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‘By consent of the whole chapter’: Lincoln Cathedral’s Rewards for Touring Players and School Comedies, 1561–1593

The records of Lincoln Cathedral possess the largest and most enduring evidence for cathedral-funded dramatic performance in medieval and early modern England. In the mid-sixteenth century earlier forms of financial backing were replaced by the rewarding of travelling players by the chapter. The absence of similar rewards in the civic accounts of the period makes the cathedral records unique in their documentation of touring players and school comedies in the city. The following essay demonstrates the unique role played by Lincoln Cathedral and reveals an alternative view of looking at who bestowed financial gifts on travelling players during the reign of Elizabeth I.

The latter half of the sixteenth century saw an extraordinary transformation at Lincoln Cathedral. By 1561 medieval theatrical customs linked to the Roman Catholic calendar and funded by the cathedral were replaced by travelling players and school plays. Records indicate that the cathedral shifted from its earlier position of producing religious entertainments to a new role in the rewarding of travelling players and funding the production of school comedies. This article explores how and why such a radical shift occurred at that time.

Beginning in the early fourteenth century, the records of Lincoln Cathedral reveal nearly three hundred years of chapter involvement with dramatic entertainments. Financial payments show the existence of saint plays, Assumption pageants, boy bishop ceremonies, Christmas and Easter performances, travelling players, and school comedies, all with financial connections to the cathedral. Financial support came from the dean and chapter, and medieval cases specified the cathedral of Lincoln itself as the site of performance. From at least 1308–9 Lincoln Cathedral hosted, financially sponsored, and encouraged a range of theatrical events on more than two hundred documented occasions.¹ The first published study of these records was Virginia Schull’s ‘Clerical Drama in Lincoln

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Cathedral, 1318–1561’, which detailed the variety of plays and playing traditions revealed in the records available at the time.² Schull’s timeline, ending in 1561, is interesting in that it intentionally neglected the emergence of a new paradigm in that year. The first records showing the chapter financially rewarding both travelling players and a local grammar school characterize a paradigm shift away from direct involvement by the dean and chapter and centred on rewarding rather than financing dramatic entertainments. This article attempts to fill in the gap in the literature concerning the school and travelling players who received financial rewards from 1561 until 1593. The medieval traditions described by Schull and others may have disappeared, but a new context for theatrical performance at Lincoln emerged. No longer were the dean and chapter directly involved in the production of theatrical events; their role appears to shift from that of producer to audience.

While Lincoln cannot claim a monopoly on cathedral performance in medieval and early modern England, the vast quantity of its records related to the topic dwarfs all but Canterbury Cathedral. What differentiates Canterbury and Lincoln is the level of involvement hinted at in the records. Canterbury’s documents refer simply to payments to entertainers as rewards, while Lincoln’s accounts prior to 1561 show money spent on properties, scenery, and costumes; rarely at Lincoln is money recorded in a way that does not imply payment for goods or works associated with the preparation of the production.³ At Chester, accounts show expenditure on beer for players and cloth for ‘the witson plaes’ in 1567–8 and 1571–2, followed by a single entry concerning the Earl of Essex’s Players in 1582–3, and three for the Queen’s Men between 1589 and 1592.⁴ Patronized players appear in the records of York Minster from 1576 until the end of the century.⁵ Lincoln’s records evidence a wide range of entertainments related to Epiphany, Christmas, boy bishops, the Assumption, Pentecost, and Easter, all of which formed a cultural and social foundation for the post-1561 entertainments. Of those cathedrals mentioned, Canterbury alone shows monastic involvement in the medieval period. The majority of Canterbury’s pertinent records, however, are from documents of the chapter, and so while monastic they are also analogous to the chapter records of the secular cathedrals. It may be that numerous records from monastic institutions that involved dramatic entertainments were lost at the Reformation, and secular cathedrals may thus be more prominent in the archival record due to this loss. This potential record imbalance should be kept in mind, as the following discussion of medieval performance necessarily relies on the extant accounts that may only partially represent a wider trend.

The enormous amount of material detailing the earlier performance traditions overshadows the shift at Lincoln in 1561. Prior to the publishing of the Records of Early English Drama's (REED) volumes for Lincolnshire in 2009 this history had already been partially explored, primarily by Schull, as well as in John M. Wasson's 'The English Church as Theatrical Space', and James Stokes's 'The Lost Playing Places of Lincolnshire'.⁶ Hardin Craig covered the tradition in some detail in *English Religious Drama of the Middle Ages*, though he offered little insight beyond Schull's earlier work. Stanley Karhl's work on the Malone Society's *Collections* presented the documents of the cathedral together for the first time in publication.⁷ Although the most complete work on the topic prior to Stokes, Schull's study stops short of considering the records that show the dean and chapter financially rewarded touring players and school entertainments after the ascension of Elizabeth I to the throne in 1558; indeed she does not offer evidence beyond 1555.⁸ In 'Staging Wonders: Ritual and Space in the Drama and Ceremony of Lincoln Cathedral and its Environs', James Stokes analyzes Lincoln's processional entertainments and their implications on ideas of sacred space in the medieval city; however, the focus of the work precludes discussions of the school and travelling players.⁹

Since the 2009 release of REED: *Lincolnshire* very little work on the role of the established dramatic tradition has been carried out apart from the introductory material to the volumes and Stokes's chapter concerning ritual and space. There are two possible reasons for this apparent lack of interest: Schull's work succinctly describes the medieval traditions while appearing to offer a dead end to the researcher due to an apparent lack of further, needed information. Secondly, at the time of Karhl's publication, focus on the city was mostly directed towards attempting to locate the N-Town plays within Lincoln, a hypothesis given no direct creditability by existing cathedral performance traditions and which has since been discredited. These facts may have led more recent scholarship away from further study of the vast number of documented cases of performance.

The pertinent records (those covering the period 1561–93) are contained in the Dean and Chapter Common Fund Accounts (DCCFA).¹⁰ Although DCCFA date back to the thirteenth century, sporadic omissions occur due to loss.¹¹ These losses provide an incomplete picture, however the majority of DCCFA records are extant. The Civic Register and City Council Minute Books surviving from the Elizabethan era record entertainments prior to this period, but do not exhibit explicit financial expenditure for non-civic drama. These civic documents show that from at least 1515 the mayor of Lincoln was allotted 33s 4d annually 'To gyff in rewardes to mynstrelles & other resortyng to hym yat yer'.¹² The mayor's lack

of specific documentation of expenditure means that one cannot say for certain that such money spent on professional entertainers made its way to school or travelling players, but one cannot rule it out. Explicit accounts of rewards made to touring and school players exist only in the records of the cathedral.¹³ The presence of the accounts in DCCFA reveals that the notations are made as a record of financial expenditure. As such they cannot be relied upon to document each year for which the entertainments took place, but rather for the years in which the dean and chapter spent money on the events. The Dean and Chapter Act Book (DCAB) contains no references to the post-1561 entertainments, but is a key witness to many of the earlier traditions. DCAB is concerned with recording the acts of the cathedral's governing body rather than day-to-day events of the building. As neither DCCFA nor DCAB serves the purpose of simply recording events, they cannot be relied upon to offer a complete picture of entertainments presented in or by the cathedral.

The earliest records pertaining to the cathedral's sponsorship of performance began in 1308–9, when the dean and chapter paid 8d for gloves and shoes for 'in ludo facto in ecclesia die Lune in septimana pasche [the play made in the church on Monday in Easter week]'.¹⁴ References to Easter or Resurrection plays then appear nine more times until 1390–1.¹⁵ From 1321–2 until 1368–9, the entries refer to the play as that of St Thomas Dydimus, and place the event within the cathedral itself. From 1383–4 onward the reference is broader, referring to the play of the Resurrection, perhaps implying a different plot line. References to clocks and doves may point to the existence of a Pentecost entertainment from 1321–2 until 1543–4.¹⁶ The tradition of visualizing the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove links the property to Pentecost and may imply the use of the dove in a theatrical manner as part of the festival.¹⁷ The dove could then be evidence for the longest performance tradition in the cathedral's records.

Epiphany plays in the records are noted on five occasions between 1318 and 1387. These records explicitly mention the three kings (1318), and 'in vno capite Laneo pro capite Regis [a woolen head for a king's head]' (1322), likely references the story of the Magi.¹⁸ When the Epiphany entries cease after 1387 there is a gap in Christmas season performance until 1390.¹⁹ Then from 1393 until 1548 the dean and chapter annually paid for gloves for up to four performers for a play at dawn on Christmas day.²⁰ Initially the names in the documents appear as Mary, an angel, and Elisabeth, before shifting to Mary, an angel, and two prophets, and after 1440, the character list normalizes to Mary and an angel.²¹ The named characters and the timing of the performance indicate the Annunciation and the Visitation (Luke 1:26–56), the only reference to Elisabeth in the gospels.

Elisabeth's announcement confirming the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary of the Immaculate Conception would thematically fit a performance at dawn on Christmas, signalling the birth of Christ. The gloves for the Christmas play are noted as being bought 'ex consuetudine ecclesie [according to the church's custom]' from 1443.²² The Christmas day plays may then be seen as a continuation of the earlier Epiphany plays as well as the angelic salutation of 1390, showing an evolving Christmastide performance. Stokes believes the Epiphany plays took place annually between 1317 and 1386, even in the years for which records are lacking.²³ If he is correct, and if the plays beginning in 1394 are a continuation of the Epiphany plays as a Christmas season entertainment, then the tradition has a documented, and potentially continuous, history spanning over two hundred and thirty years.

From at least as early as 1459 until 1544 an entertainment concerning the Assumption of Mary was presented no less than forty-seven times in the cathedral.²⁴ In 1484 it is recorded in DCAB as having been performed '*predicta prout consuetum fuerat in Naui dicte ecclesia* [as has been customary in the nave of the said church]'.²⁵ Twice before and five times after this date the records show that the nave was the site for its performance.²⁶ Except for the first entry, the play is always referenced in connection to the Feast of St Anne (26 July), the mother of Mary and patron of Lincoln's largest and most powerful guild in the late Middle Ages.²⁷ Hardin Craig posited that the Assumption tradition was a continuation of the earlier Easter plays.²⁸ This theory, however, is discredited by Karhl, and not even discussed by Stokes.²⁹ Even though the likelihood of the Easter play's transformation into the Assumption entertainments is uncertain, these Easter entertainments represent points along the timeline of the cathedral's dramatic tradition. Earlier plays in the cathedral would have likely influenced later plays, and so connected the seemingly disparate traditions into a larger whole.

After the religious upheavals that followed 1533, Lincoln Cathedral's records, particularly DCCFA do not show any immediate or significant change until 1547 with the ascension of Edward VI to the throne. A civic account from that year specifically calls for the procession of St Anne's guild to be brought forth with all occupations participating, as had been customary 'in tymes past'.³⁰ The following year the council ordered that the guild of St Anne's 'Iuelles plate or ornamentes schalbe Sold to thuse of the Commen Chambre', marking the end of the guild and its annual procession.³¹ In 1548 DCCFA makes the last listing of gloves bought for the Christmas play, and then all ecclesiastical accounts of performance vanish until 1561, despite the records for the intervening years being extant.³² A pause in the traditions may be expected under the Protestant reign of

Edward, but they may have gone through a revival under Mary. In 1553 the civic authorities agreed to charge the St Anne's guild with putting on a play at Corpus Christi, 'and that *euery* Craftes man schall bryng furth ther padgeons as hath been accustomed'.³³ This command likely indicates a reintroduction of the earlier traditions, but as no other surviving records mention such a revival this cannot be conclusively remarked upon. When performance accounts reappear in the cathedral records in 1561 they contain evidence for a new paradigm in performance at the cathedral.

The records do not explicitly or implicitly mention players or school performance, either patronized or not, at Lincoln Cathedral prior to 1561 (though references to boy bishops seem to imply the involvement of the cathedral school).³⁴ But in that year the accounts record 10s paid to John Plumbe, master of the grammar school, for his students playing a comedy, and then 13s 4d rewarded to the Queen's Men, and 6s 8d to the Duchess of Suffolk's Players.³⁵ In a span of just over thirty years, Lincoln Cathedral rewarded players on twenty-one different occasions (Table 1).³⁶ The majority of these companies appear to be patronized, the exceptions being the boys from a local grammar school and the anonymous 'other players' of 1563–4.³⁷ The list of patrons is notable, showing a variety of individuals of local and national significance at the time.

The rewards offered to players followed national trends, whereby the more powerful magnates' servants received higher sums than those of lower influence and importance. The players' patrons vary in their national significance at the time, though many represent close ties to the queen and, by extension, religious conformity. As I will show, the patrons' status within the court and adherence to official religion were factors in the amount of the rewards given to the players.

Table 1: Timeline of Cathedral rewards to players, 1561–93.

Year	Recipient	Amount	Notes
1561–2	John Plumbe, schoolmaster of the grammar school	10s	For a comedy played before Dean Francis Mallett and others. ³⁸
	The Queen's Men	13s 4d ³⁹	
	The Duchess of Suffolk's Players	6s 8d ⁴⁰	
1562–3	Lord Robert Dudley's Players	10s ⁴¹	

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Table 1 (cont'd)

Year	Recipient	Amount	Notes
	The Earl of Oxford's Players	5s ⁴²	
1563–4	Lord Robert Dudley's Players	6s 8d ⁴³	Paid to Sub-Dean Roger Bromhall, who made the payment to the players 'by order of the lord dean'. ⁴⁴
	The Duchess of Suffolk's Players	6s 8d	Paid to Dean Francis Mallett 'by order of Bartholomew Halley'. ⁴⁵
	'to other players'	6s 8d ⁴⁶	
1564–5	The Earl of Leicester's Players	10s	Ordered by Archdeacon John Aylmer, and Sub-Dean Roger Bromhall. ⁴⁷
	Lord Hunsdon's Players	6s 8d	Paid to Archdeacon John Aylmer in reimbursement. ⁴⁸
	Lord Scrope's Players	5s	Paid to Dean Francis Mallett in reimbursement. ⁴⁹
	Lord Rich's Players	3s 4d	Paid to Robert Pullayn, a messenger or representative of the chapter by order of the dean. ⁵⁰
1565–6	Sir John Byron's Players	4s	Byron is listed as a knight. ⁵¹
	William Saunderson, master of the grammar school	47s 6d	The chapter appears to have funded the entire cost of the comedy. ⁵²
	Lord Strange's Players	5s	Paid to Robert Pullayn in reimbursement. ⁵³
	The Queen's Men	6s 8d	Paid to Dean Francis Mallett in reimbursement. ⁵⁴
1569–70	The Earl of Worcester's Players	6s 8d	Paid to Archdeacon John Aylmer in reimbursement. ⁵⁵
		

Table 1 (cont'd)

Year	Recipient	Amount	Notes
	The Queen's Men	20s	Paid in to Archdeacon John Aylmer, and Master Todd in reimbursement. ⁵⁶
1572–3	The Queen's Men	5s	Paid to Archdeacon John Aylmer in reimbursement. ⁵⁷
1574–5	John Wynle, master of the grammar school	26s 8d	Paid for 'setting forth of various plays'. ⁵⁸
1592–3	Bartholomew Gryffyn and John Hilton	80s	50s was to go to Gryffyn and 30s to Hilton, for 'putting on two comedies [...] by the choristers and other scholars of this church'. ⁵⁹

The Queen's Men received the highest reward of any patronized group, a fact that is not surprising given the identity of their patron. Perhaps the most significant patron given both her local and national standing, barring the queen, was Katherine Willoughby, duchess of Suffolk.⁶⁰ Born to the eleventh Baron Willoughby de Eresby, who owned some thirty manors in Lincolnshire, Katherine's 1533 marriage to the duke of Suffolk, the most powerful landowner in the county, placed her at the pinnacle of Lincolnshire's aristocracy.⁶¹ The duchess's influence at Elizabeth's court and her open espousal of reformist thought is reflected in other patrons as well. The chapter rewarded the players of Lord Robert Dudley, from 1564 earl of Leicester, in three consecutive clerical years beginning in 1562–3.⁶² The Spanish ambassador noted in the early years of her reign that Lord Robert was the closest person to the queen.⁶³ Henry Carey, Lord Hunsdon, was the queen's cousin, had held positions in her household from 1554, and was sent on diplomatic duties to France in 1564.⁶⁴ Henry Scrope, Lord Scrope, was instrumental in forcing the French from Scotland in the Siege of Leith in 1560, sat on the Council of the North from 1561, and held Carlisle Castle for Elizabeth from 1564.⁶⁵ Edward de Vere, earl of Oxford, was only twelve or thirteen when his players appeared in Lincoln, but he had inherited one of the most powerful earldoms in the kingdom, accompanied the queen on progresses, held the ceremonial position of lord great chamberlain, and was a ward of Robert Cecil.⁶⁶ These patrons represent some of the most powerful and influential nobles in the

early years of Elizabeth's reign, and rewards given to their players by the chapter show recognition of that fact.

While the patrons mentioned above show adherence to the queen's position on the matters of religion, others do not. Lord Richard Rich was an aging vacillator, who shifted his outward religious loyalties to gain power, though ultimately appearing to be an inward conservative.⁶⁷ He was placed on the Privy Council by Mary, but lost the position under Elizabeth, leading to his withdrawal from court to his estates in Essex.⁶⁸ Henry Stanley, Lord Strange, sat on the Privy Council from 1553, and took official roles in the marriage of Mary and Philip in 1554 that resulted in overtly pro-Spanish leanings.⁶⁹ Although perhaps not a crypto-Catholic, Stanley had sympathies with those professing the old faith and was slow and reluctant to act against them.⁷⁰ He lost his seat on the Privy Council under Elizabeth.⁷¹ William Somerset, earl of Worcester, seems to have been mistrusted for his religion. Although he held numerous positions under Mary, he retained none under Elizabeth.⁷² These men showed an outward if reluctant conformity to the state's position on religion, and the comparatively low payments to their liveried players may reflect unofficial attitudes towards the men.

The existence of both groups within the records shows that the cathedral did not openly favor one side or the other. However, the amounts it chose to give vary considerably between these two groups. Lord Rich's Players brought in the least money from the cathedral, receiving a mere 3s 4d in 1564–5 at the hands of a messenger rather than a member of the chapter.⁷³ This is the lowest amount recorded in DCCFA and one of only two occasions when the reimbursement is specifically delivered to a non-member of the chapter. The players of Sir John Byron were given 4s the following year.⁷⁴ This may be the Sir John Byron of Nottinghamshire, a prominent sheriff and one-time MP for that county, but it is not clear.⁷⁵ As these rewards are symbols of the patron's status, then Lord Rich's position below that of a knighted former sheriff speaks to his fall, and the conscious acknowledgment of that fact by the chapter. The patrons with closer ties to the queen averaged 7s 9d over the years covered in the records, while those with less close ties averaged just 5s.⁷⁶

The religion of the dean is also pertinent here. Dean Francis Mallett, who was in office during both visits to Lincoln by the duchess's players, had formerly been principal chaplain to Princess Mary during the reign of Edward VI.⁷⁷ He was placed in the Tower by order of the Privy Council in 1551 for performing mass in the absence of Mary, whose attendance was legally required for the priest to conduct the rite.⁷⁸ He was an avowed, and very public religious conservative by 1547, and oversaw the restoration of Roman Catholic ornamentation at Windsor

in 1553.⁷⁹ Although Mallett retained his position after the ascension of Elizabeth, his very public past within the Marian counter-Reformation would have placed him under scrutiny. The documents in which he is named as ordering rewards for important nobles such as Lord Dudley and the duchess of Suffolk explicitly tie his name and actions to the courtiers of the reforming Elizabeth. These rewards became demonstrations of political loyalty and outward religious conformity on the part of the chapter.

It was not only travelling players that received rewards for playing. The records show that the dean and chapter financially supported the playing of theatre in local schools as well, with one such school receiving 80s, the most support for any group. The existence of multiple schools with connections to the cathedral, however, makes siting the performances difficult. The amounts are significant enough to indicate the dean and chapter's total financial backing of the plays. At the time of the first payment in 1561–2, two schools were set up in Lincoln. The first was founded in the thirteenth century exclusively for choristers, located within the cathedral close and under the supervision of the cathedral chapter (the cathedral school).⁸⁰ This is the likely school from which the boy bishops were drawn, a tradition first appearing in the records in the late twelfth century.⁸¹ The second was situated in the city and jointly controlled by the dean and chancellor of the cathedral along with the common council (the city school).⁸² Neither school was properly funded, resulting in poor standards and dilapidated conditions.⁸³ By 1584 the cathedral and civic authorities signed a deed of union agreeing jointly to fund a single school in the city.⁸⁴ This was based in a third, privately funded school opened in the former Grey Friar's church in 1568, which the council had acquired in 1574 (the new school).⁸⁵ It is impossible to tell which school is mentioned in the accounts. Hill notes, however, that by 1563 the city school may not have been fit to teach in, making the cathedral school the likely candidate for the first, and perhaps second (1565–6) performances.⁸⁶

Locating the site for the 'various plays' the school performed in 1574–5 is difficult given a number of factors. The reward was given sometime between 21 September 1574 and 20 September 1575, a time covering the council's acquisition of the new school, and up to ten years before the unification of the schools in 1584. Although no mention of these plays can be found in the civic record, the 'various plays' referred to in the cathedral accounts could have been part of the celebrations for the opening of the new school, given the timing. The record in DCCFA notes that the payment of 26s 8d was made by the chapter, the same body that administered the cathedral school.⁸⁷ Had the play been part of the city school, funding would likely have come from the dean and chancellor, and not

from the general chapter. The school plays were likely functions of the cathedral school, and not the city school. The money given to the schoolmasters for the plays appears to have represented total, or near total, financing by the cathedral, rather than token rewards offered in gratitude and recognition of work. The final entry in 1592–3 likely refers to the students and schoolmasters of the cathedral school, given the reference to 'duas comedias per choristas at alios ecclesie istius scolares [two comedies to be performed by the choristers and other scholars of this church]'.⁸⁸

The accounts do not often record direct payments, more commonly listing reimbursement paid to members of the chapter or others for rewards made by them (presumably in the name of the cathedral). There appears to have been an expectation that these touring players would be well received and worthy of the cathedral's reward. The revisiting of some companies shows that the dean and chapter may have been seen as a reliable source of income. On eleven separate occasions DCCFA states that the recorded reward did not go to the company of players directly; instead the money was a reimbursement to individuals who put up the reward for the players from their own funds.⁸⁹ The men must have expected reimbursement and foresaw no problem with regard to priestly decorum either to attend or support such playing. The willingness of priests to appear at such events is not a creation of the Reformation, as much work has already shown that the pre-Reformation English church regularly attempted to prohibit the clergy from attending such entertainments.⁹⁰ And as Alexandra F. Johnston has shown, in the early years of Elizabeth's reign biblical plays firmly rooted in humanist theory were used as tools of Protestant teaching.⁹¹ Given the religious leanings of the majority of the patrons listed in the documents it is likely that the repertoire of the travelling players included the work of Protestant playwrights and adhered to religious orthodoxy as outlined by the state.

The men named in the records vary within the clerical hierarchy but held a range of positions. John Aylmer, who prior to becoming bishop of London held the archdeaconries of Stow (1553–77) and then Lincoln (1562–77), made such payments to players on five known occasions.⁹² Dean Mallett (1556–70) did the same in three consecutive years beginning in 1563–4. Both men were Marian appointees and so may have witnessed the revival of earlier dramatic traditions beginning in 1553. Had these men seen the revived plays performed at Corpus Christi and the associated pageants, they may have noted value in the tradition, but in the light of a new cultural and religious zeitgeist that manifested itself under Elizabeth. Neither of the men appears to have lived in or near Lincoln prior to receiving his position within the cathedral, so it is possible that they had

no experience with the pre-Marian entertainments. Once in their posts, however, it is likely they would have become aware of such long lasting traditions.⁹³ Also recorded as receiving reimbursement are Sub-Dean Roger Bromhall and Chancellor Gregory Garth.⁹⁴ Although not a member of the chapter, Robert Pullayn was twice reimbursed by the cathedral for rewards made by him.⁹⁵ The variety of the men's positions and the period over which the payments were made may indicate that tradition likely played a role in players' rewards, and not just the men's personal attitudes. In 1563–4 Bromhall paid Lord Robert Dudley's Players 6s 8d at Mallett's command, indicating approval of the players by the highest ecclesiastical figure concerned with the operations of the cathedral.⁹⁶ After the death of Mallett in 1570 the cathedral continued to fund school plays through the deanships of three successive men, showing that it was not solely his leadership that kept the tradition alive. Of course the influence of such powerful patrons as the queen and Lord Robert Dudley may speak more to the need than the desire to give rewards. Such an argument would explain the money presented as an act of obeisance. Similar rewards to the Queen's Men (among others) are found in the cathedral records of Canterbury, York, and Chester during the reign of Elizabeth and show that Lincoln was not alone in rewarding players of powerful patrons.⁹⁷

As stated earlier the very high sums paid to the grammar school for multiple plays may signal the complete financial backing of the school's performances. This was made explicit in 1565–6, when the dean and chapter paid 47s 6d for the playing of a comedy by the boys of the school: '*pro custibus et expensis suis circa eundem supportatis ut patet per billam* [as well as for their costs and expenses borne about the same as according to the bill]'.⁹⁸ The cost reveals the substantial investment that may have been made in the production of the single comedy, showing that significant elements were involved in the presentation of the play. The previous and subsequent rewards can then be seen in light of this notation, explaining the higher sums paid in 1561–2, 1569–70, 1574–5, and 1592–3. These more substantial amounts show that the cathedral was concerned with not only rewarding players but also financially supporting the production of plays. This substantial financial support mirrors the medieval traditions outlined above, demonstrating the transformation of the paradigm from the pre-Reformation period to the years of the Elizabethan compromise.

The wording of the accounts and the involvement of men as highly ranked as the dean exhibit active approval rather than passive acceptance of these entertainments. In 1561–2 Dean Mallett is explicitly cited as attending the grammar school play with unnamed 'others', in addition to his presumed attendance at the plays for which he is compensated later on in his career.⁹⁹ Although the records

explicitly note Mallett's attendance at the school play, the presence of other men at various entertainments can be deduced via repayments. When men are reimbursed for such rewards it can be assumed that they themselves were part of the audience. The lack of explicit attendance records at certain performances, however, does not demonstrate clerical absence at plays. The presence of clerical admonitions against priests attending plays in the medieval period is often used as evidence that such attendance occurred. However, given that *REED: Lincolnshire* includes no such commandments from the period, and that the chapter apparently saw no problem in making explicit records of financial rewards to players along with named individuals presenting those awards, one may surmise that such participation was not an issue of propriety. Rather, the records show a tacit approval of the players by the majority or entirety of the chapter. Throughout this period, DCCFA records that compensation was sometimes given 'by order of the chapter' or 'by consent of the whole chapter'.¹⁰⁰ Notations such as these reinforce the idea that collective clerical approval played a part in the acceptance of these players.

No civic account records explicit payment to travelling players, though the previously mentioned 33s 4d that was annually allotted to the mayor shows that money was put aside for payment to entertainers at his discretion. A short-lived tradition of civic drama concurrent with the cathedral's rewarding of players, to be discussed shortly, shows that the civic authorities did not generally disapprove of playing. The differing customs of the cathedral and the city relating to the funding of playing may be accounted for given the geography of Lincoln. The cathedral sits on a hill in the centre of the city, with the entrance to the cathedral precincts, Exchequer Gate, leading to a large square that was once the site of the city's fish market.¹⁰¹ Opposite the cathedral stands the castle, to the west of which was a croft called the Battle Place, used since at least 1274 as a traditional gathering place for trials by combat and entertainments.¹⁰² Going north from the market, Bailgate leads off the square directly to Newport Cross, the largest market in the city from at least 1327, and where an annual fair was held each June.¹⁰³ These traditional locations for the assembly of people served as pools from which travelling players could draw an audience.

From the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries a crenelated wall with six guarded and lockable gates encircled the cathedral and its close.¹⁰⁴ The configuration of nearby markets and the use of the close's walls allowed the players to collect audiences easily, and direct them to the well-known landmark of the cathedral. Once the audience was assembled, the easily controlled physical and visual access the gates offered made the large area between the cathedral's west

end and the western wall of the close an ideal site for performance, complete with raked seating. Payment could be collected at the gate before entering, and those not paying could be visually barred. The western end of the close was then a strategic performance location for the company. Such an arrangement is evidenced in the fifteenth-century accounts that show that the plays performed within the city at Corpus Christi were staged within the close, with canons watching from a house.¹⁰⁵ The configuration of this area led Hardin Craig to propose the same location for all processional theatre in the city's records and Harry M. Ritchie to proffer this siting for the Digby *Mary Magdalene* play.¹⁰⁶

As was mentioned earlier, while no records explicitly show that the civic authorities reward travelling players as the cathedral did, they did financially back civic theatre. In the summer of 1564 the city attempted to establish a standing tradition of a bible play.¹⁰⁷ Stokes locates this play in an open field in 'a piece of ground in the lower city'.¹⁰⁸ This placement positions the play far from the cathedral, and cathedral documents show no financial support or reward. What emerged were two independent theatrical traditions within Lincoln. Thomas Fulbeck was paid £9 for the expenses laid out for the staging of the play, indicating its successful completion.¹⁰⁹ A similar order was made for £4 for a Whitsun play in 1566 to show 'the Storye of Tobye'.¹¹⁰ The play 'old Tobye' was produced again at Whitsun 1568, this time with a larger budget of £6 13s 4d.¹¹¹ This period coincides with the largest number of annual gifts bestowed by the cathedral on players, and may show a dramatic tradition spreading from the cathedral to the rest of the city.

The sudden reappearance of civic theatre in 1564 may be related to the presence of players in the city from 1561. Between September 1561 and March 1564 the cathedral funded a school play and rewarded between four and seven playing companies.¹¹² The public appeal of the players may have been demonstrated to the council, who were then willing to capitalize on the allure of the event for their own civic interests. The apparent end of the civic drama in 1568 corresponds to the period in which the cathedral was rewarding players most, presenting the height of drama in the city. No explanation is made in the records as to why the city appeared to stop funding the play after 1568, and so the short-lived tradition ceases in the records. No mention is made of plays in 1568–9 at the cathedral, and the following year only Worcester's and the Queen's Men appear in the records.¹¹³ The last non-school players rewarded were the Queen's Men in 1572–3, when they received their lowest reward of just 5s compared to the 20s from their previous visit.¹¹⁴ The school plays of 1574–5, and the school comedies of 1592–3 are the last records of the cathedral rewarding players at Lincoln, presenting the

true loss of a performance tradition dating back to at least the early fourteenth century.

The records of Lincoln Cathedral reveal nearly three centuries of active financial involvement with performances by the cathedral chapter. While Lincoln cannot be said to represent all such activity in England at the time, the role of the chapter as producer and not just audience in the medieval period sets it apart. Despite receiving the bulk of the scholarly attention, the medieval traditions do not represent the totality of the practice. The emergence of school performances and travelling, mostly patronized players in 1561 represents a paradigm shift in the way the chapter associated itself with dramatic entertainment beginning in the early years of the reign of Elizabeth. The records reveal their transformation from producers of their own entertainments to audience members to travelling players, as well as a new context of financially sponsoring school plays; neither of which can be found in the cathedral's records prior to 1561. The case of Lincoln Cathedral fills an important lacuna within the history of touring and school players in the latter half of the sixteenth century, showing a decades long connection between cathedrals and touring/school players that until recently has been neglected.

Notes

I wish to thank Professor Russell Jackson for his input and editorial assistance on this work, as well as the anonymous readers whose recommendations helped to improve this article.

- 1 These numbers are current as of autumn 2017, but future *REED* publications may prove the existence of such traditions in other locations.
- 2 Virginia Schull, 'Clerical Drama in Lincoln Cathedral, 1318–1561', *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 52.4 (1937), 946–66, <https://doi.org/10.2307/458495>.
- 3 See for example James M. Gibson (ed.), *REED: Kent, Diocese of Canterbury*, 3 vols (Toronto, 2002), 1.33–44 [3.1000–16]; James Stokes (ed.), *REED: Lincolnshire*, 2 vols (Toronto, 2009), 1.104 [2.646–7].
- 4 Elizabeth Baldwin, Lawrence M. Clopper, and David Mills (eds.), *REED: Cheshire Including Chester*, 2 vols (Toronto, 2007), 1.121, 1.137, 1.135, 1.159, 1.162, 1.166. Associations with Chester Cathedral prior to its achieving cathedral status in 1541 are not considered here. No records indicate that St John's, Chester, rewarded or produced dramatic entertainments during its brief period as the cathedral of the bishop of Coventry and Lichfield in the last quarter of the eleventh century; Jon Canon, *Cathedral: The Great English Cathedrals and the World that Made Them, 600–1540* (London, 2007), 291–2.
- 5 Alexandra F. Johnston and Margaret Rogerson (eds), *REED: York*, 2 vols (Toronto, 1979), 1.382, 1.494.
- 6 John M. Wasson, 'The English Church as Theatrical Space', John D. Cox and David Scott Kastan (eds), *A New History of Early English Drama*, 2nd edn (New York, 1997), 25–38; James Stokes, 'The Lost Playing Places of Lincolnshire', *Comparative Drama* 37.3/4 (2003/4), 276, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.2003.0021>.
- 7 Stanley J. Karhl (ed.), *Collections, Vol. 8: Records of Plays and Players in Lincolnshire, 1300–1585* (Oxford, 1974).
- 8 Schull, 'Clerical Drama', 965–6. Schull offers 'non-committal' entries of gloves from 1553 through 1561 (*ibid*), but these do not appear in *REED: Lincolnshire*, and so may have been miss-attributed by Schull.
- 9 James Stokes, 'Staging Wonder: Ritual and Space in the Drama and Ceremony of Lincoln Cathedral and its Environs', Frances Andrews (ed.), *Ritual and Space in the Middle Ages* (Donnington, 2011), 197–212.
- 10 Dating for the cathedrals' records, including those in DCCFA, ran from the Sunday closest to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September) to the same Sunday the following year. Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 2.493.

- 11 See Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire* 2.493–7. DCCFA records are extant from 1304, lacking 1319–20, 1330–1, 1333–4, 1358–9, 1387–8, 1388–9, 1397–8, 1398–9, 1404–5 to 1416–7, 1418–9, 1419–20, 1421–2, 1422–3, 1424–5, 1425–6, 1427–8 to 1430–1, 1432–3, 1435–5 to 1439–40, 1441–2, 1468–9, 1469–70, 1471–2, 1472–3 (from this point on Stokes no longer gives the dates using the split year starting on the Sunday closest to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross [14 September], and instead gives single year entries), 1497 to 1500, 1545 to 1547, 1550 to 1551, 1557, 1558, and 1598–1600, with 1626 being the last extant document of DCCFA Stokes lists. Stokes dates MS Bj/3/8 from 1524 to 1595, giving no indication that any of these years are missing from the bound MS, but notes that years included in this range exist in other MS (such as Bj/3/6, which he dates as 1552–77 but lacks 1557–8). One may then assume that Bj/3/8 contains the missing years noted above, but as this is not explicit, the omitted years listed for other MS are listed here. DCAB date from 1305 through 1640 in thirty-seven books, seven of which Stokes has identified as containing material related to entertainments. He lists only those cited in *REED*, and so any missing years are not listed. See Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire* 2.497–8.
- 12 Ibid, 1.135.
- 13 Ibid, 2.490–1.
- 14 Ibid, 1.104 [2.646–7].
- 15 These years are 1321–2, 1323–4, 1326–7, 1332–3, 1368–9, 1383–4, 1384–5, 1386–7, and 1390–1.
- 16 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.105 [2.647] and 1.174 [2.688].
- 17 Lynette R. Muir, 'The Trinity in Medieval Drama', *Comparative Drama* 10.2 (1976), 123; Gail McMurray Gibson, *The Theater of Devotion: East Anglian Drama and Society in the Late Middle Ages* (London, 1989), 144.
- 18 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.105 [2.647].
- 19 Ibid, 1.108 [2.651].
- 20 Ibid, 1.109 [2.651].
- 21 Ibid, 1.113 [2.655].
- 22 Ibid, 1.114 [2.656].
- 23 Ibid, 2.407.
- 24 Ibid, 1.118 [2.660]. The procession is last recorded in 1547 in the City Council Minute Book, but cathedral records of the event end in 1544 (ibid, 1.175).
- 25 Ibid, 1.125 [2.666].
- 26 Ibid, 1.120–31 [2.662–72].
- 27 Ibid, 2.409. Stokes points to the records that appear to show that prior to 1515–6 it is unclear which of the city's guilds was responsible for the procession, but by this

year the civic records indicate that St Anne's guild was given the task of organizing the event.

28 Hardin Craig, *English Religious Drama* (Oxford, 1955), 268.

29 Karhl, *Collections*, xiii.

30 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.175.

31 *Ibid.*, 1.175–6.

32 *Ibid.*, 1.177, 1.185, 2.496.

33 *Ibid.*, 1.180.

34 *Ibid.*, 1.177, 1.185, 2.496.

35 *Ibid.*

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*, 1.185 [2.689], 1.188 [2.690].

38 *Ibid.*, 2.689.

39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, 2.689–90.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*, 2.690.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

46 *Ibid.*

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*, 2.691.

51 *Ibid.*

52 *Ibid.*

53 *Ibid.*

54 *Ibid.*

55 *Ibid.*, 2.692.

56 *Ibid.*

57 2.693.

58 *Ibid.*

59 2.694.

60 Alan Somerset notes only seven records of the Duchess of Suffolk's Players, beginning in 1560 and ending in 1562; Alan Somerset, 'Not Just Sir Oliver Owlet: From Patrons to "Patronage" of Early Modern Theatre', Richard Dutton (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theatre* (Oxford, 2012), 354, <http://doi.org/10.1093/>

- oxfordhb/9780199697861.013.0021. Stokes, however, provides evidence for the payment in 1563–4 at Lincoln. It would appear that Somerset did not have access to Stokes's work as both were first published in the same year.
- 61 Susan Wabuda, 'Bertie [née Willoughby; *other married name* Brandon], Katherine, duchess of Suffolk (1519–80), noblewoman and protestant patron', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB). 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2273>; M.E. James, 'Obedience and Dissent in Henrician England: The Lincolnshire Rebellion 1536', *Past & Present* 48 (1970), 40–51, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cb09780511560613.008>.
- 62 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.186–8 [2.689–90].
- 63 Simon Adams, 'Dudley, Robert, earl of Leicester (1532/3–1588), *courtier and magnate*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8160?rskey=w9cVml&result=1>.
- 64 Wallace T. MacCaffrey, 'Carey, Henry, first baron Hunsdon (1526–1596), *courtier and administrator*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-1012554?rskey=njsW8p&result=1>.
- 65 Edward M. Furgol, 'Scrope, Henry, ninth Baron Scrope of Bolton (1533/4–1592)', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24960?rskey=NAfsSq&result=1>.
- 66 Alan H. Nelson, 'Vere, Edward de, seventeenth earl of Oxford (1550–1604), *courtier and poet*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28208?rskey=NFSBq1&result=1>.
- 67 P.R.N. Carter, 'Rich, Richard (1496/7–1567), first Baron Rich, *lord chancellor*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23491?rskey=aEH3E6&result=1>.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Louis A. Knafla, 'Stanley, Henry, fourth Earl of Derby (1531–1593), *magnate*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26272?rskey=KzguDI&result=1>.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Ibid.

- 72 W.R.B. Robinson, 'Somerset, William, third earl of Worcester (1526/7–1589), *nobleman*', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26015>.
- 73 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 2.691 (1.189).
- 74 Ibid.
- 75 The History of Parliament, 'Member Biographies: Byron (Beron), Sir John (1487/88–1567), of Colwick and Newstead, Notts', <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org>, accessed 21 April 2017. *REED*'s 'Patrons and Performance' database does not list this Sir John Byron as a patron. Rather the musicians of his grandson, also called Sir John Byron, are recorded as receiving payment in 1641 in Cambridge. As Sir John the younger was not born until 1599, and Sir John the elder died in 1567, both entries cannot refer to the same man.
- 76 This average does not include players of the queen, Sir John Byron, the grammar school, or the anonymous players of 1563–4.
- 77 C.S. Knighton, 'Mallett, Francis (d. 1570), dean of Lincoln', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/17891>.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 J.W.F Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1956), 102; Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 2.375. The names used for the schools are my own.
- 81 The earliest account of boy bishops at Lincoln is from the *Liber Niger* in the late twelfth century (Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.104 [2.646]).
- 82 Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln*, 102; Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 2.375.
- 83 Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln*, 102.
- 84 Ibid, 103.
- 85 Ibid; J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln* (Cambridge, 1948), 150.
- 86 Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln*, 102.
- 87 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.198 [2.693].
- 88 Ibid, 1.203 [2.694].
- 89 Ibid, 1.187–203 [2.690–4].
- 90 See Marianne G. Briscoe, 'Some Clerical Notions on Dramatic Decorum in Late Medieval England', *Comparative Drama* 19 (1985), 1–13.
- 91 Alexandra F. Johnston, 'William Cecil and the Drama of Persuasion', Kenneth J.E. Graham and Philip D. Collington (eds), *Shakespeare and Religious Change* (Basingstoke, 2009), 63–87.
- 92 Brett Usher, 'Aylmer, John (1520/21–1594), bishop of London', *ODNB*. 23 September 2004. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-935?rskey=6pkj2l&result=1>.
- 93 Knighton, 'Mallett, Francis'; Usher, 'Aylmer, John'.

- 94 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.187 [2.690], 1.199 [2.693].
- 95 Ibid, 1.192 [2.691]. Pullayn was either a messenger or representative of the chapter.
- 96 Ibid, 1.187 [2.690].
- 97 Gibson, *REED: Kent*, 1.226 [3.1078]; Johnston and Rogerson, *REED: York*, 1.141; Baldwin, et al, *REED: Cheshire*, 1.159.
- 98 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.192 [2.691].
- 99 Ibid, 1.185 [2.689].
- 100 Ibid, 1.185 [2.689], 1.198 [2.693].
- 101 Hill, *Tudor and Stuart Lincoln*, 203. Hill does not give a date for the beginning of the fish market in any of his books on Lincoln, but says it had ceased by the end of the seventeenth century.
- 102 Stokes, 'The Lost Playing Places of Lincolnshire', 276; Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, 359.
- 103 Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, 170.
- 104 Philip Buckler, Gavin Kirk, Nicholas Bennet, Mary Lucas, and Anne Coltman, *Lincoln Cathedral: A Journey From Past to Present* (London, 2011), 18.
- 105 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.124 [2.665].
- 106 Craig, *English Religious Drama*, 277; Harry M. Ritchie, 'A Suggested Location for the Digby *Mary Magdalene*', *Theatre Survey* (1963), 57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0040557400007195>.
- 107 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.186
- 108 Stokes, 'The Lost Playing Places of Lincolnshire', 276.
- 109 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.186.
- 110 Ibid, 1.186.
- 111 Ibid, 1.193.
- 112 The dates given here account for the beginning of the cathedral's clerical year on the Sunday closest to the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (14 September) in 1561, and the known performance date of the play of the bible in 1564. As no specific dates are given for the three performances recorded in 1563–4, all three may have occurred prior to March 1564. Thus, there were certainly four plays prior to the bible play, and may have been as many as seven.
- 113 Stokes, *REED: Lincolnshire*, 1.195 [2.692].
- 114 Ibid, 1.197 [2.693].

