

RECORDS OF EARLY ENGLISH DRAMA

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Rangeworthy, Gloucestershire

1613

Edited by Peter Greenfield

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1613

Star Chamber Case TNA: STAC 8/239/3
mb. 1 (26 November)

lurat' Vicesimo sexto die Novembris Anno Vndecimo Iacobi Regis

The Iointe and seuerall aunsweres of Robert Hobbes holder william hooper two of the defendantes to the bill of Complaynte of Iohn Parker and Morrice Hooper Complayauntes

All advantages of Exception to the incerteintie & insufficiencie of the said bill of Complaine now and att all times hereafter to these Defendantes beinge saved, And not acknowledging or confessinge anie matter or thinge in the said bill conteyned to be true The said defendantes and each of them seuerallie vnto somuche of the said bill as in anie sort concerneth them or eyther of them to aunswere vnto Doe aunswere in manere followinge, That by all the time whereof the memorie of man is not to the Contrarie there hath ben a vse and Custome in Rangworthy in the bill mencioned that a generall feast or meetinge of ffreindes called a Revell hath ben vsed and accustomed to be held & kept in Rangworthy aforesaid vppon the Sundaie next after Whitsondaie & vppon the Mundaie then followinge which revell or feast hath ben vsed (as aforesaid) aswell for the refreshinge of the mindes & spirittes of the Countrye people beinge enured and tyred wjth husbandrye and Continuall labour as alsoe for the invitacion and entertaynment of one freinde & kinsman with another for preservacion of mutuall ^{^amytie} acquaintance and love and decidinge and allayinge of strifes discordes . . and debates between

Neighbour & neighbour and vpon the *said* Revell or feast daie yt hath likewyse ben vsed & accustomed that in the afternoone after the hearinge of Divine service or of a sermon the inhabytauntes of the *said* village and their kinsfolkes and ffreindes soe assembled together haue spent some time in excercises of bodie as wrastlinge leapinge runninge throughinge the barr or the like as alsoe in dancinge or other honest sport or recreacion without offence And theis *defendants* further saie that shortlie before the last revell or feast daie in this present ^{xjth} yere of his *Maiesties* raigne of England &c Robert Hooper Clerke person of Ironacton in the Countie of gloucester aforesaid who hath the nominacion of the Curate for readinge Divine service in Rangworthye aforesaid did (as these *Defendants* haue credibly heard) giue warninge & notice to the inhabytauntes of the *said* village that the *said* Revell should not be kept vpon the sundaie next after whitsondaie beinge the Saboth daie, as sometimes formerly it had, but that the same should be Deferred vntill the Mundaie followinge, and by reason thereof the *said* Revell or feast was not kept on the *said* sundaie after whitsondaie last nether was there anie concourse of people or anie gaminge or sportes vsed vpon the *said* Sundaie (as theis *Defendants* haue Credibly hard); but vpon the Mundaie followinge beinge the last daie of Maie the *said* Revell & feast was kept & held in manner as formerly ^{^it} hath ben vsed (*videlicet*) in feastinge & honest mirth of one freinde with an other Nether was there anie vnlawfull gaminge vsed at all vpon the *said* daie or extraordinarie Drinckinge or Drunkennes happened to theis *Defendants* remembraunce but theis *Defendants* saie that the inhabytauntes of the *said* village and their freindes and Neighbors that thyther resorted to the *said* revell & feast did refraine from Dancinge or Musicke (as theis *Defendants* verily thincke) for ought thei hard to the Contrarie, vntill their had heard a sermon preached there on the *said* Mundaie for the space of neere three ^{^houres} which ended about fower or five of the clocke in the afternoone, and after thend of the *said* sermon a great parte of the people departed homeward, and some yongemen & Maides of the *said* Inhabytauntes & Neighbors to the number of twelue or therabouts (there beinge two or three Musicjans) Did Daunce for about the space of one hower without offence or scandall for ought theis *Defendants* perceaued and theis *Defendants* and Diuers other Inhabytauntes & Neighbors for a short space as thei passed by in their waie homeward did looke on the *said* dancers duringe which time the *plaintiff* Iohn Parker beinge Constable of the hundred of Thornbury beinge a precisian and arrogatinge to himselfe a singularitye of sanctitie and Religion and beinge a fauorer & follower Preachers as are not conformable to the kinges *Maiesties* ecclesiasticall lawes & constitucions of wearinge surplesse, Churchinge of women baptizinge with the signe of the Crosse or the like by which Refractorie and Discordinge opinions, great Distraccion in religion & scismes haue ensued, and great & manie suites and troubles haue ben stirred therby in the hundred of Thornburie aforesaid/ between Neighbor & freindes, soe that at one Sessions of the peace there haue ben of late preferred (as theis *Defendants* haue credibly hard) about thirtie Indictmentes presentmentes & informacions by that occasion, he the *said* Iohn Parker by his *said* singularitye of opinion did at the *said* Revell take occasion by the *said* Mirth Dancinge and Musicke to stirr vpp quarrelles braules and Dissencion sayinge that all Musicions were rogues, and that thei should be sett in the stockes, and vsed diuers revylinge speeches against the *said* Dancinge, althoughe there was nether ^{^anie} fightinge quarrellinge, Dronkennes ^{^or} gaminge then vsed or anie breach of the peace like to ensue yet the *said* Iohn Parker & the *said* Morrice Hooper (beinge of the like humorous Disposicion by his *procurement* did by Colour of the *said* office of Constablenesshipp,

but but intruth to purchase to themselues for their singular pretended sanctimoney, a great name & estimacion amongst the vulgar sort seduced by them did forbid the *said* Dancinge and Musicke in a *peremptorie* & Commandinge sorte, and did *without* cause or occasion assault & pull by the throate one Iohn Tomkins (one of the *Defendants*) ^{^as these *defendants* haue hard} who then in peacable manner Daunced and did violentlie Dragge and Drawe the Musicians aforesaid or some of them towardes the stockes and did offer to impryson them by the assistance of some of the people that then looked on Nether was there anie rescous made of the *said* Musicians from the said stockes or imprysonment for ought these *Defendants* knew or sawe: but these *Defendants* Confesse that diuers of the standers by did forbear to arrest or impryson the *said* Musicians vppon the Command of the said *plaintiffes* themselues had made by their singularitytie of opinion selfminded behaiour and violence offered (as aforesaid) And to countenance their said offence and misdemeanores (as theis *defendants* haue hard) the said Iohn Parker did make a *proclamacion* by colour of the said Constabeshipp whereas there was not anie apparaunce or suspicjon of mischiefe harme or Disorder to ensue And these *Defendants* saie that the *plaintiffes* or one of them heretofore did Complaine to diuers Iustices of Peace of the said Countie of *gloucester* ^{^as these *defendants* haue likewise credibly hard} for the punnishinge of the said supposed Complaintes beinge idle, malicious & friuolous and these *Defendants* furthersaie that the *plaintiffes* althoughe thei pretend to *prosecute* the *said* matter in zeale of Iustice, yet for their owne priuate *profitte* (as these *Defendants* are informed thei haue offered a *Composicion* with some of the *Defendants* for fortie poundes And theis *Defendants* & eache of them doe seuerally saie that thei nor either of them are not guiltie of the Riottes routes vnlawfull assemblies assautes rescous misdeamenors or offences in the bill mencioned or of anie of them in manner & forme as thei are in the said bill sett forth & declared All *which* these *Defendants* & each of them are readie to averr & maintaine as this honorable Court shall awarde and humbly praie to be dismissed with their resonable costes by vexacion of suite vniustly susteyned./

Edw. Scotmans

mb. 2 [different hand]

To the kinges most excellent *Maiestie*

Humbly complaying shewe ^{^& informe} vnto *your* most excellent *Maiestie* Iohn Parker late Constable of the hundred of Thornbury in *your* *Maiesties* Countie of Glocester and morris hooper an Inhabitant of the same hundreth That wheras *your* subiect Iohn Parker was lawfully appointed and sworn to be Constable for the said hundred from the feast of St michaell tharkangell in the Tenth yeare of *your* *Maiesties* Raigne vntill the feast of St michaell in the Eleauenth yeare of *your* *Maiesties* Raigne & did accordinge to his Oathe and dutie in that behaulf duly endeauour himselfe for the *preseruacion* of *your* *Maiesties* peace and mantaynaunce of *your* *Maiesties* Lawes mad for suppression of Riotous & disorderly assemblies and vnlawfull gamyng So it is if it maye please *your* most excellent *Maiestie* that about the last daye of Maye last past *your* said subiect being ^{^then Constable of the sayde hundreth &} *geuen* to understand that ther was a most disorderly Riotous and vnlawfull assembly gathered together at a place called Rangeworthy in the *parishe* of Thornbury in the Countie aforesaid

and that the said persons did there in most barbarous & beastly manner endeavour themselves in a most wicked and detestable Course of excessive drinking and bending themselves to all manner of vnlawfull gaminge to the breache of your Maiesties Lawes and the great danger of making some tumult and vprore in their vnruely & drunken humors By reason wherof your said subiect in discharge of the dutie of his place repayed vnto Rangeworthy aforesaid and ther finding 2 hundred persons at the least vnlawfully assembled at vnlawfull games and most beastly and disorderly drinkinge soe that many of them were most shamfully overcome with drinke and were animated in ther wicked Cour by °fower° vnknown persons whoe passed vnder the name of Musitions all of them °being° strangers hauing noe habitations therabouts nor apertaininge to any nobleman or man of worthe And your said subiect finding that the said fowr vnknown persons were not only the Abettors but alsoe the gatherers together of that vnruely Company did therupon Comand the said persons to departe & that befor any hurte was done the said assembly should seperate °themselves° But the said vnknown persons refusinge to departe your said subiect did furthwith Commaund your other subiect hooper & diuers others Inhabitanes therabouts to assist your subiect being Constable to carry the said vnknown persons being the procurers & Abettors of the said vnru<..> persons to your Maiesties prison of the stockes wher they might be stayed vntill the said assembly were dispersed & your subiect might Cary them before some of your Maiesties Iustices of peace of the said Countie for further to be done against them as to Iustice did [aperte...e] °appertayneo But then soe it is if it may please your most excellent Maiestie that one Thomas Cloterbock & Agnes his wief Robert hooper henry Smeth William Neale Iane harrys wydow Iohn wayght William lucas Christopher p[i]°rouet Arthur Mansell Phillip Mansell Abraham Pratt Robert hobb the elder Robert hobb the yonger William hobb Nicholas Chaundler Margaret Chaundler Elizabeth Chaidler Thomas Smeth Iohn Tomkyns William hooper Giles White Thomas white Edward white Margaret Jones Edward Semans Richard Potts And Ione his wief Iosephe Neale William neale William Lauraunc Iohn Moore Iohn Nashe Edith Mansell widow with a multitude of other persons to the number of two hundred at the least vnknown to your subiectes whose names they humblie pray may be incerted into this Bill when they shalbe made known And the said persons being then and ther the said last daye of Maye so vnlawfully assembled as aforesaid & being then & ther armed and arayed with longe staues Sword & daggers Rapiers and other weapons as well Innasyne as defensiue did not only contemptuously deny to assist your said subiect Iohn Parker from the stockes keeping the said prison by force & strong hand and not Contented °therwytho the said Riotous and disordered persons did then and ther alsoe in Contempt of Iustice most Riotously & vnlawfullie greuously assault and set vpon your said subiect Iohn Parker being then and ther your Maiesties officer & Comaunding them to keep the peace and your other subiect Morris hooper whoe to the best of his power assisted your said subiect Iohn Parker in the preseruacion of your Maiesties peace and did then and there most greuously hurt beate and wound your said subiects & with most opprobrious tearmes reuile your said subiect being in great feare that he should be there murdered amongst them did then and ther furthwith cause a Proclamation to be made that the said Rioutous & vnruely Company should departe wherupon they being somewhat affrighted with further danger did after many horrible abuses opprobrious tearmes threatens menaces blowes & woundes begine to sever themselues But in suche manner & with such execrations & vowing a sodaine Revenge vpon your said subiects as your said subiectes for feare of ther liues were Compelled to departe

from them and leaue the said ffowr vnknown persons being Musitioners vnpunished In tender Consideration wherof and forasmuch as the said Riotes Ba<...>es and vnlawfull assembles & all other ^{o^theo} misdemenours ^{o^aforesaido} are offences against the Lawes & statutes of this your Maiesties realme of England & were Committed and done since your Maiesties last generall and free pardon may it therfore please your most excellent Maiestie the premisses Considered to graunt vnto your said [said] subiectes your Maiesties most gracious writt of sub pena to be directed to the said Thomas Cloterbock & Agnes his wief Robert hooper henry Smeth William neale lane harrys widow Iohn wayght William lucas Christopher [p..et] ^{o^Pruetto} Arthur Mansell Phillipp Mansell Abraham Pratt Robert hobb the elder Robert hobb the yonger william hooper Giles white thomas white Edward white Margaret Iones Edward Semans Richard Potter & Ioane his wief Ioseph neale william neale william Lauraunce Iohn moore Iohn nashe Edithe Mansell ^{o^&} vnto the said other vnknown persons when they shal be discoueredo Comaunding them and every of them at a Certaine daye and vnder a Certaine payne therin to be limited personally to be and appeare before your Maiestie & your Maiesties honorable [priuie] Consaile in your Maiesties high Court of Starr Chamber then and ther to answeare the premisses & to stand to & abide such further ^{o^orderso} or Censure therin as your Maiestie & [..] your ^{o^saydeo} Counsaile shall thinke fitt & your said subiect shall according to his bounden Dutie pray for your Maiestie &c

[signature illegible]

Notes:

Rangeworthy is a Gloucestershire village located in the Severn Vale eleven miles north of Bristol and lying between the towns of Thornbury and Yate. In 1613 Rangeworthy was not a parish in its own right, but rather a detached chapelry of St Mary's, Thornbury, separated from Thornbury town by four miles and parts of two other parishes. The constable John Parker was a master clothier in Thornbury who employed a dozen weavers (David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 62.) Parker may have been inspired by the reforming zeal of the then vicar of Thornbury, one John Sprint. Before coming to Thornbury, Sprint had briefly been imprisoned at Oxford for preaching against the ceremonies of the English Church and in 1607 he published a puritan sabbatarian tract that caused the archdeacon of Gloucestershire to force Sprint to conform or lose his living (Tom Webster, "Sprint, John (d. 1623)," *ODNB* (2004). DOI: 10.1093/ref:odnb/26181).

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