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Minstrels, Morris Dancers, and Players: Tracing the Routes of Travelling Performers in Early Modern Cornwall

Travel between and among the parishes, towns, and villages of early modern Cornwall played a major role in the county's lively social 'entercourse', a characteristic of Cornish life identified by historian Richard Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall*.¹ While many Cornish men and women travelled around the county to buy or sell goods at regularly held markets and fairs or to visit family and friends, others, especially groups of minstrels, morris dancers, and players, did so to provide entertainment for local festivals and celebrations in exchange for monetary reward. Many of these groups appear to have been locally sponsored by their home parish, town, or village rather than by named patrons. When records identify such groups of performers by place-name, we can determine the troupes' points of origin and begin to assess the routes they may have taken to their destinations.² For the purposes of this study, we are fortunate that fifteen record entries in extant documents spanning the years from 1506 to 1596 record twenty-three instances of travel by locally sponsored performers from specifically named locations in Cornwall and Devon.³ These references provide ample evidence for us to begin tracing the routes taken by local performers from site to site. In order to trace the performers' routes, this essay situates the documentary evidence within the general context of travel in early modern Cornwall, reconstructed from early modern maps, personal diaries, travel itineraries, and studies of Cornish geography, roads, and bridges.

Several conclusions emerge from such a study. First, performance venues in sixteenth-century Cornwall fell, roughly, into three playing regions, and performers typically entertained in their own regions of the county (see Table 1). A second conclusion also emerges from the evidence: while economic incentives may have influenced a group's decision to perform, they did not necessarily drive a group to perform farther from home in search of greater reward. Performers most often travelled to well-to-do boroughs within easy travel range of their home parish or town, which more often than not was less prosperous than the performers' destination. This

conclusion may be primarily a function of the distribution of surviving records since more records relating to performance have survived from larger towns and parishes; perhaps if other documents were to come to light, the list of destinations would include more, smaller, poorer towns and parishes. Third, and finally, some groups utilized Cornwall's highways to range far from their homes, while others followed the county's many minor roads and tracks to travel shorter distances to nearby parishes.

This evidence that performers followed well-travelled roads through Cornwall confirms Carew's assertion that the intercourse of the county community was 'obtain'd by high wayes'.⁴ Such dependence on major routes also fits the pattern characteristic of provincial touring circuits identified in other parts of England by scholars such as Sally-Beth MacLean and Peter Greenfield.⁵ Their analyses suggest, however, that minor routes were not the norm for touring circuits, which tended to avoid less-travelled and, perhaps, less-prosperous areas. In Cornwall, the less-traversed routes may have provided the best means of north-south travel within the county. Most major roads ran east to west, the longest stretching atop the watershed that forms the spine of the county. Minor tracks, though perhaps no less travelled by local inhabitants, left little impression on early modern maps and now are best identified by the bridges along their course.⁶ Strictly speaking, I see little evidence to indicate that regularly scheduled performances along 'touring circuits' as described by MacLean and Greenfield occurred in early modern Cornwall with any regularity.⁷

The three playing regions (see Map 1) – western, central, and eastern Cornwall – as I have defined them, take their boundaries from the topography of the county (see Table 1 for locations within each zone). The western playing region occupied an area roughly from Land's End, at the western tip of the Cornish peninsula, to a line running northeast-southeast east of Camborne, along the eastern edge of one of Cornwall's major granite outcrops. Much of this area is occupied by the hundred of Penwith, which sixteenth-century cartographer John Norden describes as 'verie mountainous and rockye'.⁸ Even such rough going, however, did not deter the morris dancers from Gunwalloe and from St Levan near Land's End from travelling, respectively, approximately twelve miles and twenty miles to Camborne in 1595–6.⁹ Indeed, performers from the western region of the county sometimes travelled even farther east, beyond Camborne into central Cornwall. The central playing region occupied an area from Camborne east to a line running north-south from Padstow to Bodmin to Fowey, a zone between two granite highlands,

bounded on the west by the outcrop near Camborne and to the east by Bodmin Moor.

Performers from central Cornwall performed primarily around Bodmin and St Breock. Perhaps the ease of travel on one of Cornwall's main east-west roads (see Map 2) made St Breock a convenient destination whereas Bodmin's size relative to surrounding communities accounted for its popularity. It would be easy to assume that the number of visits to these locations is indicative of the lack of incentive for central Cornwall's performers to travel west of Camborne where the economy was generally poorer, according to the early modern accounts of Richard Carew and John Norden;¹⁰ however, evidence contradicts this assumption. Notwithstanding the economic problems of the western region as a whole, the borough of St Ives rewarded players at a rate higher than or consistent with the rates of reward among eastern destinations.¹¹ The players from Germoe, a parish in Penwith near the south coast, raised 2s for their church in 1586–7 when they performed in St Ives, some eight miles to the north. An even greater reward was given to a parish group from the central region: in 1587–8 the Robin Hood from St Columb Minor, travelled twenty-seven miles to entertain in St Ives, where they received 5s, according to the guildhall record book.¹² Close to the line between the central and eastern regions, St Breock, in north-central Cornwall, from 1565–6 to 1567–8, made yearly payments for performances by various groups. Besides being visited by the dancers from Ludgvan, who journeyed forty-one miles to perform in 1565–6, St Breock welcomed interlude players from St Dennis, eight-and-a-half miles away, and dancers from Grampound, about eighteen miles southwest. In later years, dancers from St Eval and Phillack entertained in St Breock (1574–5), and players from Mawgan provided pleasant diversion for the parish with their Robin Hood (1591–2).¹³

Performers in the eastern region – between the Padstow/Bodmin/Fowey line and the River Tamar – seem to have been governed in their journeys by the location of their points of origin in relation to Bodmin Moor. While groups from the western, southern, and northern areas of the county, who could travel easily around the moor, performed in Bodmin, those performers whose journeys originated east of the moor or from points in Devon appear to have been less likely to venture to Bodmin than to any areas on their own side of the moor, even if the route taken meant crossing the Tamar.

Like St Breock, however, Bodmin attracted multiple groups of performers from nearby and farther away over the period for which records survive. In 1505–6, dancers from Saint Erme, Boscastle, and Minster visited Bodmin and received 3s 4d, according to general receivers' accounts for the year.¹⁴ Another entry in early sixteenth-century town receivers' account (c1514–39) records payment to players from Tywardreath (16d) and dancers from Lanivet (12d), St Mabyn (12d), and Lanhydrock (12d). Even Exeter (approximately sixty-five miles distant) contributed a minstrel or minstrels to Bodmin's entertainment offerings.¹⁵

Central Cornwall's largest granite area, Bodmin Moor, made travel from the eastern part of the county west more difficult than travel into Devon from Cornwall. Interchange across the Tamar appears to have been fairly common and should have been comparatively easy as several main roadways linked Cornwall to Devon in the early modern period, as we shall see. Launceston, as one centre for performance, in 1521 attracted diverse players from Plymouth, Devon (some sixteen miles distant), and in 1573–4 a singer from South Tawton, Devon (about twenty miles away), and players from Milton (probably Milton Abbot, Devon, seven miles east of Launceston).¹⁶ Heading east into north Devon, players from Liskeard, Cornwall, travelled fifty-seven miles to perform in Barnstaple in 1538–9.¹⁷ While these performers sought reward far from home, others performed for their neighbours. The players from Millbrook, Cornwall, made a three-mile jaunt to Antony (on the Cornish side of the Tamar's mouth) in 1548–9.¹⁸

Like the players from Millbrook, many itinerant performers stayed close to their homes, travelling ten miles or fewer to perform, but on occasion performers travelled long distances outside their accustomed orbits. To some extent, the distances travelled correspond to the ease with which performers could reach a main road that was likely to be in good repair. Joan Parkes, commenting on the roads of Cornwall and Devon in the seventeenth century, observed that 'the extreme narrowness of the ways, frequently hollowed below the level of their surroundings, and the sticky nature of the soil, made it especially difficult to maintain the road surface', which might traverse steep gradients and, consequently, be particularly susceptible to the 'effect of rushing water'.¹⁹ The assertion that mud and steep hills made Cornish roads difficult to traverse finds support from Carew, who also tells us that the conditions of roads varied from the eastern part of the county to the western:

for highwayes, the *Romanes* did not extend theirs so farre: but those layd out of later times, are in the Easterne part of *Cornwall*, uneasy, by reason either of their mire or stones, besides many vp-hills and downe-hills. The Westerne are better trauitable, as lesse subject to these discommodities: generally, the statute 18 *Eliz.* for their amendment, is reasonably wel executed.²⁰

Clearly the state of the roads could deter casual travel, especially in the rainy seasons and in the years before the Elizabethan road repair statute was enacted; it was not yet in effect when many of our visits were recorded. The ‘uneasy’ condition of Cornish roads makes the distances travelled by some minstrels, morris dancers, and players even more striking. Performers from Exeter and Liskeard in the east, St Columb Minor in central Cornwall, and Ludgvan and Phillack in the west traversed considerable distances to perform. The rest of the travelling performers visited sites twenty-five miles or fewer from their homes. To put this in perspective, we might consider that William Worcestre rode an average of approximately twenty-two miles per day through Cornwall in 1478 (some days travelling as much as twenty-five miles), but on occasion – riding from Penryn to Bodmin (thirty-six miles) and from Fowey to Tavistock (thirty-three miles) – he was able to cover greater distances in a day following main roads.²¹ These statistics suggest that while journeys of more than twenty-five miles could be completed in one day, reliance on major thoroughfares was what enabled their timely completion.²² We might surmise that those troupes travelling greater distances may more often have been able to utilize main roads, and were less burdened by the equipment of performance and, possibly, that they had greater incentive to make the longer trip, perhaps expecting greater reward in return for the journey than they would have received had they stayed closer to home. Other than St Columb Minor’s Robin Hood, most of the long-distance travellers were dancers, singers, or minstrels, who probably had little equipment to transport. Reconstructing the routes the players most likely took to reach their destinations will help us to interpret these travel patterns more effectively.

In reconstructing the routes of travelling performers, I have relied upon a variety of written and cartographic resources to create a series of route maps, beginning with a baseline map showing major seventeenth-century roads. While the Gough Map offers the earliest picture of the main roads in medieval Cornwall, it is not the most useful map upon which to build. Working backward from an early modern source, Robert Morden’s maps of Devon and Cornwall, is easier, as the quality of cartography improved

drastically between the creation of the Gough Map in the mid-fourteenth century and the publication Morden's maps in Camden's *Britannia* of 1695.²³

On Morden's maps the three main routes from Exeter across the Tamar into Cornwall stand out clearly (see Map 2). The most southerly route from Exeter into Cornwall crossed the Tamar at Plymouth, continuing to Mount Edgecumb and Millbrook on the western bank at the river's mouth. From the vicinity of Millbrook, the coast road continued westward through Croshole, East and West Looe, Pendennick, Fowey, Comb, Tywardreath, St Blaise, and St Austell. Just southwest of St Austell, the way split. The northern track continued on through Grampound and Probus to Truro. The southern route passed through Tregony, Ruan Laniorne, and Philleigh, where it reached the Fal estuary. Crossing the Fal below Feock, the track continued westward near Enis and Carnsew, north of Porkellys and Crowan, through Garlin to the bridge at St Erth. Thence it carried on past Truernwith and Marazion, around Mount's Bay to Penzance, and westward again to St Buryan and a terminus at Sennen on Land's End.

The middle road from Exeter westward ran from Tavistock to Calstock across New Bridge and on to Liskeard, Lostwithiel, St Blaise, and St Austell. There it joined the coast road.

The northern passage through Cornwall from the Exeter road was the way from Okehampton to Lifton, across Higher New Bridge to Launceston/St Stephen's, and northwest to Egloskerry, Tresmere, Davidstowe, Camelford, St Teath, and Tresunger. It crossed the Camel estuary near Padstow, continuing southwest just north of Petherwick and Trevour to St Columb Major, Cuswath, Mitchell, Treworgan, and Truro.

Though we cannot assume that the roads across Cornwall in Morden's day are those that performers trod in the sixteenth century, we can supplement Morden's maps to suit our needs by consulting the maps of pre-seventeenth-century Cornish roads, limited though they are, and the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century itineraries of William Worcestre, John Leland, and William Carnsew.²⁴ These resources, together with the twentieth-century study *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams*, by Charles Henderson and Henry Coates,²⁵ should provide a reasonable outline of some of the routes likely used by players travelling in early modern Cornwall.

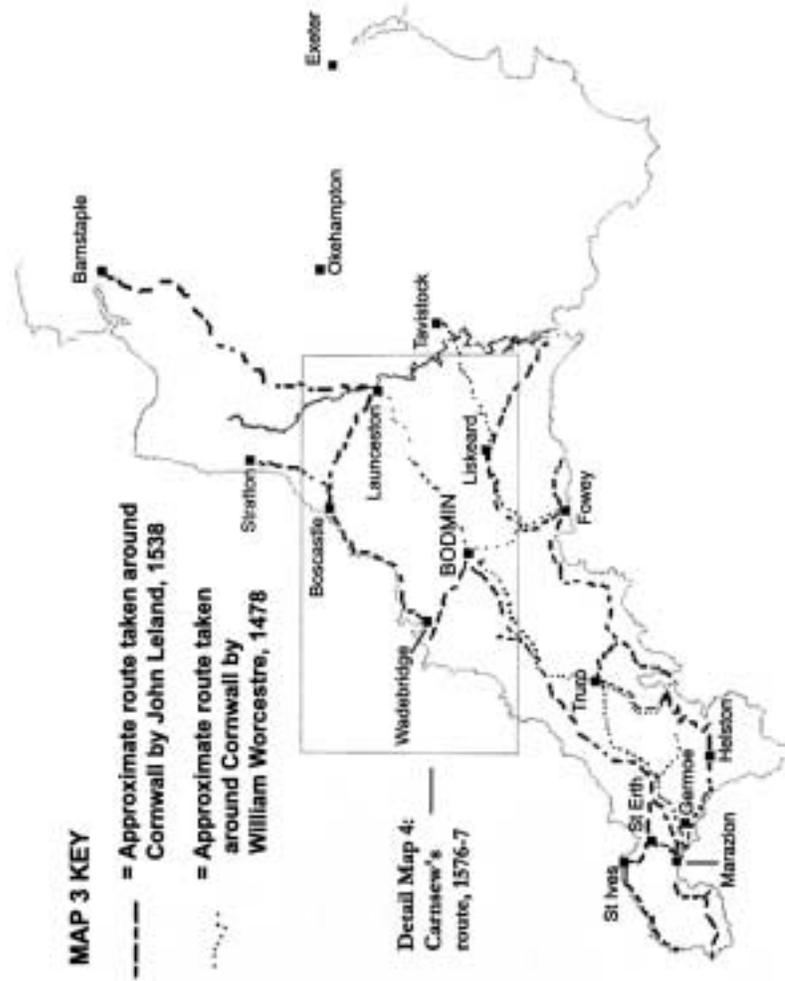
The earliest map of any use for our purposes, the Gough Map of c1360, offers evidence of at least one main route through Cornwall (see Map 2). Sir Frank Stenton, in his analysis of the roads of the Gough Map, concluded

that the 'exact termination [of the road] is uncertain, and Okehampton seems to be the only point in the section west of Exeter which can definitely be identified'.²⁶ Though E. J. S. Parsons later suggested that the route depicted runs from Okehampton to Launceston, thence to Camelford, Bodmin, St Columb Major, and St Ives, the route indicated on the Gough Map road actually might be a version of the old Roman road from Exeter through Cornwall (see Map 2), which seems to have run 'down the spine of Cornwall'²⁷ rather than skirting the northern side of Bodmin Moor as Parsons suggests the Gough road did. Archaeological studies now indicate that the Roman route cut directly across Bodmin Moor. Unlike modern engineers the Romans showed little concern for avoiding precipitous hills and valleys so the old road covers a number of difficult stretches bypassed by the current A30.²⁸ From Exeter the Roman road continued on to Crediton, North Tawton, Okehampton, and Launceston, then crossed the moor directly to Bodmin borough. From there it traced a virtually straight line to Mitchell and Redruth, eventually dipping south and terminating at Marazion. Thomas Clerk of Ware, travelling from Okehampton to Marazion in 1476, seems to have followed this Roman route according to his itinerary recounted by William Worcestre.²⁹

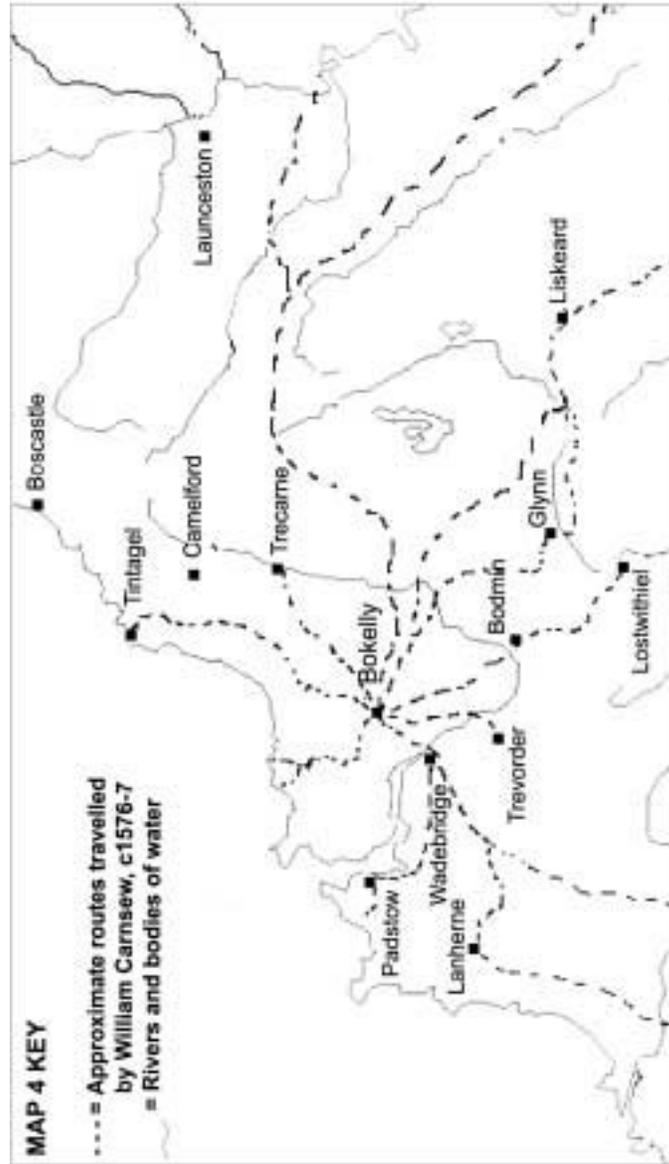
Worcestre himself probably traversed the eastern portion of the Roman road through Cornwall in 1478 when he set off on a pilgrimage to St Michael's Mount near Marazion (see Map 3). In his itinerary entry for the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Monday, 14 September 1478, he recorded: 'I rode from Launceston Priory in the afternoon across the moor where my horse fell down; I reached Bodmin and talked with Brother Mohun'.³⁰ In Worcestre's day the direct route across the moor would have been the Roman road. After passing Bodmin, however, the pilgrim's path seems to have diverged from the Roman road near Mitchell, turning south to Truro, much as one of the roads on Morden's map does (see Map 2). From Truro Worcestre's route continued westward to Marazion.

Worcestre's return trip by a different route allows us to fill in a few more details of the early modern Cornish road system that illuminate travelling performers' possible route options. After stops at Penryn and Bodmin, Worcestre went south, presumably past Lanhydrock, to Lostwithiel, Boconoc, and Fowey. Following an overnight stay in Fowey, he continued through Liskeard to Calstock and on to Tavistock Abbey, along a course that may well be the central route Morden represents.

Map 3: Approximate routes taken by John Leland and William Worcestre, with detail box delineating area of Map 4: Routes taken by William Carnsew



Map 4: Routes taken by William Carnsew in the vicinity of Bodmin, 1576-7



Additional evidence of the route around the Fowey estuary comes from the 1538 itinerary of John Leland. Leland visited virtually the same towns in the area as Worcestre did, which suggests the existence of an early track connecting those places. Leland's itinerary also offers valuable evidence for charting the roads along Cornwall's north and south coasts (see Map 3). Coming from north Devon, Leland crossed the Tamar at Higher New Bridge, above Launceston. He then crossed the River Ottery and entered the town from the north. Leaving Launceston, Leland seems to have followed almost the same path indicated on Morden's map but continued on to Boscastle and the coast. After a short detour northeast to Stratton and a return to Boscastle, he continued following the coast to Bossiney and Tintagel and, perhaps, connected with a main road for a bit at Helston-In-Trigg.

Though it is unclear what place Leland meant when he described his next stop at 'St Esse', it is possible that he intended St Teath, for he seems to have travelled southwestward through Trelille to Master Carnsey's house – probably William Carnsey's house at Bokelly – and on, crossing the River Camel (*alias* the River Alan) at Wadebridge. Leland's path then led up the Camel estuary to Padstow, returned to Wadebridge, and continued south across Dunmeer Bridge to Bodmin. From Bodmin Leland took the Roman road west as far as Mitchell.

The exact path of Leland's continuing course remains unclear, but he seems to have followed a route very close to that described on Morden's map (see Map 2). In fact, Leland's progress around West Penwith in the sixteenth century diverges little from the seventeenth-century route, though he did go as far south as St Levan, a point the later road did not reach. Toward the north coast his course followed the seventeenth-century road, crossed the bridge at St Erth, then turned north through Lelant and St Ives, possibly continuing around the peninsula to St Just. Leland's apt descriptions of terrain and distances along the north coast from Lelant to Padstow via St Agnes, Perranzabuloe, and Crantock might suggest that he also travelled a northern coastal track during his rambles. Completing his trip through Cornwall by a trek along the south coast, Leland left the county on the road from Liskeard to Saltash, across the Tamar to Plymouth.

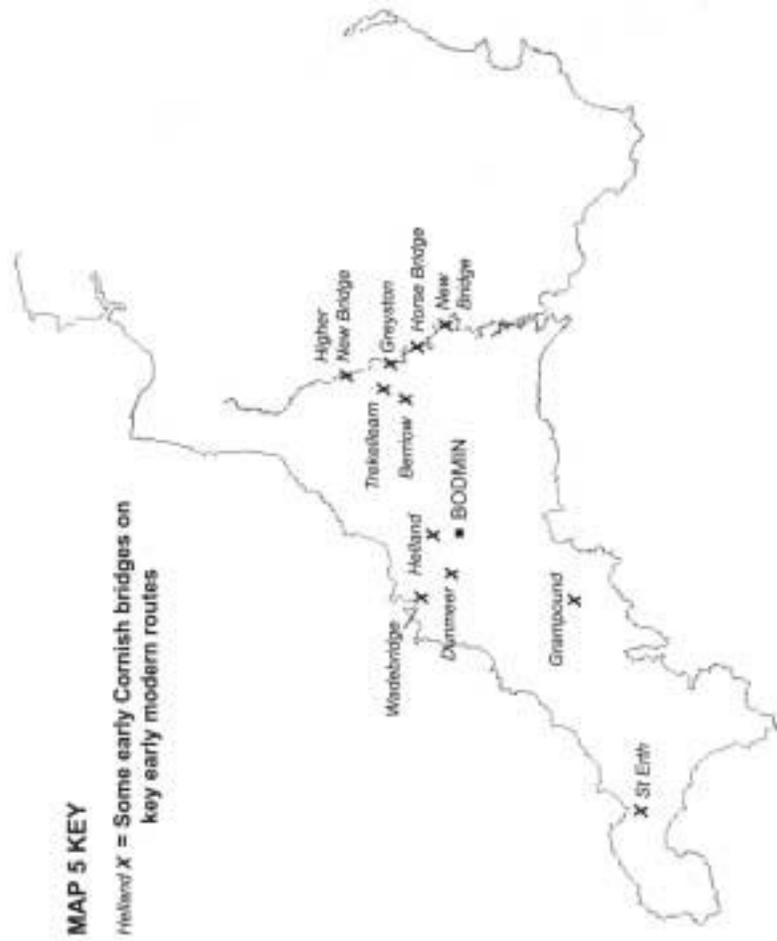
The routes of Morden, Worcestre, and Leland provide an adequate depiction of the main roads through the county that travelling performers might have taken, but many of these groups would also have used local tracks in their journeys. William Carnsey of Bokelly's diary of his daily life and travels in 1576–7 will enable us to fill in a number of these local paths,

especially in the area of Bodmin. Carnsew had extensive connections with family and friends among the gentry of early modern Cornwall and Devon and travelled often to visit his relations and other associates on business, for familial obligations, or for pleasure.³¹

His most frequent jaunts were short ones to places within five or six miles of Bokelly, but occasionally he travelled farther, moving from one location to another over several days. While Carnsew's diary entries are brief, they, like the document entries relating to itinerant players, provide enough place names to trace Carnsew's route with some certainty. The routes shown on Map 4 – short trips between Bokelly and Bodmin, Tintagel, Trecarne, Padstow, St Merryn, Wadebridge, Lanherne, and Glynn, and longer ones from Bokelly to Lostwithiel, and to points along the Tamar – are approximately those suggested by N. J. G. Pounds, the editor of Carnsew's diary. Unfortunately, Carnsew did not chronicle which bridges he crossed or roads he took to the many places named in his journal; he did, however, recount where he 'laye' and 'dynyd' from day to day. It is these details that Pounds analyzed to chart Carnsew's travels. Given that Carnsew was 'in the saddle much of the time', travelling at least 1200 miles in fourteen months,³² we might assume that he chose roads that would make his journeys as quick and pleasant as possible. Carnsew's home, Bokelly 'lay close to the road from Wadebridge to Camelford and on to Launceston',³³ which made it possible for him to rely upon major roads for longer journeys, but a majority of his trips seem to have been via smaller tracks, the routes of many of which might not be as recoverable to researchers today were it not for the bridges that mark their course.

The twentieth-century study of early Cornish bridges by Henderson and Coates allows us to have greater confidence in the details of Carnsew's route, as well as in the specific routes of Leland and Worcester, and about some roads that travelling performers may have used which these men did not. The building and maintenance of bridges was a tremendous undertaking for parishes and towns, thus bridges were built on frequently travelled routes long before they were built elsewhere. The antiquity of the bridges on Map 5 suggests these routes were early, established roads. The bridges on the map are those that seem likely to have been used by travelling performers in the sixteenth century if we judge by the groups' origins and destinations. When we consider all the evidence provided by these various maps and itineraries, it becomes clear why players would have found no difficulty in journeying to destinations outside their regions on occasion.

Map 5: Some Cornish bridges on possible travel routes in the early modern period



In all cases of longer travel, and many cases of shorter travel, both origin and destination are within a mile or two of the main thoroughfares of Cornwall.

Many performers travelling from and to the far west could have followed the old Roman road most of the way to their destinations. The dancers from Ludgvan probably crossed the bridge at St Erth whereas the dancers from Phillack could have joined the road only a mile or so from their home to travel to St Breock. Coming from the east, the Robin Hood players of St Columb Minor might have followed the path of William Carnsew, joining the main road east of Mitchell and following his route to Lelant and on to St Ives. The morris dancers of St Levan could have followed Leland's route to Marazion, there joining the main road to Camborne. Only the morris dancers from Gunwalloe and the players from St Germoe would have had little use for the main roads in their journeys. The morris dancers more likely took smaller roads northeast along the watershed past Helston and turned north to Camborne. According to Henderson and Coates, many of the oldest tracks through the county kept to these high regions because the going was easier.³⁴ Coming from Germoe, the players heading for St Ives could have followed some of Leland's route, bearing north from near Germoe, through Trewinnard, past St Erth, and then on to St Ives.

The routes of some performers travelling to and in eastern Cornwall and western Devon no doubt followed the main roads and paths utilized by Carnsew and his predecessors; in other cases, however, the routes probably followed roads unused by our historical witnesses. The players from Millbrook may have been able to travel the short three miles to Antony via one of the main arteries that entered Cornwall across the Tamar. Mount Edgescumb and Millbrook were on one branch of the seventeenth-century road past Antony. The singer from South Tawton travelling to Launceston and the Exeter minstrels on their way to Bodmin could have journeyed easily on the main Exeter-Okehampton-Bodmin road.

Coming from Plymouth, players might have chosen to head north to Launceston, staying primarily on the Devon side of the Tamar, a course that Carnsew rode from Berry Pomeroy to Polston. After reaching Tavistock and riding on through Milton Abbot, the players would have crossed Greyston Bridge to Launceston, tracing a final journey stage similar to that which the players from Milton Abbot would have followed when they crossed the bridge to perform. The players from Liskeard, on the other hand, could have held to the Cornish side of the Tamar for much of their

journey. Though Leland, Worcestre, and Carnsew did not ride the road from Liskeard to Launceston, two sixteenth-century bridges mark the road's course (see Map 5). In 1538–9 the players from Liskeard journeying to Barnstaple may have crossed Trekkellearn Bridge on the River Inney (possibly the object of a 1504 indulgence) and Berriow Bridge on the Lynher (first mentioned by Norden in 1584); the exact dates of the bridges' construction are unrecorded.³⁵ But the course they mark must pre-date the construction of the bridges and may well have been the track the players followed on the way to Barnstaple. From Launceston, they probably turned north to Holsworthy, then continued on to Great Torrington and Barnstaple.

Of all the areas within which performers travelled, central Cornwall provides the most options for possible routes. Honeycombed with roads and tracks covering short distances, the area presents many alternatives for getting from one place to another. The following suggestions are necessarily highly speculative but reasonable, I think, based on the evidence examined so far. William Carnsew's route from Bokelly to Lanherne suggests that there was no easier route to follow from the Wadebridge/St Breock area than the main road through St Columb Major. From this we might infer that the Robin Hood players of Mawgan and the dancers of St Eval probably travelled the few miles to the St Columb road and then turned northeast to St Breock. Likewise Carnsew's route from Bokelly to Bodmin across Dunmeer Bridge, which appears to have been Leland's route as well, may have been the shortest or best route for the dancers of St Mabyn to reach Bodmin. Leland's route from near Bokelly to Tintagel looks like one possible path for the dancers of Boscastle and Minster to take, assuming they continued on past Bokelly to Bodmin where they performed. That Carnsew took a similar path suggests this may have been the easiest route to the northeast coastal towns from the vicinity of Bokelly. Unfortunately, we cannot be sure there wasn't a better route through Camelford to Bodmin, perhaps an early main road as was suggested by Parsons or even a water route down the River Camel.³⁶

The courses for the dancers of Lanivet and Lanhydrock are clear since both locations are within two miles of Bodmin, the former on the Roman road, the latter near the road to Lostwithiel taken by Worcestre. The dancers of St Erme, while farther west, may easily have travelled north to Mitchell and taken the main road east to Bodmin, as could the interlude players from St Dennis, though they would have turned north near Lanivet to St Breock. They might instead have travelled to St Columb and contin-

ued northeast from there. Coming from the south coast, the players of Tywardreath, a town on a track leading north to an intersection with the main road from St Austell to Lostwithiel, could have taken the track to the main road and followed it to Bodmin.

Thus while some of the performers in early modern Cornwall were travelling considerable distances to entertain, their journeys were made easier by accessible routes through the county. This evidence seems in keeping with Sally-Beth MacLean's findings regarding the routes used by Renaissance players throughout England, that players 'preferred the "high ways" to ancient trackways or less-charted footpaths'.³⁷ Complementing this assessment, however, is the additional evidence that well-established tracks and an early bridge network throughout the county facilitated local travel in areas further from the main routes. Since all of the major performance destinations offered rewards at similar levels and since some groups even travelled to smaller destinations, such as Antony, where rewards were lower than in the larger towns, it seems that travel within and between regions was determined more by the topography of the county and the quality of the roads than by any desire on the part of performers to seek the greatest remuneration for their skills. Ease of travel took precedence over seeking greater reward.

Notes

- 1 Richard Carew, *The Survey of Cornwall*, new edition (1602; Penzance, 1769), 53 r–v. I would like to thank Evelyn S. Newlyn and Sally L. Joyce, editors of REED *Cornwall* (published as part of Rosalind Conklin Hays, C.E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce, and Evelyn S. Newlyn [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, REED [Toronto, 1999]) for generously allowing me access to their research before publication. An earlier version of the essay, presented at the 1996 International Medieval Congress, University of Leeds, received invaluable commentary from Ian Arthurson. I would like to thank him especially for his observations on the way in which the county's geology influenced routes of travel in Cornwall. This pre-publication exchange of information resulted in the citation of my unpublished paper both in Joyce and Newlyn's introduction to the REED Cornwall records and in Arthurson's 'Fear and Loathing in West Cornwall: Seven New Letters on the 1548 Rising', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall* ns 2.3, parts 3–4 (2000), 68–86.

My thanks also go to the REED Patrons and Performances Web Site <<http://eir.library.utoronto.ca/reed/>> team, especially to Sally-Beth MacLean, Alan Somerset, and the University of Toronto Cartography Office for providing the baseline map from which all the maps in this essay have been adapted. The maps of the REED Patrons and Performances Web Site <<http://mercator.geog.utoronto.ca/reedmapping/>>, which are based on the research of Sally-Beth MacLean and a variety of cartographic resources, have made my mapping easier. Any imprecision in the maps presented here was introduced by me during my adaptation and is not the fault of the original cartographers.

- 2 Such identification is more difficult today because of the number of touring players affected by the Elizabethan statutes prohibiting travel by patronless companies. As Peter Greenfield notes, 'Players identified by their town of origin almost disappeared after Elizabethan statutes, the first issued in the year of Elizabeth's accession, required touring companies to obtain license from a noble patron' (Peter Greenfield, 'Touring', John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan [eds], *A New History of Early English Drama* [New York, 1997], 253). Interestingly, the number of patronized companies that visited towns in Cornwall (eighteen) is actually less than the number of groups identified by their place of origin included in this study, but had I been able to determine their points of origin, their inclusion would have changed our picture of who travelled in Cornwall (adding entertainers, fools, and bearwards to our list) and, perhaps, suggested more about the routes travelled and motives for visits within the county.
- 3 See Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 625–6, for a list of these performances excluding the visit made by the players of Liskeard to Plymouth, which appears in John Wasson (ed), *Devon*, REED (Toronto, 1986), 38–9.
- 4 Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, 53 r–v.
- 5 See Sally-Beth MacLean, 'Tour Routes: "Provincial Wanderings" or Traditional Circuits?', *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 6 (1992), 1–14, and Peter Greenfield, 'Following the Money: Travelling Non-Professional Players', unpublished paper.
- 6 Clearly Carew was accurate in his assessment that bridges also contributed to social interaction in the county (*Survey of Cornwall*, 53 r–v).
- 7 Sally Joyce and Evelyn Newlyn, in their survey of travelling performers in Cornwall (Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 406–8), look briefly at the troupes and players who travelled from elsewhere to perform in the county. Most of these performers, whose visits might confirm the extension of the

touring circuits noted by Sally-Beth MacLean (17–32, above), including the earl of Warwick’s servant, who performed in Launceston in 1470–1, the juggler of the king, who played there in 1520–1, the king’s interlude players, who travelled to Poughill in 1550–1, and Lord Stafford’s interlude players, who may have extended their tour from Exeter to Launceston in 1575–6, had noble patrons but were not associated in the records with a particular point of origin and, therefore, fall outside the scope of this study, along with other travelling groups whose origins are not clear, such as the ‘Egyppcions’, who visited Stratton in 1522–3, 1559–60, 1560–1, and 1561–2, and the ‘venesicians’, who visited Launceston in 1572–3. For more on itinerant performers and their routes through the southwest, see Sally-Beth MacLean, ‘At the End of the Road: An Overview of Southwestern Touring Circuits’, 17–32, above. David Klausner, whose article ‘Plays and Performing in Early Modern South Wales’ also appears in this collection, has noted the clear economic incentives for travelling in England rather than in the Welsh hinterlands, which seem to be not far removed from Cornwall in either lack of prosperity or difficulty of travel (57–72, below).

8 John Norden, *Speculi Britanniae Pars: A Topographical Description of Cornwall* (London, 1728), 26.

9 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 476.

10 Norden, writing c1584 (*Speculi Britanniae Pars*, 15), notes that those areas of Cornwall richest in tin works, ‘the parishes wherein theis workes moste abounde’ – ie, in the western hundreds of the county – ‘are for the moste part meaneste of wealth’. Norden’s assessment suggests that a number of the western villages and parishes who sent performers on the road were far from wealthy. Given that abundance of tin works typically goes hand in hand with lack of prosperity in Norden’s view, we might assume that St Levan, in Norden’s day, was poor since he tells us that ‘in this parishe are manie Tynn mynes’ (28), and that Germoe is likewise rich in tin but at the same time ‘mean’, as it is ‘a chappell appendant unto *Breage*’ (33), which Norden claims is ‘situate in a good vayne for Tynn workes’ (32). Phillack, ‘much anoyde and almoste drowned with the contynuall drifte of the sea sande, that ... is forced out of the baye into the Lande, to the great hurte of the Inhabitants’, is probably also unprosperous.

In this somewhat bleak economic scene, St Ives emerges as a pocket of relative wealth, though it too receives criticism from both Norden and Carew. Norden characterizes its mixed blessings and curses: to his eyes St Ives is ‘a poore hauen towne, and a market: Ther is a baye, but the sande

hath bene verie preiudiciall vnto it, and made it insufficient to receyue shippes of any great burden; but fisher boates, who being well exercised, bring profit to the inhabitantes, beinge greate store of fishe vpon that north coaste' (*Speculi Britanniae Pars*, 27). Carew offers an equally mixed view of the town and its port: 'both of meane plight, yet, with their best meanes, (and often, to good and necessarie purpose) succouring distressed shipping. Order hath bene taken, and attempts made, for bettering the Road, with a Peere, but eyther want, or slacknesse, or impossibilitie, hitherto withhold the effect: the whiles, plentie of fish is here taken, and sold verie cheape' (*Survey of Cornwall*, 54 r). Despite these rather dire depictions, by the sixteenth century St Ives did have borough status, parliamentary representation, a growing population (from under fifty residents in 1327 to an estimated 1800+ residents by 1642), and a strong economic base dependent upon its fisheries and the influx of both miners and revenues from mining supplies that came through the port (Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 394)

- 11 The players of Millbrook visiting Antony in 1548–9 received only 12d; the players of Tywardreath visiting Bodmin in the early sixteenth century, 16d; the interlude players of St Dennis visiting St Breock in 1566–7, 3 s 4d; and the players of Milton Abbot visiting Launceston in 1573–4, 2s (see Hays et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 468, 472, 506, and 495).
- 12 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 516–17. It is unclear whether the higher reward for the players from St Columb Minor reflects their greater skill, the longer distance they travelled to perform, or some other intangible, such as crowd size on the day of the performance. Since the reward is consistent with that received when the Robin Hood travelled a much shorter distance to St Breock in 1590–1 (507), it seems that travel distance does not account for the reward amount. One might guess that the troupe was particularly good, and perhaps, well known and in demand for that reason, or that, at least, the travelling performances had proven to be successful enough fund-raisers for the parish to send out the Robin Hood more than once.
- 13 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 506–7. Joyce and Newlyn note that this series of payments to dancers could indicate that St Breock was a 'regular stop for travelling dancers during the time encompassed by these records' (*Dorset/Cornwall*, 411). Dancers from St Eval travelled approximately six miles, those from Phillack, thirty-five miles, and the Robin Hood from St Mawgan, ten miles.

- 14 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 471. Saint Erme is approximately twenty miles from Bodmin whereas Boscastle and Minster are about fifteen to sixteen miles away.
- 15 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 472. These amounts seem small compared to other sixteenth-century rewards given in Bodmin, which typically range to several schillings; Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 470.
- 16 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 494–5.
- 17 Wasson (ed), *Devon*, 38–9.
- 18 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 468.
- 19 Joan Parkes, *Travel in England in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 1925), 18.
- 20 Carew, *Survey of Cornwall*, 53 r–v.
- 21 John H. Harvey (ed), 'Introduction', William Worcestre, *Itineraries* (Oxford, 1969), xvii. As Harvey relates, 'On twenty-four days [of Worcestre's trip] reasonably precise distances can be calculated and the average journey was 21-25 (statute) miles. For the twenty measurable journeys of 1478 the average is 22.05 m.p.d.; for the four journeys of 1480 only 17.25 m.p.d.' (xvii).
- 22 Estimates of travel times available for the late medieval and early modern period often highlight the fastest speeds possible to give readers an idea of the maximum distance one might expect travellers to cover; see for example W. G. Hoskins, *Devon* (Newton Abbott, 1972) 148, who recounts late medieval travel rates of up to fifty to sixty miles per day for those conducting urgent business. If we are to judge by the distances travelled by most performers in Cornwall, these rates, while contributing to a more complete picture of travel on early roads, do not as realistically apply to the travel of the minstrels, morris dancers, and players of this study as do the more leisurely rates of Worcestre.
- 23 William Camden, *Camden's Britannia, Newly Translated into English: With Large Additions and Improvements* (London, 1695).
- 24 William Worcestre, *Itineraries*, John Leland, *The Itinerary of John Leland in or about the Years 1535–1543, Parts 1–III*, Lucy Toulmin Smith (ed), 5 vols, especially vol 1 (Carbondale, 1964); N. J. G. Pounds, 'William Carnsew of Bokelly and His Diary, 1576–7', *Journal of the Royal Institution of Cornwall*, ns 8.1 (1978): 14–60. Maps of the routes travelled by these men are based upon these texts and the following maps found in them: 'Map 2: Leland in England', John Leland, *The Itinerary*, vol 5, back insert;

- 'Itineraries of William Worcestre 1478–80', Worcestre, *Itineraries*, back insert; and Figures 2 and 3, Pounds, 'William Carnsew', 26–7.
- 25 Charles Henderson and Henry Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges and Streams* (1928; reprinted Truro, 1972).
- 26 Frank Stenton, 'The Roads of the Gough Map', extracted from 'The Road System of Medieval England', *Economic History Review* 7 (1936): 7–19 and reproduced in E. J. S. Parsons, *The Map of Great Britain, c AD 1360, Known as the Gough Map* (Oxford and London, 1958), 16–37.
- 27 Parsons, *The Map of Great Britain*, 17 n2. It is Parsons' suggested route that B. P. Hindle reproduces in his article 'Roads and Tracks', Leonard Cantor (ed), *The English Medieval Landscape* (London, 1982), 193–217; Ivan D. Margary, *Roman Roads in Britain* (London, 1967), 120–3. Writing in 1967, Margary notes that '[u]ntil recently it was doubted whether any true Roman roads had been constructed beyond Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*), the last town in that direction' (117). Perhaps that is why Parsons, writing in 1958, chose to explain the road on the Gough Map as he did.
- 28 Margary, *Roman Roads*, 120–3. These precipitous gradients would not have bothered early travellers in Cornwall if we are to believe Henderson and Coates: 'The pack-horse was the Cornishman's vehicle. ... In many a deep Cornish valley the pack-horse track, a mere gully hewn out of a precipitous hill, may yet be seen descending straight to the ford and so up hill again to be rid of the morass and lurking robber as soon as possible' (*Old Cornish Bridges*, 8).
- 29 Worcestre, *Itineraries*, 12–13.
- 30 Worcestre, *Itineraries*, 39.
- 31 Pounds, 'William Carnsew of Bokelly', 115–17.
- 32 Pounds, 'William Carnsew of Bokelly', 17 and 18.
- 33 Pounds, 'William Carnsew of Bokelly', 18.
- 34 Henderson and Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges*, 8.
- 35 For Trekellearn Bridge see Henderson and Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges*, 30 and 57–8; for Berriow Bridge, 30 and 60.
- 36 Although '[f]ew of the Cornish Rivers are large or deep enough to lack easy fords' (Henderson and Coates, *Old Cornish Bridges* 9), the Camel (or Alan) is the 'principal river in Cornwall after the Tamar, and the only large stream on the North Coast' (106). It is conceivable that a fair amount of traffic may have plied this river.
- 37 MacLean, 'Tour Routes', 1.

Table 1: Performers' sites of origin and destinations by region

	<i>Point of Origin</i>	<i>Destination of Travel</i>
Origin in East Region	Boscastle	East/Central – Bodmin
	Minster	East/Central – Bodmin
	Liskeard	Devon– Barnstaple
	St Mabyn	East/Central – Bodmin
	Lanhydrock	East/Central – Bodmin
	Millbrook	East – Antony
	Plymouth (Devon)	East – Launceston
	Exeter (Devon)	East/Central – Bodmin
	Milton (Abbot?) (Devon)	East – Launceston
	South Tawton (Devon)	East – Launceston
Origin in Central Region	St Erme	East/Central – Bodmin
	Tywardreath	East/Central – Bodmin
	Lanivet	East/Central – Bodmin
	St Dennis	Central – St Breock
	Grampound	Central – St Breock
	St Eval	Central – St Breock
	St Columb Minor	West – St Ives
	Mawgan	Central – St Breock
Origin in West Region	Ludgvan	Central – St Breock
	Phillack	Central – St Breock
	Germoe	West – St Ives
	St Levan	West/Central – Camborne
	Gunwalloe	West/Central – Camborn