

# RECORDS OF EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA

## Pre-publication Collections

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### Newport, Isle of Wight (Hampshire)

1570 - 1628

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#### 1570-71

*Newport Parish Churchwardens' Accounts* IOWRO: NPT/PR/18  
f [8] (*Payments*)

...  
for mendyng a sette when the play wasse ytt was broken iiij d  
...

f [9]  
...  
payd for naylles to mend the settes after the play iij d  
...

f [9v] payments  
...  
for mendyng the settes after the play and naylles xxj d  
...

#### 1588-9

*Borough Court Book* IOWRO: NBC/45/22  
f [5]

minstrelles                    ...  
Item that noe minstrell nor musicion shall playe nether in the streete nor in  
typlinge howses within this Towne after nyne of the lock at night vpon payne  
of Loseing their Instrumentes  
...

Note: This regulation in a list of ordinances which are repeated every few years in the Those concerning baking, brewing, keeping streets clean, etc. appear each time, but this one concerning musicians only in 1588-9, 1613 and 1614.

## 1613

***Borough Court Book*** IOWRO: NBC/45/22  
f 323 (19 October 1613)

musicions            ...  
                          Item that no minstrell or musicion shall plaie neither in the streetes or  
                          victualling howses *within this Towne* after nine of the Clocke in the night  
                          vpon paine of loosing their *Instrumentes:/*  
                          ...

## 1614

***Borough Court Book*** IOWRO: NBC/45/22  
f 336 (26 April 1614)

musicions            ...  
                          Item that noe mynstrell or musicon shall playe neither in the streates or  
                          victualling howses *within this towne* after nyne of the clocke in the nighte  
                          vpon paine of losinge theire *instrumentes:/*

## 1621

***Newport Convocation Book*** IOWRO: NBC/45/16a  
p 159 (24 August 1621)

...

Observations toucheing the spoile of the Forrest

1. That the poore people dwelling about the Forrest usuallie chipped out Chippes from the trees [and] in the forrest and brought them to the Towne & sold them.
2. The keepers having fee wood due have in Cullar thereof Cleared out and sold wood continuallie by the loade / both winter and Somer / and have not paid for the clearing and cutting thereof <...> in moneys but permitted the cutters & cleavers of wood to take wood for their labours wherby they have had a scoape to doe ' & have don ' great spoiles.

It is now ordered to prevent the disorder of the poore people 'of the town' in spoiling the forrest, That from henceforth the custome & vse of the Maior & his bretheren going to wood oves on the Sundaie after Maye daie yearlie shalbe nowe left off / and the *Inhabitantes* of the towne shall noe longer [ha] take [anie] or fetch anie wood of the forrest / but that the [...] same vse and custome shalbe vtterly left off & abolished for ever /.

3. That the keepers and woodwardes have not onlie sold [...] wood into the Towne but have usually [/] carried & solde wood vnto the *Inhabitantes* of Bowcombe [Shorwell] Carisbrooke, Shorwell & Brixton & other Bordering places & have not onlie don so but have greed together & have vsually [solde] in stead of Dotters taken timber & sold to Carpenters & Ioiners. /

Note: Although this record does not mention dramatic or musical performance, it is included because it and the folowing 1621 entry from the Ligger Book concern the prohibition of a local custom that included minstrels and other forms of entertainment. For a description of the custom, see the undated entry from the Ligger Book, f 17.

**Newport Ligger Book** IOWRO: NBC/45/2  
f [53v-54] (31 August 1621)

...

Whearas there hath been great spoiles committed in the *Kinges Maiesties* fforest of Parkhurst by the poore people of this towne. Who (notwithstanding Honourable Earle of Southampton hath often written and some of them have been punished therefore) doe yet continue in the same disorder / Insomuch that his honor is so highlie displeas'd with the towne therefore that if the same abuse be not speedilie reformed / the towne is likelie to be much preiudiced therby in their *Chartre & liberties* ffor preventing whereof, and for that the fetching of wood out of the forrest vnder pretence of Custome is found rather to encrease the nomber of idle poore in the towne, then to relieue the poore (they too much relyeng vppon the comfyt thereof, and so breeding vpp their children in ffelenes that they be vnfitt for anie seruice / whoe otherwise might be educated in some honest vocacion to gett their livinges, it is nowe at a Court of Common Counsell holden in the Guildhall of this Burrough this last daie of August Anno *Domini* 1621 Ordered and decreed by Mr Maior & his whole Companie nowe assembled That the custome and priuiledge of the Maiors going to the wood ovis, and the fetching of boughes & wood out of the forest shalbe vtterlie left off yealded vppe and abolished / And that none of the | *Inhabitantes* of this Burroughe shall from hencefoorth neither in the moneth of Maye nor at anie other time fetch, or suffer their children or servauntes to fetch anie boughes or wood in the said forrest vnder anie cullor or pretence whatsoever without speciall leave of his *Maiesties* woodwardes and keepers vppon 'paine' to be punished by open whipping according to his *Maiesties Lawes* / This order was agreed on and made by vs whose names are heerevnder written and hath been published by open proclamacion in the towne wittnes *our handes* heervnto sett the daie and yeare aforesaid /

...

## 1624

*Newport Convocation Book* IOWRO: NBC/45/16a  
p 196 (16 April 1624)

At this assemblie Mr Maior and the Companie within named being at the hall about the assessing for the poore and other urgent busines/ there came in Gilbert 'Reason' a player and shewing his authoritie deseired to have leave to playe in the towne/ whervppon Mr Maior & the Companie Considering the povertie of the towne and the inconvenience of suffering players to plaie too long in the towne heertofore, thought good to lymitt him the said Gilbert and his company to plaie onlie this evening and to morrowe and no longer 'or two other daies in the old towne hall' and the said Gilbert not being therwithall contented much urged to have longer time/ [therwith] and would not depart but at length said hee would stand [...] on his authoritie and told Mr Maior that he would be questyoned for yt/ and that he should heare from my Lord Chamberlaine with divers other *peremptory* speeches/

...

Note: Gilbert Reason was the leader of the Prince's players.

## 1628

*Newport Convocation Book* IOWRO: NBC/45/16a  
p 232 (4 Jan 1628)

...

It is agreed that in regard of the great infection and danger of the small pox in this towne the shewe of the Chaos shall not be shewed in the towne./

...

Notes: The 'Chaos' was a puppet play performed by a group led by William Sandes and including his two sons and about nine others. They came from Preston and presumably toured all over the south that year, as they were sent away from Beaminster in Dorset in October, 1630 (see David George in *REEDN* 19 No 1 (1994), p.16-19). They were probably the puppet players who were sent away from Dorchester in July, 1630: '5 July This day the poppet players craved leave to play here in this towne and had a warrant under the Kings hand, yet were refused' (D. Underdown et al (eds), *The Diary of William Whiteway*). See also Sir John Oglander's accounts for 1630 for a payment to see puppet players at Newport, which may have been Sandes' company returning.

## Undated Records

*Newport 'Ligger Book'* IOWRO: NBC/45/2  
f 17

...

Item the Satersday after Maye daie. the custome is & hathe *been* tyme owt of mynde yt ye Bailives for ye tyme beinge sholde yerely appoynte a Lorde to ride with a mynstrell & a Vice abowght the towne a pretie companie of yowthe folowinge themm. which staing at euery burges dore warneth euery of them to attend vpon ye said Bailives att ye wood oveis of Parckhurst the

next morninge to fetch some maye. & to <sup>^</sup>obbe<sup>y</sup> olde custome & vsadge of ye towne. vpon payne of euery one making defaulte & not then there *present* before the Sonne risinge to leest a greene <sup>^</sup>goose<sup>^</sup> & a gallon of wyne. The *maner* whereof in forme foloweth. When ye sayd bailiues with their *companie comburgesses* be come to ye wood oveis yen *commeth* forthe ye *keapers* of fforest meetinge & salutinge them & offeringe smawle greene bowes to euery of themm. signifienge thereby yt ye said bailiues and *comburges* hathe free *commeen* of pasture for all *maner* their livinge thinges in all ye landes of Parckhurst vnto ye said wood oveis for euer accordinge to their Charter. After ye bowes so deliuered to ye *burgesses presentlie* (accordinge to auncient custome) ye *commeen* people of ye towne entereth into *parckhurst woodes* with their *hatchettes* Sarpes & other edge tooles cuttinge greene bowes to refresh ye *streetes* placinge themm at their doors to give a *commodios* & pleasant *vmbrage* to ye howses & *comfort* to ye people passinge bie. And assone as ye said *commen* people ar spedde *competentlie* with greene bowes they retorne home in marchinge arraye the *commoners* before the *keapers* folowinge them: next ye *minstrell vice* & *morisse daunceres* after ye *Sergeantes* with their maces. then the bailiues & *comburges* cooples in their *degree* ye *gonnes* and *chambers* goinge off after a *triumphant maner*. vntill they come to ye towne *marckett* where they showeth suche *pastyme* as ye leeke to make & after castinge them selffes in a ringe all departeth except only ye *burgesses* which with the *keapers* bringethe ye bailiues home where of custome ye *keapers* breaketh their fast *prepared* for themm. eche of the bailiues and *burgesses* with speede *preparinge* themm selffes to morninge prayer & from thence with ther wives to ye elder bailiues *dynner*. This vse of cuttinge greene bowes indureth for ye holie daye eves & *mornynge*s only ye maye moneth & people of custome owght to goe but once a daye. but sere & broke woode ye said *inhabitanes* of ye towne hathe *been* accustomed tyme owte of mynd to fetch home att there *backes* with their *pickardes* from ye woodes aforsaid all the yere longe: savinge only ye foure moneth & also to haue by estimacion xxx<sup>ti</sup> acres of firses & other fewell in ye said lanndes *withowt* ye said woodes all tymes of ye yere *withowt* excepton /

Item the custome ys & hathe been owt of mynde after *dynner* ye said daie ye bailiues wives with their sisters ye *comburges* wives orderlie in their degree by cooples to walke foorthe to Bugge berie for custome & pleasure onlye ye Lorde ye *morisse daunceres* ye *vice* & *mynstrell* plainge before themm with other *pastyme* for ye daye *prepared*. & so to retorne in leeke *manner* somewhat before eveninge prayer to ye elder bailiues howse. Where they *bancketeth* & so repaireth to eveninge prayer & from thence to supper passinge the hole daie in good *companie* myrthe & honest pleasure /

...

Textual notes: ‘ovese’: eves, the edge or border of a wood (*MED*). ‘Sarpes’: pruning hooks (*OED*). ‘Bugge berie’: Buckbury.

Note: This record is one item in a group headed (on f 16) ‘This be the auncient vsages & olde customes of the borowgh of Newport within ye Isle of Wight Dewlie continued from ye tyme *yemmemorie* of man,’ copied in 1567-9 by the town bailiffs from various unidentified sources.