in 1583, for instance, took note of a letter from Edmund Tilney that his authority over playing now replaced theirs. On Tuesday 3 March a note reports that 'certen playors whoe said they were the servauntes of the Queues majesties master of the Revelles whoe required licence to play & for there aucthortye showed forth an Indenture of Lycense from one mr Edonde Tylneye esquier master of her majestes Revelles of the one parte and George Haysell of wisbiche in the Ile of Ely in the County of Cambridge gentlemen on the other parte.' Dated 6 February, the licence was evidently being used by the players to credit their travels. The note adds that 'The forsed haysell is now the chiefe playor' of the company carrying this new Revels licence.

But Tilney's letter said more. The Leicester report goes on to summarise the players' indentures, and it notes that Tilney made the claim that only his allowance was now valid as a licence for plays. This would have overriden the Proclamation of 1559 and the obligation it lay on local mayors to authorise performances. This was evidently an innovation so far as Leicester was concerned, and there is a hint of scepticism or disagreement behind the scrupulous transcription of the claim.

Leicester could not have found it easy to accept Tilney's usurpation of their powers. In the event the validity of Haysell's licence fell into doubt very soon after his visit. Only three days later, on 6 March, a company of Worcester's players arrived, and they declared, as the Leicester records carefully note, that the Haysell company 'were not lawfully aucthorysed'. The very fact that the authorisation should have been raised with them indicates the scepticism in Leicester about the claim. Was the Haysell letter from Tilney a forgery? Were the Worcester's players basing their claim on a current dispute in London over how much power the Master of the Revels now had? I am inclined to believe that it was genuine, and that it represented one of Tilney's first attempts to assert the centralised control that the Privy Council had granted him. Changes were in the wind. The Lord Chamberlain was dying, and no obvious successor was yet in sight. The Queen's Men were set up as a new company by the Privy Council Secretary Walsingham later that same month, and their creation changed a lot of circumstances for the professional companies. Tilney himself commissioned a new group to travel under his own name for a while after that upheaval. It appears in the records for Ludlow on 7 December 1583 and at Bath in 1583–4, though not again, as if for while after the Queen's Men were first established he tried to give them some back-up with a reserve company. He was clearly starting to be interventionist at this time, whatever the true character of the Haysell letter.

The story of the office of Master of the Revels and his development of control over the professional companies has been well told by Richard Dutton. Some of its implications for the Reel records under the Stuarts are worth looking into in this context, though. Tilney's designated successor, his nephew George Buc, had already been taking the income from licensing plays for print in 1606, before he became Master of the Revels in 1610. In the decade or so of his control Buc did a few other things to tighten the system of control that had grown under Tilney. He maintained a limit of four companies in London, and tried in 1615 to restrict the use of duplicate licences or 'exemplifications' that had started recently so that one company could perform in London while another used a duplicate to license its travels around the country. By the time the most interven-
tionist of the Masters, Henry Herbert, took control in 1623. He had developed a system of issuing annual licences for travel.

Like so much of England's bureaucracy, the systems imposed from on high were implemented even less consistently than mayoral edicts. From 1594 onwards, when the first professional companies were formed with a London base designated for them by the Privy Council, differences grew between the London companies and the rest. The Master understandably concerned himself much more with the London-based companies than with the travellers. But his authority was not universal. Families that had run companies under Elizabeth, like the earls of Sussex and the lords Berkeley and Chandos, continued to run their companies under the Stuarts, though they never visited London, ruled as it was by the companies of the royal family. Great lords like Lennox and Arundel mounted new companies that never visited London and only rarely came the Master's attention.

The patronage system initiated under Elizabeth as a means to keep the professional companies under control and later to limit their numbers effectively declined under James and died under Charles. This had two major effects. First, the Master concerned himself only with licensing the London companies. Second, the London companies themselves, needing written authorization for their tours, started making duplicates of the licences for secondary groups that never came to London. The difficulty that this makes for the REED records is that different companies started travelling under the same names. Lacking the distinguishing name of an individual patron, from roughly the time Queen Anne died in 1619 all the London-based companies with royal licences issued by the Revels Office became 'Revels' companies, and it is often impossible to differentiate one such company in the REED records from another.

Hythe in Kent made a thorough note about its view of the new situation that had been developing since James became king, and its own conclusions about what the procedure should now be. On 24 April 1615 its records contain a note which must by then have been fairly representative of civic attitudes to playing:

Whereas divers Common Players of Enterluds as well of the Kings Majestie as of the Queene Prince & nobles of this Realme have used to come to this Towne & shewing their Commissions unto Master Mayor or his Deputie & the Jurats have been permitte to play within this Towne and limited to play but a certaine number of playes & those at convenient times one the working days or holydays & forbydden to meddle with any their playinge or pastyme one the Saboth daye wherewith the said Players have seemed to be satisfied and promised to performe such limitation & to observe the times as they were required and yet have practized the contrary wherein they haveinge beene by the Mayor of this Towne & other the Officers forbydden & resiisted have bearded & opposed them selves against the said mayor and Officers standing upon the validitie of their Commissions & proceeded in their playinge contrary to ye magistrates express commandement in that behalfe For remedye whereof it is at this assembly thought fyt & thereupon ordered & decrved that the Players of Enterluds of the kings majestie, the Queene or Prince of this Realme comeinge to this Towne & shewinge their Commissions unto Master Mayor or his
deputy & the Jurates of this Towne for the tyme beinge allowed to play two or three playes within this libertie at the most (and no more) to be played on the workinge daies & holydayes in the daye tyme or Eveninge (the same playes beinge fully ended before eight of the Clock at nyght in ye winter & in the Sumer before nyne of the Clock at night.) And no play in any wise to be played on ye Sabbath day, And if ye said Players of ye kinges majestie ye Queene or Prince shall at any tyme hear after come unto this Towne & doe not play and play at all heere then this assembly are content that ye Chamberlyns of this towne by the appointment of Master Mayor or his Deputy for ye tyme beinge doe once in one yeare give to any one Company of them x s. as a gratuity or benevolence in that they forbeare to playe heere, And that the players of Noble men of this Realme comeinge to this Towne & shewinge their Comission as aforesaid be allowed to playe one or two playes within ye libertie of this Towne & noe more at the most, to be played only on such days and at such tymes as is last before mentioned & lymitted, And if it happen that any players doe at any tyme hereafter indevor to play within this libertie contrary to the trewe meaning of this decree Then this assembly doe order and decree that ye mayor of this Towne for ye tyme beinge or his Deputy & the Jurats & other the Officers of this Towne shall altogether denye & forbey ye said players to play, and alsoe commaund all & every the inhabitants of this Towne to forbear goinge to theire playes, And that if any the Inhabitants of this Towne shall refuse to obaye such commaundement herein or doe take parte with ye said Players or goe to theire playes contrary to the Comaundement of any ye said Officers or if ye Master or owner of any house within this Towne shall suffer any players to play in their houses or backsides contrary to this decree or contrary to the expresse comandement of any ye said Officers then every person soe offendinge shall be bound to the good behavior & further shall for their offence therein forfaite & pay to this Township the somme of xx s. to be levyed by distresse & sale of the goodes of ye person Offendinge & for want of goods by imprisonment of ye boddy of ye person offendinge without bayle or mayneprize until ye said forfaiture by payed, And it is further ordered & decree that if any suit or trouble doe aryse or be brought against any officer or other person of this Towne for the denyng of any Players accordinge to the Tenor of this decree then ye same shall be defended at the Chardges of this Township.

This, besides being a valiant attempt to impose order on the chaos that procedures had evidently fallen into, seems principally to be a renewal of the local control over visiting companies that the 1559 Proclamation had given to town authorities under Elizabeth, and which Hythe at least felt was now being eroded by the powers vested in the carriers of the royal warrants licensing the professional companies. In the context of the time, it was forthright contribution to what might almost be called the war of 1614–1618 between central and local government.

The effects of this war can be seen most vividly in a subsequent battle at Norwich, when the mayor came into direct conflict with the royal licenser of players. In April 1624 the Norwich authorities, grateful for having received a letter from the Privy Council that expressed sympathy for their bans on public playing, used it as their justification to
ban the next company that arrived with its royal warrant from performing any plays in the city. They had enough courage, allied to their conviction that playing corrupted the poor, to argue that the Privy Council's letter supporting their position overruled the king's signet on his licence to the company. Predictably, the outcome was stormy, though entirely local to Norwich. The Norwich authority's records state that:

This day francis wambus brought into this Court A Bill signed with his Maiesites hand ... wherevpon there was shewed forth vnto him the Letters directed from the Lords of his maiesies most honorable privie Counsil Dated the 7th of May 1623 ... wherevpon the said wambus peremptorily affirmed that he would play in this City & would lay in prison here this Twelue monthes but he would try whether the kings Command or the Counselles be the greater ... the said wambus was accordinge to the Counsells order Comanded to forbeare to play within the liberties of this City And he neuertheless answered that he would make tryall what he might doe by the kings authority for he said he would play.8

Norwich chose to use the Privy Council's authority against the king's. It was a nice question, roughly handled. The men wearing the king's daughter's livery as royal servants, Francis Wambus and his Lady Elizabeth's company, took up Norwich's challenge to test which authority was the stronger on that same day, 24 April, by setting up a playbill saying that a play called The Spanish Contract9 would be played at the White Horse inn. Norwich promptly imprisoned Wambus, who admitted to the court that he had written the playbill himself. The mayor eventually released him on a bond paid by Wambus's co-leader John Townsend. In September Wambus returned to Norwich with Townsend. He brought with him a letter from the Master of the Revels Henry Herbert which said that Wambus had been freed from his imprisonment on the Lord Chamberlain's authority. This letter Wambus used to demand the repayment of Townsend's bond. It was a matter of money as well as the legal status of the players and their right to play. But the Norwich court stood its ground and refused to give the money back.10 Playing on their home ground, they won easily against the touring team. The incident reflects the strength that came from the unity of the local authority when pitted against a divided central authority. When provoked, they could even prevent the players from using local inns on their visits. That division between local and central control first showed itself in 1614–1618.

The war of 1614–18 was not so much a direct consequence of the royal favouring of plays against the reluctant mayoralties as an unforeseen effect of the increase in the number of companies authorized to play in London to more than there were playhouses available for them. The number of companies with royal patrons and licenses had risen to six by 1614, and there were only four playhouses available in London. One direct result was that the royal companies spilled out into the country. Copies of the royal licences proliferated. So it followed that some companies were soon found to have been using duplicate licences.

At about this time too the Privy Council decided that four was the limit of companies for London. On 29 March 1615, they summoned the leading representatives of the London companies to present themselves before it. They named two players from each of four groups that they wanted to speak to. From the King's Men they asked for John
Heminges and Richard Burbage; from Queen Anne’s, Christopher Beeston and Robert Lee; from the Palsgrave’s (formerly the Prince’s), William Rowley and John Newton; from Prince Charles’s (I) Company, Thomas Downton and Humphrey Jeffes. With the disappearance of the last of the boy companies in 1614 and the recent merger of the two companies that were patronised by James’s younger children into one, four had become the set number of approved London playing companies by 1615.

The number of London companies had risen to six in the preceding years. It actually reached that total by 1611, once James’s second son the young Duke of Albany/York and his daughter the Lady Elizabeth had both become patrons of their own companies so long as the Blackfriars Boys kept their London foothold as a company of youths. The Duke of York’s was formally patented on 30 March 1610. The Lady Elizabeth’s company’s patent a year later made it the sixth to be then officially tolerated in London, after the King’s, Queen’s, Prince Henry’s (now the Palsgrave’s) and York’s, plus the former Blackfriars Boys, who were once again calling themselves the Children of the Queen’s Revels.

But the events of the next year’s indicate that, quite apart from the Privy Council’s wishes, in the commercial marketplace six was too large a number of companies for London to sustain comfortably. Even at the height of their social standing under Charles, London did not accommodate easily more than five companies. And there was a shortage of playhouses. So by 1615 the former boy company had merged with the Lady Elizabeth’s and that merged group had in turn joined up with the Duke of York’s to take the duke’s new title as Prince Charles’s company. That left the four groups whose leaders the Privy Council summoned in 1615. Not until 1629, when Richard Gunnell built the third hall playhouse, Salisbury Court, did five companies play regularly in London again. Although no record exists of any formal declaration being made about the allowed total, four evidently became the agreed figure. On 29 February 1618, for instance, the Master of the Revels summoned Heminges from the King’s to see him ‘in the name of the four companies’. Henry Herbert twice noted that four was the number.

The shrinkage from six to four between 1614 and 1615 was due to more factors than the economic pressure of the increase in supply to the market of playgoers. By 1615 there were barely four playhouses available even to the four companies that were then in operation in London, and the city never relented in its hostility to the building of new playhouses. The King’s Men kept to themselves the luxury of playing at their Globe and Blackfriars alternately. They even rubbed their superiority in by rebuilding the Globe as their second playhouse in 1614. The Queen Anne’s played at the Red Bull. The Palsgrave’s had the Fortune. In 1615 the fourth company, the merged Prince Charles’s and Lady Elizabeth’s, used the Hope. That playhouse had been disliked by the Lady Elizabeth’s who opened it in 1614 because it also served for bear-baiting. The only other venue available to the merged company was the old Curtain. The Swan was still in existence, but for various reasons had never been used very much for playing, and hardly ever by a resident company. There was a serious shortage. The Hope stank. The Curtain, built in 1577, was not much better, because it was now by a long way the oldest amphitheatre in London. It was also the one with distinctly the lowest reputation. So long as the King’s kept their two playhouses for their own exclusive use, the other three companies of 1614 had not enough good playhouses available to them.

It was out of this situation that the practice started of using ‘exemplifications or
duplicates' of company licences. Warned by the Lord Chamberlain, Norwich seized on the practice in 1616. It was in fact stamped on at least twice, under rather peculiar circumstances. In 1616 William Herbert the Lord Chamberlain sent the player Joseph Moore around the country with an official letter naming various players who were using fake patents. Moore was a leader of the Lady Elizabeth's which had recently left London because of the shortage of playhouses and started travelling. The letter which Moore carried for the Chamberlain, presumably based on good information, identified the chief culprits and the companies they claimed to run. It reads, in the Norwich copy,

wheras Thomas Swynaerton and Martin Slaughter beinge two of the Queens Maiestes Company of playors hauinge separated themselues from their said Company, haue each of them taken forth a severall exemplification or duplicate of his Maiestes Letters patentes gaunted to the whole Company and by vertue therof they severally in two Companies with vagabondes and such like idle persons, haue and doe use and exercise the quallitie of playinge in diverse places of this Realme to the Beat abuse and wronge [f] of his Maiestes Subiectes in generall and contrary to the true intent and meaninge of his Maiestie to the said Company And whereas William Perrie hauinge likewise gotten a warrant whereby he and a Certaine Company of idle persons with him doe traviall and play ynder the name and title of the Children of hir Maiestes Revelles ... And wheras also Gilberte Reason one of the prince his highnes Playors hauing likewise separated himself from his Company hath also taken forth another exemplification or duplicate of the patent granted ... And likewise one Charles Marshall, Humfrey Jeffes and William Parr: thereof prince Palatyne Company of Playors hauinge also taken forthe an exemplification.... These are [in his] therfore to pray, and nevertheless in his Maiestes name to will and require you vpon notice given of any of the said persons by the bearer herof Joseph More whom I haue speciallye directed for that purpose that you Call the said parties offenders before you and thereupon take ther said severall exemplifications or duplicates or other their warrantes by which they use ther saide quallitie from them, And wrought with to send the same to me.  

The named players were to give bonds that they would go immediately to Whitehall and answer to the Lord Chamberlain for their offences. Moore was the thief set to catch the thieves. He was also, perhaps less than voluntarily, working to protect the monopolistic status of the authorized London companies against any rivals.

The Chamberlain repeated this circular seven years later, in 1624. This time, instead of using Moore from the Lady Elizabeth's, which had just resumed playing in London, he used Gilbert Reason, one of the 'vagabondes' named in the 1616 letter. On 29 January 1625, Reason showed the Norwich authorities a printed warrant from the Lord Chamberlain to 'all Maiors Sheiriffes Justices of peace Baliffs Constables & other his Majesties officers', noting how many 'grantes Comissions & lycences which they have by secret meanes procured both from the kinges Majestie & also from diverse noblemen by vertue whereof they doe abusively Clayme unto themselves a kind of licentious fredome to
travell aswell to shew play & exercise in eminent Cities & Corporations within this kingdom as also from place to place without the knowledge & approbacion of his Majesties office of the Revels & by that means doe take upon them at their own pleasure to act & sett forth in many places of this kingdom diverse & sundry places & shewes which for the most part are full of scandall & offence both against the Church & State'.

The state felt the need to reassert its control through censorship. This time the letter named no names, but insisted that no company could travel without authorisation from the Master of the Revels. From then on the Master appears to have followed the practice that George Buc appears to have initiated during the 1614–18 war, of issuing the patented companies with annual licences to travel.

The practices that developed in this new situation made a major contribution to the loss of evidence about visiting players from the civic records. At Canterbury a letter of 25 March 1636 from the mayor to Archbishop Laud set out the mayor's grievance over the behaviour of a visiting company of stage players. It is a revealing document, not least because it covers a period when no entries at all about visiting companies appear in the town's records. It begins by asserting that the conventions had been properly observed:

`Certayne Stage players came lately to this Citty and in obedience to his Majesties Commission with my licence they played beer 8 daies.' They had their royal patent, and the mayor therefore granted them leave to play, although no payment was made to them, and so nothing was noted in the civic accounts. The convention if not the legal requirement that the company first approached the mayor for his permission was evidently still observed. What the letter passes over is that the visit and the playing took place in the prohibited time of Lent. The letter acknowledges that breach of the law only in passing:

although their night playes continyned untill neere Midnight to the great disorder of the whole Citty and to the disquiet of many a citizen whose servants without their masters lycence continued at the playes till neere midnight whereof dayely complayneites comying unto me and especially fynding that those plaies here prooved a Nursery for drunkennes & disorder especially in this tyme of abstynence & being credibly informed that two honest mens daughters at that unseasonably tyme of the night were made drunk & carnally abused at the play house to the publick scandall of government I did require the players to desist from playing any longer without my leave.

The players challenged this order, telling the mayor that they would return to play again, and that they would lay a complaint against him for his prohibition. The mayor's letter to Laud sought to pre-empt this complaint: 'I humbly beseech your graces direction it is not my person but the office I beare and the affront to government that makes me present this suite to your grace to whome as the best friend this Citty hath under his Majestie I am bould & incouraged by your graces former favours.'

Laud took the matter up promptly, though the Council to whom he reported the case neatly avoided the main issue of the conflict between the royal patent and local government by taking up instead the convenient point that the players had breached the Lenten prohibition. A reply came from the Privy Council on 29 March, signed by
the Lord Keeper Newburgh, the Archbishop of York, the Lord Treasurer Coke and Secretary Windebank, asking for the players' names and for confirmation that they had been playing 'in the unseasonable tyme of lent'. The mayor's answer to this confirmed their use of Lent and gave the names of Weekes and Perry as the leading players. The mayor was to get support for his ban, but the Norwich battle of 1624 was not to be resumed.

The mayor's naming of the responsible players raises another rather complicated question, company identity in the years after the royal patronage system died. Richard Weekes and William Perry were travelling together in 1629 as a company of 'King's Men' apparently based in and licensed from York. The York company of King's players was one of at least two groups quite distant from the London King's Men. It was set up by William Perry in 1629. He had earlier appeared with a Revels Children licence at Leicester on 8 July 1627, and he visited Reading with the Red Bull (Revels) company in 1629. He was named in the royal livery list of May 1629, though, and on 18 September was granted a licence 'for making up and keeping a company of players, to present all usual stage plays, by the name of His Majesty's servants for the city of York.' This licence was renewed in February 1633. Although it may have had links with the Red Bull Revels company, Perry's was certainly not a London-based company but exclusively a touring group, most likely the one which appears in the subsequent records for visits to Coventry, Norwich, Leicester, and York. Their base in York must have been part of the Revels Office licence for their travels. That the Revels Office was using such devices to supply the king's name as an authority for more than the one London company against the resistant locals is a plausible inference. The Perry company's existence as King's company and visits by both King's companies to Coventry presumably called out the distinction that Coventry tried to make in 1636 between the Perry company and another group which they identified as 'the kinges players of Blackfriars'. What relation if any the York group had to the London King's company, who besides Perry played in it, and what 'usual stage plays' they performed we cannot tell.

As the patronage system disappeared under Charles, to be replaced by Revels licences, the problem of identifying travelling companies by name in the records multiplies. The 'Revels' companies of the Red Bull and the Salisbury Court theatres in London were not the only groups to use that name. The so-called 'Bristowe' company of the King's youths is another cause of confusion. That too has reflections from the 1614–1618 war. Bristol in April 1618 copied out a notice of copied out a notice of a 'grant unto John Daniel gent Authoritie to bring upp a Companie of Children and youths in the quallitie of playing Enterludes & Stageplaies. And wee are informed yat notwithstanding his Majesties pleasure therein, that there are some who oppugne and resist the said authority in contempt of his Majesties Lettres Patentes. In consideracion whereof and for the further effecting & performance of his Majesties pleasure therein Wee have thought good to grant unto the said John Daniell these our Lettres of Assistance Thersby requiring you and in his Majesties name straightly charding & commaunding you and every of you not only quietly to permitt and suffer Martin Slatier John Edmonds & Nathaniell Clay ... to play as aforesaid'. This militant order was directed to all towns.

Basically the 1614–1618 war was diplomacy by other means, an attempt by central government to force local authorities to accept visits by the approved playing companies.
It was an imposition of the general terms of the 1559 Proclamation that tried to give
the companies access to the towns, but avoided laying the direct costs of the Elizabethan
system onto the local authorities. Those direct costs are what normally provide the chief
evidence about the professional companies in the reed records.

All of these 1614–1618 changes affect the appearances of the professional companies
in the Stuart records. As the government system for the control of the professional
companies changed, so do the records. That is why the richest haul of information
generally comes in the Elizabethan period. The terms of the Proclamation meant that
at the least the mayor would give something from the town coffers to the players for
their initial presentation before starting the 'common' performances, and the payment
would therefore normally be entered in the civic accounts. Usually the company's name
was specified along with the amount of the town's gift. These entries tell us something
about the towns, and something about the companies and their touring routes. Even
when the gift was to the company to go away without performing they tell us something
about mayoral attitudes, though they give little direct information about the financial
side of travelling for the companies.

That was the Tudor system. Once the leading companies were granted royal patrons
under James, it decayed, and entries became fewer. The practice of the Master of the
Revels issuing travelling licences which started in the second decade under James might
prompt an entry, often simply to record that the company was sent away without per-
forming, or to protest against the way the companies behaved in the king's name. But
the records shrink, especially under Charles as the playing companies became more
obviously associated in civic minds with the royal prerogative. Bath and Oxford were
not alone in not recording any payments to playing companies after 1610.

We know that the companies did perform throughout this period, usually at local
inns, and mostly without bothering to report to the local authorities. As the Norwich
evidence shows, the players felt that they had royal support against local opposition.
Some of the provincial records, which increasingly after 1610 confine themselves to
notes about the three or four royally-patronised London companies, may have been
recording their payments merely as a way of putting out flags to signal their loyalty to
the crown.

The records for Oxford and Cambridge for the Stuart period up to 1642 exemplify
the underlying situation. As playgoing became more and more popular under Elizabeth
both universities tried to stop students from going to plays. The earl of Leicester as
Chancellor of Oxford confirmed the university's ban on 'common stage players' in 1584,
saying in a letter that he thought 'the prohibicion of common stage players very requisite',
though he would not like to see academic plays by students themselves banned. This
ban was renewed in 1593, in the form of a letter from the Privy Council to the Vice
Chancellor and Masters of the colleges. It was signed by both Cecils and others includ-
ing Essex and Charles Howard, the Lord Admiral. The message was to be passed on to
the mayor of Oxford to ensure that the ban held for a five-mile radius around Oxford.
Cambridge did the same. And yet the boasts on the titlepages of Q1 Hamlet (1603),
Volpone (1607), and other plays, declaring that they had been applauded at both univer-
sities, are certainly correct. What they conceal is that the visits were to the town, not
the universities. The King's Men are on record as playing in Oxford regularly through that decade, though the Cambridge records are less revealing. They were recorded playing in Oxford town in 1609–10, when they produced the performance of Othello that led a don to praise its acting in Latin. Robert Armin dedicated A Nest of Ninnies (1608) to the 'Gentlemen' of Oxford, Cambridge, and the Inns of Court. He wrote, paraphrasing Justice Shallow, 'I have seen the stars at midnight in your societies . . . I was admitted in Oxford to be of Christ's Church, while they are of Al-soules gave ayme, such as knew me remember my meaning'. Even allowing for Armin's heavy-handed puns, this suggests a level of informal contact between the company and students that makes a nonsense of the official university ban.

The King's Men are in the civic records as visiting Oxford in 1603–4, which would give some justice to the claim on the titlepage of Q1 Hamlet that it had been acted 'in the two Universities of Cambridge and Oxford'. They were at Oxford again in October 1605, which would justify Jonson's boast about Volpone in his letter published in the 1607 quarto, and in 1609–10, which explains the 1610 account of Othello. There is no similar evidence about visits to Cambridge in the same years, though the claims must have a similar credibility for that town. Cambridge town seems to have stopped recording visits by the professional companies rather earlier than Oxford. That the King's Men and other companies continued to visit both places fairly often in the succeeding decades there is no doubt, neither Oxford town nor the university has any records of the companies that visited after 1610. Gilbert Burnet in his Life of Matthew Hale (1682), reports (p.4) that while Hale was at Oxford University between 1626 and 1629, he was 'so much corrupted' by 'the Stage Players coming thither' that 'he almost wholly forsook his Studies'. This so shocked him in retrospect that on going to London he resolved never to see a play again. There is no civic record to say which dangerous companies were the ones that seduced him from his books. Thomas Crosfield's diary for 13 July 163517 has a note saying 'besides ye players at ye Kings armes other things were to be seen for money'. One of the available attractions Crosfield identified was '5. The witches of Lancashire over against ye Kings head, their 1. meetings . Tricks'. Oxford had two inns, one offering a new King's Men's play (The Late Lancashire Witches was staged through a three-day run at the Globe that August), and both inns were routinely showing plays for money. The civic records give no hint that such riches were on offer in Oxford.

NOTES

1 For this trawl I have used the eleven REED volumes in print by the end of 1994, plus a fairly broad sweep, thanks to Sandy Johnston, Sally-Beth MacLean, and Bill Cooke, of the volumes in process that are on file in the REED office, and which I was given leave to look through in July-August 1994. To all the editors and to the officers in Toronto my most honest and profound thanks. Except where acknowledged, my citations in this article are all from the REED work, published and unpublished.

2 James F. Larkins and Paul L. Hughes (eds), Stuart Royal Proclamations (Oxford, 1973), t. 12. This early Proclamation had attached to it an afterthought, not at all relevant to
its main subject (p.14), 'that no Beare-bayting, Bul-bayting, Enterludes, common Playes, or other like disordered or unlawful Exercises or Pastimes be frequented, kept or used, at any time hereafter upon any Sabbath day'. That was a principle which James was to renew in the Book of Sports in 1618.

4 Quoted in Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (eds), Cumberland / Westmorland / Gloucestershire (Toronto, 1986), 362–3.
9 The play has been lost. Its title suggests that it was written to ride on the same wave of anti-Spanish feeling that produced A Game of Chess a few months later.
10 See Norwich, 180–3. Six years went by before the Lady Elizabeth’s returned to play at Norwich.
12 J.Q. Adams (ed), The Dramatic Records of Sir Henry Herbert, 1622–1673 (New Haven, 1917), 48. Besides the number specified in 1618, Herbert made two references to four companies as the authorised number, in 1623 and 1636 (Herbert Record Book, pp 25, 65).
14 The Norwich authorities, who had originally caught Swinnerton out in March 1616, made a transcript of the Chamberlain’s letter on 4 June 1617. It is printed in Norwich, 151–2.
15 Norwich, 188.
17 QC Lib: ms 390.

MARION E. COLTHORPE

The disputed date of the Theobalds Entertainment, 1591

Queen Elizabeth I stayed at Theobalds with Lord Burghley in May 1591, her visit lasting from Monday 10 May – Thursday 20 May, as noted by Burghley himself: 'May 10 The Queen came to Theobalds from Hackney ... May 20 Robert Cecill made Knight at the Crown Majesties remoyng.' These dates were queried by Curtis C. Breight in 'Entertainments of Elizabeth at Theobalds in the early 1590s.' He stated that there is 'some evidence' that the royal visit lasted only from 10 May – 14 May, and that 'since