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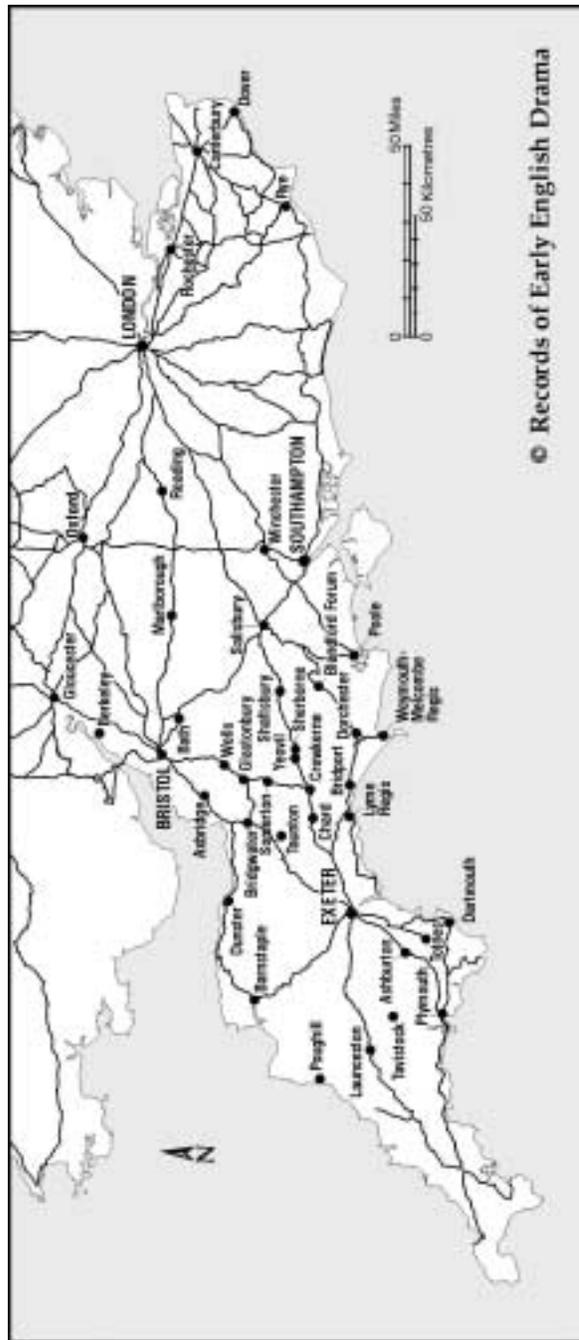
At the End of the Road: An Overview of Southwestern Touring Circuits

This collection of essays on culture and politics in southwestern England marks a significant point for the REED series: the completion of the research survey of dramatic records for the city of Bristol and the counties of Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and Cornwall. *Devon* was published in 1986 and two volumes for *Somerset including Bath* in 1996, with *Bristol* in 1997, and *Dorset/Cornwall* following in 1999.¹ It now is possible to analyze in more detail than ever before what can be described as the southwestern touring circuits, with many new performance locations unrecognized by Bentley, Chambers, or Murray in their early twentieth-century studies of the provincial itineraries of Elizabethan and Jacobean travelling companies (see Map 1).²

How much can we learn from these regional dramatic records? No one will be surprised that the journal kept by a touring actor that researchers dream of has not been found, although a letter survives, written by Edward Alleyn to his wife while he was with Lord Strange's troupe at Bristol in 1593.³ The most common source of information for performance circuits in this area is the financial records kept by towns and parishes – disappointingly few household accounts survive from powerful families, such as the Courtenay earls of Devon, and only scraps remain from Glastonbury and other religious houses that must once have been magnets for travellers, including entertainers. We are fortunate, however, that one of the richest archives of English borough records is extant from this region. The receivers' account rolls from Exeter are more or less continuous from 1339 until 1642, and although they are periodically little more than summary, they do establish from their earliest performance notice in 1361–2 that Exeter attracted a remarkable range of touring entertainers from outside the immediate region.⁴

Exeter stands alone as evidence of the southwestern circuit for almost a century, however. Representative but incomplete receivers' accounts from the north Devon port of Barnstaple begin in 1389 but do not record touring entertainers before 1435. Frustratingly, the years in the fifteenth century are

Map 1: Principal medieval and Renaissance southern tour routes



few and far between when both Barnstaple and Exeter receivers' accounts run parallel and in detail, so we cannot even trace this touring connection before 1525–6 when the king's performers visited both locations as well as Plymouth.⁵ Yet despite the isolated nature of these medieval Devon dramatic records, it is very clear that the county was not regarded as too remote to visit by entertainers coming from London or from other town or private household bases across England. There are 261 visits by at least 109 different troupes to Barnstaple, Exeter, or Plymouth on record before 1500, with the royal entertainers most frequently visiting, a pattern established in 1361 and remaining constant for the region until the last royal players were welcomed at Dartmouth in 1634.⁶

We should not be surprised that the region attracted so many performers. Exeter alone would have been a significant lure for those looking for sizeable audiences and substantial rewards. It was, in effect, the provincial capitol of the southwest, the seat of a wealthy and extensive diocese, administrative centre for the justices of assize, and an important market centre with a port. By the early sixteenth century when it became a county in its own right, Exeter had risen to rank fifth or sixth in the kingdom in wealth and population.⁷ Its position at the hub of several major roads indicates its significance as a regional urban centre. Frank Stenton, in his seminal article on the road system of medieval England, identifies one of these roads as among the five main routes radiating from London on the mid-fourteenth-century Gough map.⁸ This is the road running through Salisbury, Sherborne, and Chard to Exeter and beyond into Cornwall. Other roads marked on the map are known to us from lists of Renaissance highways connecting London with other 'notable towns' in England.⁹ Thus we can trace nationally recognized routes such as the road leading from Exeter to Barnstaple on the north coast and east through Dunster and the Brentmarsh in Somerset to Bristol; another to Bristol via Taunton, Bridgwater, Wells, and Glastonbury; and several going to the south coast through Ashburton to Plymouth, to Totnes, or to Dartmouth. The south coast road from Weymouth through Lyme Regis in Dorset to Dartmouth and Plymouth also had a branch running into Exeter.

Apart from the smaller stannary towns of Ashburton and Tavistock, where notices of touring companies are rare, the other Devon towns on the map were more populous regional centres.¹⁰ Barnstaple and Plymouth especially were important ports with substantial populations; Barnstaple was also the busiest market town in north Devon, with a well-known, five-day fair in September that regularly attracted visitors.¹¹ By the early sixteenth century, Totnes was second only to Exeter in merchant wealth in Devon, but its relevant accounts,

like those from its neighbouring port at Dartmouth, are limited to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and incomplete in their coverage so we know less about the popularity of either as a performance stop.¹² Besides the perceptible attraction of prosperous towns with potentially good audiences, these urban centres in Devon were well located, not just on principal roads, but reasonably close together. When John Norden compiled his guide for English travellers in 1625, he estimated the following distances between Exeter and the other towns on the map: Ashburton, sixteen miles; Plymouth, thirty-seven miles; Totnes, twenty miles; Dartmouth, twenty-four miles; Tavistock, twenty-five miles; and Barnstaple, twenty-five miles, little more than a day's journey from one major centre to another.¹³

In Devon alone, then, important urban centres attracted performers to enrich their cultural life from at least the early fifteenth century, although we cannot chart the direction of these medieval tours because of the haphazard survival of comparable records. Even viewing the possibilities from a distance reveals little for the pre-1500 period. Gloucestershire's medieval records are very sparse – only three years' worth, in fact – and we can trace no exact correspondences between performers travelling to Exeter, Barnstaple, or Plymouth and those on record at Gloucester and Berkeley Castle on or near the road north from Bristol.¹⁴ Salisbury, lying on the principal road from London to the West Country, holds more promise, with extensive medieval records surviving. Yet of 180 performance stops at Salisbury before 1500, only thirteen were made in the same years by the same troupes further along the road in Devon. Five of the ten troupes concerned were royal and four of the five remaining had patrons with regional links in the south but residences elsewhere.¹⁵

Clearly, establishing the routes and incentives underlying these early southwestern touring circuits has its challenges. Somewhat earlier records survive from Bridgwater in Somerset and Launceston in Cornwall, beginning in 1461; Bristol's mayors' audits are almost complete from 1531; while Bath's detailed chamberlains' accounts begin in 1568. Of the Cornish towns only Launceston, on the main road, and Poughill, for an isolated performance in 1550–1, have relevant dramatic records, but these have been discussed elsewhere in this collection by Gloria Betcher (see page 50–1, n7, below). We have a few sample civic and cathedral accounts for Wells and even more tantalizing scraps from Glastonbury Abbey to help us sketch some aspects of the entertainment history of these places, but we should note some interesting lacunae elsewhere. Two of Somerset's more important towns on established roads lack performance

entries: Axbridge, which does have extensive records extant, and Taunton, a well-populated centre of commerce and administration in the valley between the Blackdown and Quantock Hills, which does not.¹⁶

While admitting some limitations in the available evidence, we can attempt to identify routes favoured by touring troupes. Certainly Axbridge lay on a secondary route, which may have been less agreeable for more than one reason. This was the alternative road from Bridgwater to Bristol, faster by five miles than the road through Glastonbury and Wells, but still not for the pessimistic, situated as it was across the undrained flats of the River Parrett: ‘no man can wel trauell it except it be in Sommer, or els when it is a great frost’, according to a contemporary witness.¹⁷ Yeovil, a market and assize town on a branch of the great road west from Salisbury, had a lively performance tradition of its own, but no records of visiting performers.¹⁸ Even its neighbour Sherborne has surprisingly few, despite a run of churchwardens’ accounts surviving with some gaps from the early sixteenth century.¹⁹ In fact, if we can judge by the performance entries that have been found for Sherborne and other towns lying along the road to the west mapped in the fourteenth century, we would have to question whether this route was much used by touring performers. It is true that the important market centres of Dorchester and Shaftesbury have either no or few financial accounts extant, that those of Crewkerne at the crossroads of the road north through Somerton to Wells begin only in the early seventeenth century while the assize town of Chard has only partial seventeenth-century accounts. Nonetheless, what we have suggests that other roads in the southwest may have been more lucrative. The only players’ reward on record, at Sherborne in 1571–2, was for 2s 8d to the Queen’s Players, an amount to be contrasted with the 20s the troupe received the same year at Bristol, or their standard official payment of 13s 4d made at Bridgwater on the northwestern route to Exeter in the same period.²⁰

A close comparison of available information for patronized troupes known to have made their way into Dorset and Somerset in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries reveals that the northwestern towns of Somerset attracted more troupes and paid them substantially more for their performances before the mayor and other dignitaries. Seventy payments to thirty-two visiting troupes in Dorset can be contrasted with 210 visits by at least seventy-eight troupes in Somerset. Payments at the northwestern towns of Bath and Bridgwater were usually double or even triple the amount paid by the smaller southern port towns of Poole, Weymouth, or Lyme Regis in Dorset. For population size, administrative importance, and local economy, both Bath and

Bridgwater would have been recognized as superior to the Dorset towns with comparable records for the period. Bridgwater was the market centre for the Levels region and a small port situated at the lowest crossing of the Parrett, with an important bridge and long-established road linking it with Bristol to the north and Exeter to the south.²¹ Bath had an additional advantage in its proximity to Bristol, the largest urban centre and port in the west, ranked second or third in the kingdom in the later Middle Ages and Renaissance.²²

Bristol even more than Exeter should have been a lure to the southwest for entertainers on tour, and its extant performance records from 1531 on confirm its appeal. We can only assume that if its medieval civic accounts survived, we would have further corroboration of its cultural primacy in the region. Of the 177 payments to eighty-six patronized companies on record between 1531 and 1636, only fifteen occur after 1600. For most of the sixteenth century, it is typical to find various entertainers appearing annually and it is sometimes possible to confirm return visits in the same year by a troupe. No doubt the renowned fair at St James tide in late July was an incentive for entertainers' visits.²³ The weekly accounting style of the mayors' audits for much of this period enables us to pinpoint more precisely than in many locations the dates of payment to performers and further detail specifies that there were several performance venues in the city. Like Exeter, Bristol offered its guildhall most frequently for the mayor's show, but bearwards attracted outdoor audiences to the Marsh along the Avon, and the tumblers and rope-walker featured in the Queen's Men tour of 1590 must have dazzled a crowd at the Free School, probably in its outdoor courtyard if an eyewitness account of the same troupe at Shrewsbury is anything to go by.²⁴ However, the city fathers became increasingly opposed to use of the guildhall for such purposes by the late sixteenth century.²⁵ After Elizabeth's reign the performance locations are not specified, but it is likely that some visiting troupes may have used one of the private playhouses built in the early seventeenth century by enterprising local merchants. These playhouses would have been remarkable features in provincial England – aside from a perhaps ill-fated playhouse development at York and a short-lived venture at Prescott in Lancashire, both in the early seventeenth century, no other such dedicated performance spaces are known outside the London metropolis.²⁶

The size and relative affluence of the potential audience for performances in addition to the one traditionally played before the mayor probably persuaded troupes to stay for longer and return more often to Bristol than to other locations in the region. Intriguingly, for much of the sixteenth century, the

official rewards at Exeter, Plymouth, and even lesser towns, such as Bridgwater, were comparable to those at Bristol, but by the last quarter of the century, Bristol had pulled ahead in what it offered, usually giving twice the amount to companies such as the Queen's Men.

In this context it is worth taking a closer look at the Queen's Men, the royal troupe that toured more widely on an annual basis than any other during the two decades after its reformation in 1583. Because of the troupe's consistent appearances in the southwest during the period with the fullest collection of surviving dramatic records, developing an itinerary for the Queen's Men reveals much about preferred routes and relative levels of reward. The easiest circuits for a Renaissance troupe using London or the court as its base were those leading through the comfortably situated and prosperous towns of East Anglia or the southeast coast. Logically enough, these two have proved to be the most popular and lucrative of the routes travelled by the Queen's Men, but the company took the longer tour to the southwest almost as often and their regional profits were comparable. So, for example, on their first summer tour, new levels of generosity were set by the mayors along the Bath-Bristol road for this royal company of stars. The £2 reward at Bristol matched those at Ipswich, Norwich, Canterbury, and Dover and remained at that level for most of the period of the company's existence (1583–1603). The much smaller town of Bath paid 20s 7 1/2d, a level maintained with some minor fluctuations until 1600.²⁷ The direct route to Bristol via Bath, and often including Gloucester along the road northwest of Bristol, was very popular: seven tours by the Queen's Men went only in this direction, but twelve others ventured further into the region.²⁸ Thanks to more specific dating in the accounts of Bristol, Plymouth, and Lyme Regis especially, it is possible to determine for some of these years the direction and even the route taken by the Queen's Men. In the summer of 1588, the company appears to have taken the south coast route through Dorset via Lyme Regis in early June to Plymouth and Exeter before making its way north to play at Bath and Bristol in mid-July.²⁹ We have no clues as to which route they took north from Exeter: Barnstaple and Bridgwater receivers' accounts are incomplete for this period and those for Wells are lost altogether. However, the dramatic records for Bridgwater indicate that the Queen's Men usually took one of the main roads leading through the town when travelling southwest to Exeter, and in 1593 when surviving accounts intersect, the troupe took the coastal road linking Barnstaple with Bridgwater.³⁰

For those interested in whether the official rewards may reflect not only the relative appeal of the southwestern circuit for the players but also the local

economies of the towns along the way, the 1588 figures can serve as just one example for further analysis: the Queen's Men received 8s at Lyme Regis, 10s at Plymouth, 20s at Exeter, 23s at Bath, and £2 at Bristol, with a further 27s and 26s 8d respectively for return visits to Bath and Bristol in August. The lower reward of 10s at Plymouth is worth a closer look. By the last quarter of the sixteenth century, Plymouth's population had doubled and in the 1580s, with an expanded harbour, it was the most important English naval base for operations against Spain.³¹ Rewards at this prosperous port had been higher in the past – Leicester's Men, an important but still lesser troupe than the Queen's, had received 20s almost two decades earlier in 1570 – but local puritan influence was strong.³² The growing popularity of special preachers and lecturers, for example, can be traced in the late-sixteenth-century town accounts while the gradual decrease in rewards to touring players during the same period may be a corresponding clue of changing attitudes and even active discouragement of public theatrical entertainment.³³

How many times did the Queen's Men take the coastal route through Dorset to the southwest? Certainly they did so more frequently than most professional companies in the period. We can trace them in Dorset during eight of their twenty years of touring and a comparison with information from regional tours elsewhere in these years shows that they were usually heading west. Lyme Regis notes their visit four times (1588, 1589, 1593, and 1595), but they do appear at Weymouth twice (1590–1 and 1596–7), once in the same year that they rented the church house at Sherborne (1597), the first of only two known appearances on the inland road through the county.³⁴ Despite sporadic accounts for Poole during this period, extant records confirm that the Queen's Men appeared twice there also (1591 and 1601–2).³⁵ Dorset's smaller population and primarily rural character coupled with the relatively modest rewards at these towns probably help to explain why fewer companies chose the coastal route to the southwest.

Even at this preliminary stage a few broad patterns emerge. Touring by entertainers to prosperous towns along main roads in the southwest was evidently an established tradition by the later Middle Ages and Renaissance. Although Bristol must have been the most powerful lure to the region, Exeter, Barnstaple, and Plymouth drew many further south although few seem to have ventured beyond into Cornwall. The preferred routes of the Queen's Men seem to have been typical: the road west through Sherborne and the southern route along the Dorset coast seem to have been less frequented, perhaps because of their smaller towns and more modest rewards. In the later sixteenth century

at least we know that companies heading to or from Bristol usually stopped at Bath also, so this northern road into Somerset may have been the one of choice. If we can judge by extant evidence, entertainers heading south into Devon did not use the north coast road from Bristol via Axbridge to Bridgwater. It seems that they preferred the alternative road south across the Mendip Hills through Wells, perhaps aware of its appeal as a cathedral city and (until the early sixteenth century at least) of the welcome likely from its powerful monastic neighbour at Glastonbury. Past Bridgwater we may be less certain of preferred routes, but of fifty-four troupe visits recorded at Barnstaple between 1500 and 1600, seventeen connect with the same annual tours to Bridgwater and/or Bristol. It would seem then that the longer route along the north coast was worth making at least a third of the time and we might be able to increase that percentage if more civic accounts existed for Bridgwater and Barnstaple in the later sixteenth century.

In conclusion, the southwestern circuit, so well-established and popular for medieval and Renaissance performers, became one of the least rewarding early in the seventeenth century. It is possible that a hardening of attitudes to public entertainment on the part of local civic oligarchies contributed to this notable change. Plymouth may have been the earliest to discourage travelling players but it was not alone in its religious leanings. Hoskins identifies a powerful reformist influence in Francis Russell, second earl of Bedford, lord lieutenant for Cornwall, Devon, and Dorset (1558–85), aided by similarly inclined county families.³⁶ Another aspect of regional evangelism identified by Patrick Collinson as characteristic of the second, more aggressive phase of protestant reform was the establishment of a preaching ministry, 'the favoured instrument of conversion and also the principal amenity to which a progressive town could now aspire'.³⁷ Plymouth was not the only town to sponsor preachers. Barnstaple, a centre of non-conformity by the early seventeenth century, appointed its first town preacher by 1584.³⁸ The increasingly puritan spirit of the county of Devon as a whole during this era 'comes out repeatedly in the Quarter Sessions records from the 1590s onwards'.³⁹ MacCaffrey corroborates its arrival at Exeter: 'by the early seventeenth century Exeter was deeply touched with something of the Puritan spirit'.⁴⁰ Players kept coming to Exeter as late as 1635, but dismissal payments become common after 1615 and after 1620 troupes' patrons' names are not recorded, perhaps an indication that even royal sponsorship was not enough to persuade hostile civic authorities to sanction performances. J. H. Bettey similarly identifies Dorset puritanism as 'the strongest religious force in the county', like Devon, especially in the towns,

with Poole leading the way.⁴¹ Not surprisingly Poole appears to have been the first Dorset town to stop paying touring players.

The rich and diverse collection of surviving records for the county of Somerset bears vivid witness to factional struggles and conservative resistance in the rural parishes and cathedral city of Wells in the early seventeenth century. However, reformist sympathies were becoming dominant in the last quarter of the sixteenth century at Bridgwater, and by 1620 puritanism was firmly established at Bath and in northeast Somerset generally.⁴² At Bristol, John Northbrooke had fulminated against stage plays and other pastimes from his pulpit at St Mary Redcliffe during the 1570s, his views representing 'a fundamental rejection of the cultural traditions that dominated English life until the sixteenth century'.⁴³ By the turn of the century, such influences would seem to have gained control in most of the towns on our map that had entertained touring troupes in the past.

A tally of performances at the key locations surveyed here reveals that the number of visits by travelling entertainers declined greatly after 1600 – Bristol, once a mecca for touring companies, recorded only fifteen visits by recognized play troupes, although after 1630 two of these were merely paid to go away. Bath and Bridgwater virtually ceased paying players after the first decade of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ Barnstaple and Exeter paid any continuing visitors to depart for most of this period while Dorset has only thirteen visits on record after 1600; three of the seven after 1608 were hostile lieu payments rather than rewards, and two notices at Dorchester (in 1608 and 1615) only occur because players were in trouble with local authorities.⁴⁵ The first of these ensued over the players' refusal to observe a restriction against playing on the sabbath⁴⁶ but the second, in 1615, is indicative of the increasing disregard that some town authorities held for the players' commissions, even when royal patronage was involved (one of Prince Charles' players was jailed for two days for calling the bailiff a traitor when he refused to look at the commission).⁴⁷

Controversy, discouragement of performance, and disappearance of official rewards from civic records were a sign of the times. It would seem that in most of the important towns of the southwest, suppression of one of the most longstanding entertainment traditions followed hard upon the success of Elizabethan reformation of the church.

Notes

- 1 John Wasson (ed), *Devon*, REED (Toronto, 1986); James Stokes with Robert J. Alexander (eds), *Somerset including Bath*, REED, 2 vols (Toronto, 1996); Mark C. Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, REED (Toronto, 1997); and Rosalind Conklin Hays, C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce, and Evelyn S. Newlyn (eds), *Dorset/ Cornwall*, REED (Toronto, 1999).
- 2 All three scholars did important pioneering work on the provincial itineraries of travelling companies in the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods, but the medieval tours have never received the same attention. See Gerald Eades Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage: Dramatic Companies and Players*, 7 vols, especially vol 1 (Oxford, 1941–68); E. K. Chambers, *Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols, especially vol 2 (Oxford, 1923); and John Tucker Murray, *English Dramatic Companies 1558–1642*, 2 vols (London, 1910). Andrew Gurr has more recently published an update on the history of London-based professional companies in the later period, drawing in part on unpublished transcriptions from the REED series: see *The Shakespearean Playing Companies* (Oxford, 1996).
The map illustrating this essay (see Map 1) has been adapted from the interactive map on the REED Patrons and Performances Web Site <<http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/reed/>>. My thanks to Jane Davie, Cartography Office, University of Toronto, for her skilled help with both versions of the map.
- 3 Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 143–4.
- 4 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 70–1 ff.
- 5 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 37, 127, and 222. The term used at Barnstaple and Plymouth is in English ('mynstrellys', 'mynstrelles') while at Exeter accounts still kept in Latin used the generic term 'mimi'. The royal bearward who visited both Barnstaple and Plymouth is not so specified at Exeter in 1515–16 although it would be remarkable if he had not passed through the city on route south (37 and 219).
- 6 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 69.
- 7 See W. G. Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns in the Early Sixteenth Century', *Provincial England: Essays in Social and Economic History* (London, 1963), 70–1, and Wallace T. MacCaffrey, *Exeter, 1540–1640: The Growth of an English County Town* (Cambridge, MA, 1958), 13. MacCaffrey notes (7 and n1) that Devon was 'among the first two or three counties in England in wealth and population' in the sixteenth century.

- 8 Frank Stenton, 'The Road System of Medieval England', *Economic History Review* 7 (1936), 9.
- 9 In drafting the map I have used the list at the end of Richard Grafton's 'The high wayes from one notable towne in Englande to the Citie of London...' (*Abridgement of the Chronicles of Englande* [London, 1570]), commonly known as Grafton's *Abridgement*, and the Gough map, traditionally dated c1360 (facsimile with introduction by E. J. S. Parsons published by the Bodleian Library and Royal Geographical Society, 1958). Lesser routes can be deduced from period sources, such as those taken by John Leland in the early sixteenth century (see Lucy Toulmin Smith [ed], *The Itinerary of John Leland*, 5 vols, especially vol 1 [Carbondale, IL, 1964]). A fuller explanation of my use of the road map sources was published in 'Tour Routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or Traditional Circuits?', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 6 (1992), 1–14.
- 10 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 29 and 279.
- 11 W. G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Newton Abbott, 1972), 328–9.
- 12 For Totnes' ranking, see Hoskins, *Devon*, 108–9, and H. C. Darby (ed), *A New Historical Geography of England* (Cambridge, 1973), 243, where Totnes is ranked sixteenth among towns outside London.
- 13 John Norden, *An Intended Guyde, For English Travailers* (London, 1625), Devonshire table. Hoskins gives instances of late medieval rates of travel averaging between fifty and sixty miles a day for those on urgent business (*Devon*, 148), and Gilbert Sheldon corroborates with Renaissance examples, including that of a messenger who rode 'in hot haste' from Plymouth to Hartford Bridge in Hampshire along the Salisbury road (approximately 180 miles) in thirty-one hours, for an average of six miles an hour (*From Trackway to Turnpike* [London, 1928], 74). However, such speed was surely not typical or even necessary for playing troupes.
- 14 Audrey Douglas and Peter Greenfield (eds), *Cumberland/Westmorland/Gloucestershire*, REED (Toronto, 1986), 291 and 347–8.
- 15 These tour records will be published in Audrey Douglas' edition of Salisbury in the REED series. Dr Douglas has analyzed the evidence for fifteenth-century tours to Salisbury in her as yet unpublished paper 'Minstrels and Roses: Politics and Patronage in Fifteenth-Century Salisbury', for the Second International Medieval Congress at Leeds University (July 1995). We came independently to the same conclusion – that the well-established route through Salisbury to the southwest was not routinely used by entertainers whose patrons were based

- in that region. I am grateful to have had access to a preliminary list of Salisbury patrons submitted to the REED office by the editor.
- 16 Axbridge's numerous extant documents include court rolls, manorial records, religious guild and churchwardens' accounts, although a primary source of information, the corporation accounts, do not survive before 1642. Taunton, on the other hand, was essentially controlled by the bishop of Winchester, an occasional resident of the castle. Castle accounts survive from our period, but the range of civic and parish administrative records available for comparable southwestern centres does not exist. I am indebted to James Stokes, editor of the Somerset dramatic records, for this report on his research survey of both locations.
 - 17 Grafton's *Abridgement*.
 - 18 Although original Yeovil churchwardens' accounts survive, they are incomplete for the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and some are too fragmentary for examination. However, there are, in addition, antiquarian transcriptions of some further sixteenth-century accounts made by John Gough Nichols (for specific details of survival, see Stokes with Alexander [eds], *Somerset*, 2.577–9).
 - 19 Sherborne has churchwardens' accounts surviving for 112 years between the first decade of the sixteenth century and 1642. For further details see Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/ Cornwall*, 76–81.
 - 20 See Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/ Cornwall*, 266; Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 81; and Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.49.
 - 21 See further R. W. Dunning (ed), *A History of the County of Somerset*, vol 6, VCH (London, 1992) and Michael Havinden, *The Somerset Landscape* (London, 1981), 113. The road running from Bristol through Bridgwater to Taunton, like the road from Glastonbury to Taunton, existed long before the reclamation of the Somerset wetlands (Havinden, *Somerset Landscape*, 166).
 - 22 See Hoskins, 'English Provincial Towns', 70, and Darby (ed), *Historical Geography*, 243. Jonathon Barry ('Provincial Town Culture, 1640–1780: Urbane or Civic?' *Interpretation and Cultural History*, Joan H. Pittock and Andrew Wear [eds] [London, 1991], 200) estimates Bristol's population as approximately 12000 in 1600 (somewhat below its medieval peak). Robert Tittler notes, for example, that Poole, one of the more prosperous Dorset towns in the Renaissance, was 'one ninth the size of Bristol' ('The Vitality of an Elizabethan Port: The Economy of Poole, c1550–1600', *Southern History* 7 [1985], 103).
 - 23 See, for example, the payments made to the Queen's Men in late July (Pilkinton [ed], *Bristol*, 124, 128, 131, 133, and 150).

- 24 See Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 135–6, and the entry from ‘Dr Taylor’s History’ in J. Alan B. Somerset (ed), *Shropshire*, 2 vols, REED (Toronto, 1994), 1.247. For the Free School courtyard, see Roger Price, *Excavations at St Bartholomew’s Hospital Bristol* (Bristol, 1979), 16–21.
- 25 See Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 128–9 and 148, for 1586 and 1596 prohibitions against performances in the guildhall.
- 26 See, further, Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, xxxvii, 195–9, and 242, for the Barker and Wine Street playhouses, and also Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), *York*, 2 vols, REED (Toronto, 1979), 1.530–1, and David George (ed), *Lancashire*, REED (Toronto, 1991), xlv–xlv and 77–83.
- 27 Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 124; *Collections* 2.3, Malone Society (Oxford, 1931), 272–3; David Galloway (ed), *Norwich 1540–1642*, REED (Toronto, 1984), 65; James Gibson (ed), *Kent: Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 vols, REED (Toronto, 2002), 1.215 and 2.474.
- 28 For further details of the itineraries taken by the Queen’s Men during these years, see Appendix 1 in my book with Scott McMillin, *The Queen’s Men and Their Plays 1583–1603* (Cambridge, 1998).
- 29 See Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 216; Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 164 and 252; Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.14; and Pilkinton (ed), *Bristol*, 133.
- 30 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 46 and 173, and Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.54.
- 31 Hoskins (*Devon*, 113) calculates Plymouth’s population as rising from about 3800 to 7800 in this period. For the town’s Elizabethan expansion, see also Crispin Gill, *Plymouth: A New History*, 2 vols (Newton Abbott, 1966), 1.196–200.
- 32 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, xx and 240.
- 33 Gill, *Plymouth*, 2.5. See also Mark Stoyle, *Loyalty and Locality: Popular Allegiance in Devon during the English Civil War* (Exeter, 1994), 196–7, for the development of puritanism in Plymouth
- 34 The second appearance was the next year, in 1598. Distances between these Dorset towns was not great. Norden’s table for Dorset gives the following mileages along the southern route west from Poole: Blandford ten miles; Dorchester seventeen miles; Weymouth twenty miles; Bridport twenty-eight miles; and Lyme Regis thirty-four miles. He calculated Sherborne as eighteen miles from Weymouth. See also Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 216–17, 277, and 272;
- 35 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 246.
- 36 Hoskins, *Devon*, 237.

- 37 *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1988), 41.
- 38 See, for example, Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989), 250–3. Whiting (253), focusing on the transitional decades of Elizabethan reform, identifies Exeter, Plymouth, and Totnes among the towns in which the new religion was most vigorously preached. Mark Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, 192–5, provides details of the unique strength and influence of non-conformity in Barnstaple, but see also J. R. Chanter and Thomas Wainwright for illustrative extracts from the receivers' accounts in their *Reprint of the Barnstaple Records*, 2 vols (Barnstaple, 1900), 2.100–1.
- 39 Hoskins, *Devon*, 237 and 252, and the more recent study by Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, especially 21–3 and 182–203. Robert Whiting (*Blind Devotion*, 222–4) adds further evidence of the Devonian elite giving early support to protestant reforms.
- 40 MacCaffrey, *Exeter 1540–1640*, 199, and Stoye, *Loyalty and Locality*, 186–8. The religious conservatism centred at the cathedral cannot be discounted but puritan factions in Exeter thrived in some parishes 'beneath the very nose of the Bishop' (187).
- 41 *Dorset* (Newton Abbott, 1974), 100–2.
- 42 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 2.461 and 463–4, and John Wroughton, *A Community at War: The Civil War in Bath and North Somerset 1642–1650* (Bath, 1992), 56–65.
- 43 David Harris Sacks, 'The Demise of the Martyrs: The Feasts of St Clement and St Katherine in Bristol, 1400–1600', *Social History* 11 (1986), 141.
- 44 Queen Anne's troupe was the last known to have visited Bridgwater, in 1611–12; the same troupe was given a final charge for use of the town hall at Bath in 1616–17. See Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.59 and 26.
- 45 See Hays, et al., *Dorset/Cornwall*, 137, 153, 167, 168, 198, 223, 246, 278, and 279.
- 46 Their performance in a local inn was described in a celebrated court case as 'to the heigh Contempt of Almighty God and his Maiestyes proclamacion' (Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 177).
- 47 The 1608 court case of Chubb v. Conditt (National Archives, Public Record Office [NA, PRO]: STAC 8/94/17) has most recently been examined for this special collection of *Early Theatre* articles by C. E. McGee in 'Puritans and Performers in Early Modern Dorset', *Early Theatre* 6.1 (June 2003), 57–60. It has also been described in detail by David Underdown in his study of puritan

Dorchester, *Fire from Heaven* (London, 1992). See Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 173–98, for sections of the case relating to the defiant performance by Lord Berkeley's men, and also 198, for the 1615 controversy, which appears in the Casebook of Sir Francis Ashley, BL: Harley 6715, f 6v.