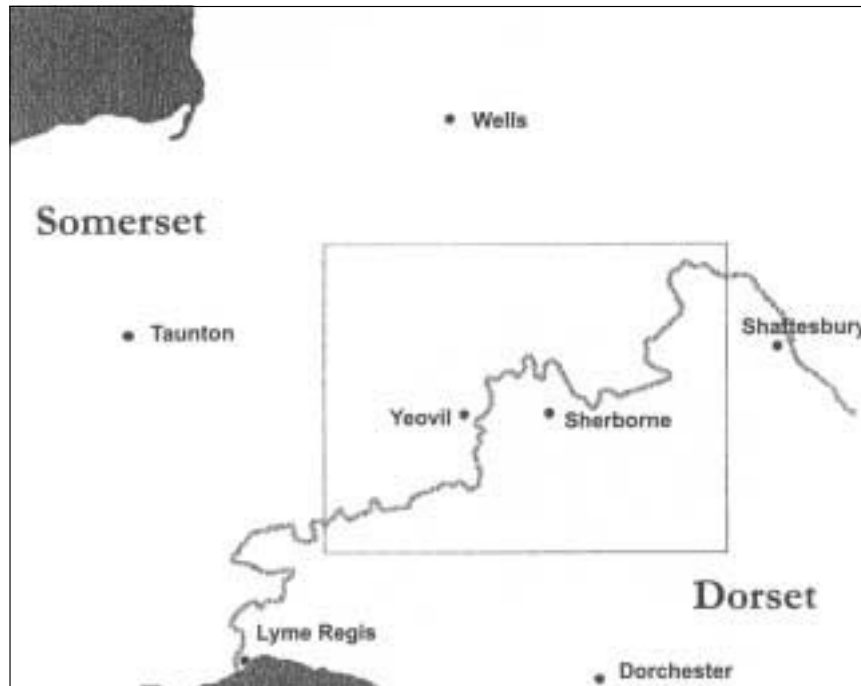


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Crossing County Boundaries: Sixteenth-Century Performance and Celebration in Yeovil, co. Somerset, and Sherborne, co. Dorset

Dramatic activity in the neighbouring towns of Sherborne, Dorset, and Yeovil, Somerset, was linked together in a region defined not so much by political or physical boundaries as by evidence of a mid-sixteenth-century flurry of regional cooperation when each market town rented costumes to smaller communities in the area (see Table 1 and Map 1).¹ This essay is a case study, locating this period of regional dramatic activity within the context of a comparative history of performance in the two towns, c1530–1610.

Such a study shows three very different things. First, it illustrates both common patterns and the rich variety of drama in the West Country. Although mid-sixteenth-century records suggest that Sherborne and Yeovil were each very much aware of the other's dramatic traditions,² their expressions of community were very different, remaining essentially secular in Yeovil's case, and exhibiting important religious as well as secular elements in the case of Sherborne. If we compare the two parishes' practices and their responses to religious reformation, we can surmise something of how each expressed its sense of community through performance and find strikingly similar chronological patterns of adaptation to changing circumstances. Secondly, the study exemplifies the value of transcending the borders that tend to define investigation of local practice. When Yeovil and Sherborne found their separate customs under threat, the two neighbours helped foster performance in a region that lay outside the boundaries of each town and that straddled the county border (see Map 2). Both *Records of Early English Drama* volumes and the studies of local historians often limit themselves to individual shires or cities,³ and the case of Yeovil and Sherborne offers insights that complement such scholarship. Finally, a comparative history limited to the experience of two neighbouring parishes presents some interesting variations that add nuance to more sweeping interpretations that deal with England as a whole or with very large regions.⁴ In particular, Ronald Hutton's 1994 book *The Rise*



Map 1: Counties of Somerset and Dorset, showing detail inset of Yeovil/Sherborne vicinity

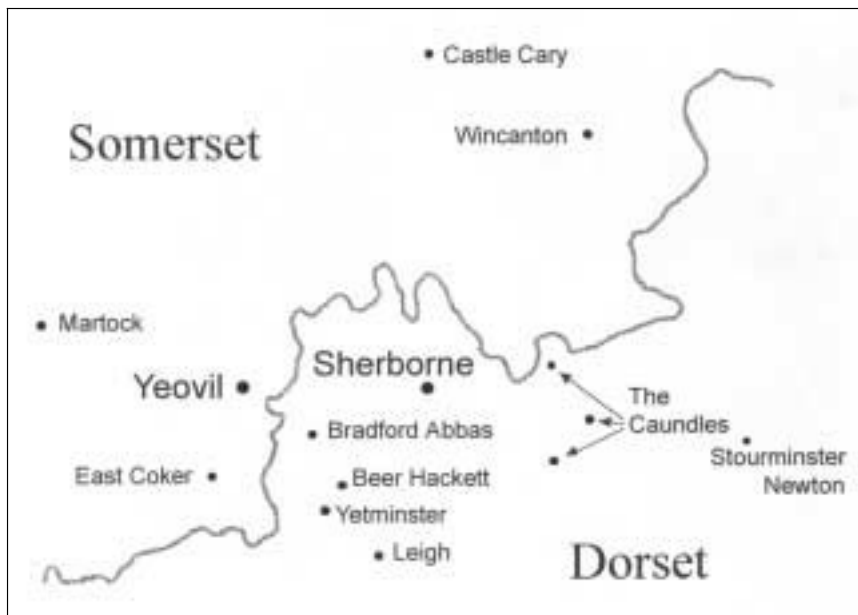
and Fall of Merry England offers a masterful and complex analysis of the effects of religious and other pressures on traditional seasonal custom throughout England during this period, taking into account variations in national and regional policy and local response.⁵ The history of dramatic activity in Sherborne and Yeovil generally provides independent confirmation of the conclusions reached by Hutton, who incidentally gained access to very little of the Yeovil evidence and overlooked some details from Sherborne. Sherborne and Yeovil's accommodation to the temporary suspension of their customs in the mid-sixteenth century adds an unusual twist, however, to Hutton's description of the 'shattering' effect Somerset's regime had on both religious ritual and seasonal custom. And the growing emphasis on dramatic expression we shall find in both towns in the 1560s and 1570s does not quite match the pattern Hutton finds of Elizabethan decline.

Yeovil lies about six miles west of Sherborne along the great road that linked early modern London to Exeter (roughly the line taken by the modern A30 from Salisbury). A relatively important road branched from the Bristol-Wells-Glastonbury-Taunton-Exeter road at Glastonbury, followed a Roman route from Yeovil to Dorchester (Dorset), and found the coast at Weymouth (Dorset). Yeovil was the largest town in the geographically distinct southeastern arc of Somerset. Sherborne, the only town of any size in its part of northern Dorset, was actually closer to Yeovil than to any sizeable town in Dorset,⁶ as well as lying on a road that would lead Yeovil citizens through Sherborne on their way to Salisbury or London.⁷

Yeovil and Sherborne shared some common characteristics. They were both sizeable market towns serving overlapping areas of rather conservative mixed husbandry, although by the later Middle Ages, the area near Yeovil was also active in leather-processing and glove-making, and Sherborne bordered a cloth-making region. Both towns were prosperous in the sixteenth century. Although some citizens in Yeovil held burgage tenures and both Sherborne and Yeovil are sometimes called boroughs, neither held a borough charter before the late sixteenth century.⁸ Tudor communal institutions in each town centred on the parish, and most evidence of dramatic activity in each town comes from churchwardens' accounts.⁹

Most important to this study, evidence shows that the two towns interacted in the 1550s and 1560s, a critical period for the dramatic practice of each community, when Sherborne responded to official disapproval of Corpus Christi observances by suspending its play and Yeovil's Robin Hood stopped presiding over the church ale.¹⁰ As we shall see, the suspension of traditional ales and plays in these towns may have brought straitened financial circumstances and that, in turn, may have encouraged both towns to develop other sources of revenue with the added benefit of fostering a spirit of regional cooperation in community celebration. The roots of the towns' community spirit, however, lie in their earlier histories of traditional customs.

In Yeovil, throughout the sixteenth century, the varied activities dominated by the venerable citizen chosen each year as the town's Robin Hood remained a consistent channel for expression of community. In 1516–17, in 1519–20, and in the 1540s, Robin Hood presided over the Yeovil Whitsun ale and collected contributions from the whole parish. Accounts from the early 1540s list a Robin Hood each year. This Henrician Robin Hood, like his Elizabethan successor, may well have performed with a 'Little John', a sheriff, and perhaps, other characters, although we cannot be certain that all the elements were present in each Robin Hood's year. The surviving traces at Yeovil of other



Map 2: Detail of region surrounding Yeovil and Sherborne defined by costume rentals

possibly mimetic customs are fragmentary. References to Yeovil's playing garments in the mid-fifteenth century and again in 1553–4 provide evidence of a link between the Whitsun ale and gathering and some mimetic activity. In addition, the town paid 'ffor Ryngyng a *pr*ocession on *cop*o^ris cristiday' in 1519–20;¹¹ the procession was, perhaps, a predecessor of the play that netted the town 5s 11d in 1539–40. No accounts between 1520 and 1539–40 survive to reveal whether 'the *Corpus Christi* playe' of 1539–40 first appeared in that year, but such an innovation would be a striking parallel to Sherborne's initiation of a *Corpus Christi* play between 1539 and 1542.¹²

The durability of Yeovil's Robin Hood custom suggests that it expressed elements important to the town's sense of community; it is the more interesting if, as Hutton argues, Robin Hoods were more vulnerable to the whims of fashion than other early Tudor seasonal customs.¹³ Stokes makes a strong case that the selection of the Yeovil Robin Hood, generally from among recent senior churchwardens, was arranged to ensure alternating influence of borough and out-parish.¹⁴ Clearly, pre-Edwardian Yeovil linked parish fund-raising to

parish government and developed seasonal customs structured carefully to unite factions from the most obviously separate parts of the community. And, according to Stokes, 'in the absence of tithing, this annual Robin Hood game was the primary means of fund-raising for the parish church'.¹⁵

In the early 1540s Yeovil's traditional customs seem to have flourished, particularly in 1540–1, the year the town sponsored both an especially profitable Robin Hood gathering and a Corpus Christi play. Regardless of their economic success, however, both the Corpus Christi play and the Robin Hood gathering disappear from the records: the play never appears again, and Robin Hood, along with Yeovil's ale and any mimetic activity associated with his office, is absent from the accounts of 1546–7, 1548–9, 1549–50, and 1550–1.¹⁶ Yeovil suspended its strongest parish-sponsored tradition by abandoning its church ale, its gathering, and anything to do with Whitsun after 1547, a pattern common in the many parishes where Hutton finds 'the regime of Protector Somerset had almost as shattering an effect upon the secular or semi-secular customs of the ritual year [as on seasonal religious customs]'.¹⁷ Yeovil's Robin Hood disappeared in 1546, only to re-emerge some five years later in 1551–2 when Yeovil chose not one but two Robin Hoods, perhaps, says Stokes, as 'an effort to re-establish Robin Hood activities'.¹⁸ That year separate collections for borough and town together produced more than any other Robin Hood before 1642. But if Stokes is correct in his surmise, the effort to re-establish the tradition did not immediately succeed despite the financial gain. Yeovil chose no more Robin Hoods until 1557–8, and we have no evidence that the brief Edwardian Robin Hood revival meant a concurrent revival of either the Whitsun ale or any sort of mimetic activity.¹⁹

In Sherborne, on the other hand, the many surviving churchwardens' accounts from before 1539 reveal a community rich in observance of seasonal religious customs, particularly those associated with Easter. Sherborne had a rood cloth to drape over the cross in Lent and paid annually to have a pascal taper made and eventually font tapers as well; the parish collected banner silver and paid it to the vicar; and its bedesmen watched the Easter sepulcher each year and kept it in repair. Sherborne also possessed special vestments for 'Dunn's mass', and on Corpus Christi day the parish paid four men to carry a shrine in procession. The only clear trace of mimetic activity in Sherborne's pre-1539 accounts is the king who presided over the parish Whitsun ale, though the Corpus Christi procession did involve, in some unknown way, 'tents' erected near the church door.²⁰ In keeping with the sober religious nature of most of Sherborne's seasonal observance, the king of Sherborne's

more frivolous ale, unlike Yeovil's Robin Hood, was ordinarily a future churchwarden, not an elder statesman.²¹

Sherborne initially reacted to the Reformation in ways much more striking than Yeovil did. Probably this reaction had to do with Sherborne abbey's strong presence in the town. In some ways the parish's worship space was emblematic of the parish/abbey relationship: until 1530 the secular parish was forced to make do with a tiny church tacked on to the great abbey structure. Relations between the parishioners and the abbey had long been strained; mid-fifteenth-century conflict between the parishioners had resulted in a major fire in the abbey church for which the bishop of Salisbury had held the secular parish responsible. The development of community institutions in Sherborne perhaps focused on the parish school, on a church house built in the 1530s, on the Whitsun ale, and on the fifteenth-century parish almshouses, built with moneys raised by massive gatherings (to which we may contrast the fifteenth-century Yeovil almshouse, founded by a single Londoner).²²

Sherborne seems to have anticipated its abbey's dissolution, as the inventory in the account for 1538–9 lists twelve albs 'bowgt from the abbey'.²³ Although the closing of a large abbey may have affected some towns adversely,²⁴ Sherborne succeeded in bringing together community efforts to pay Sir John Horsey about £260 for the abbey church and its leads, and engaged in expensive rebuilding.²⁵ Unfortunately, churchwardens' accounts do not survive for 1539–40, 1540–1, or 1541–2. When they resume, Sherborne is in a flurry; following the purchase of the abbey church, the town has torn down the old parish church and is selling building materials by the yard.²⁶

The 1540s appear to have been a decade when the triumphant parish expressed its sense of community in an elaboration and transformation of celebratory religious practice and focused all its mimetic impulses on a play staged on the feast of Corpus Christi. Like the Corpus Christi procession before it, Sherborne's play was not a parish fund-raiser; the churchwardens' accounts record no income from its production. But payments for the play replace those associated with the pre-Dissolution Corpus Christi procession in the accounts of the 1540s. Thus, money that earlier went to repair or carry the shrine paid instead for setting up pageants in the rood loft and buying 'pynnes for the pleyer^es' in 1542–3, 'payntyng' Corpus Christi garments in 1547–8, and carrying away the boards the players played upon in the church in 1543–4 and probably 1547–8. The parish inventories also refer to the 'bokes off corpus chryſti [b] playe'.²⁷ Even more indicative of this shift in customary activity, 1537–8 marks the last time the churchwarden-to-be is referred to as Sherborne's 'king' or his ale is cited as the 'king's ale', although (after a break in the

reign of Edward VI) Sherborne would continue to use the ale as a parish fund-raiser until the 1570s.²⁸

Regrettably, Protector Somerset's regime quashed the autonomy and dramatic energy Sherborne expressed from at least 1542 to 1547–8. The Corpus Christi play vanishes from the accounts, and the play book disappears from the inventory by 1549. According to Hutton, Corpus Christi plays not linked to guilds 'ought in theory to have been able to continue', but Sherborne, like all the other smaller communities Hutton sampled, prudently abandoned its play as well as any ecclesiastical practices that were out of favour, tearing down the altars and selling vestments and ornaments.²⁹ Nor did Sherborne's future churchwarden hold the regular church ale between 1549–50 and 1554–5, although the parish held a special ale in 1550–1.³⁰ Thus, both Yeovil and Sherborne suspended their most dramatic expressions of community and most effective parish fund-raising activities in response to pressures from Protector Somerset's regime.

During these years of constricted performance, the records show evidence that both Yeovil and Sherborne began to use their costumes as a minor source of income, developing a network of dramatic interaction that would draw the two towns and the outlying countryside together. Yeovil records confirm the rental of costumes (*pannis jocalibus*) to Sturminster Newton and Bradford Abbas as early as 1457–8, and it is possible that there was an old tradition of hiring out playing garments (few accounts survive between the 1440s and 1540s). Confirmation of frequent Yeovil rentals begins in the mid-sixteenth century. The parish profited from nine costume rentals in seven different years between 1553–4 and 1569–70, including loans to East Coker, Somerset, and Leigh, Dorset. Sherborne does not appear to have rented out its costumes before the mid-sixteenth century, but between 1549 and the sale of its costumes to a Yeovil citizen in 1561–2, Sherborne rented playing garments no fewer than ten times, in six different years, to other parishes or to individuals who may have been parish representatives. The renting parishes included Wincanton and Castle Cary in Somerset and Yetminster, 'Cawndell' (Purse Caundle, Stoke Caundle, or Bishop's Caundle), and 'Beer' (probably Beer Hackett) in Dorset.³¹

The distribution of known costume-renters on Map 2 shows that Sherborne and Yeovil operated in each other's counties, and each leapfrogged the other to get to potential renters. The overlap is even more intriguing if one looks at the rental dates. After an initial rental of 'the pleyers clothyng^e' in 1549–50, Sherborne seems to have made a deliberate decision to profit from her costumes, holding a special ale to maintain the garments in 1550–1 and paying

to brush them in 1550–1 and 1552–3, a year in which the parish again profited from ‘the hyer of The players Garmentes’.³² Yeovil, though it may have had an earlier tradition of costume rental, loaned the town costumes only once in Edward VI’s reign, becoming an active renter in the 1560s, at about the time Sherborne was probably considering the sale of its playing garments. In no year did both parishes hire out playing garments, although Yeovil rented out its costumes in the same year Sherborne claims to have sold its old Corpus Christi garments to ‘Richarde (*blank*) of yevyll’.³³ We may speculate that for some reason Sherborne’s costumes were more desirable in the 1550s and that Yeovil took over Sherborne’s costume business when Sherborne abandoned the practice of renting. Neither Sherborne nor Yeovil ever realized more than 8 1/2s from costume rentals in a single year: costume rentals may have helped a little with the extra expenses the parishes faced as changing national religious policy forced the purchase of gear to support different forms of worship, but they were at best a supplement to the £10–20 either parish might collect at an ale.

If we consider the territory on Map 2 delineated by the costume rentals, the 1550s seem to have witnessed the shaping of a small regional community of dramatic activity, fostered by the willingness of Sherborne and Yeovil to lend their playing garments to their smaller neighbours for a fee. Within that territory lay no other middle-sized towns with so nearly continuous a playing tradition as Yeovil or Sherborne. It is almost as if, after 1547 and the demise of Sherborne’s play, smaller neighbouring towns and villages saw the opportunity to borrow gear for costumed celebrations of their own, activities with which both Sherborne and Yeovil cooperated. The hire of costumes is, of course, strong evidence that small towns or individuals in the region sponsored some sort of dramatic activity; unfortunately, the records tell us nothing of the nature of the performances or even the time of year when they occurred. Less visible than their larger neighbours, communities like East Coker, for example, may have been able to sponsor ales with dramatic characters presiding at a time when Yeovil and Sherborne were fearful about holding ales.³⁴ Or the renting communities or individuals may have staged processions with costumed figures or other mimetic activities separate from an ale or gathering, perhaps even putting on plays to substitute for those they missed at Sherborne. The costume rentals are more frequent after Queen Mary’s succession resulted in a freer environment. It may be that the region’s mimetic focus continued for a time in the smaller communities. Church ales resumed at Sherborne in 1554–5, and Yeovil’s Robin Hood made regular collections after 1557–8, if not a year or two earlier, but although it seems likely that at least the Robin Hoods put on some kind of show, the first direct post-Edwardian evidence of actual

performance requiring costumes at either Sherborne or Yeovil is in 1566–7.³⁵ Since Yeovil continued to rent out playing garments for several years after the Yeovil Robin Hoods were again plainly involved in some costumed action with other characters, it is also clear that Yeovil was willing to aid dramatic activity in neighbouring communities while actively investing in the town's own productions.

Yeovil and Sherborne's cooperation with their neighbours from 1549 to 1572 seems to have ensured the presence of some mimetic activity in the region defined by costume rentals. Their costume rentals thus represent an interesting adaptation to the pressure to abandon their respective expressions of community. Hutton maintains that 'the government of Protector Somerset had virtually demolished the seasonal rituals of the English Church', and Sherborne's Corpus Christi play fell victim to the government's disapproval of pageantry associated with the feast.³⁶ Yeovil's Robin Hood celebrations and Sherborne's ale were also suspended. Sherborne and Yeovil, however, perhaps tempted by even tiny additions to their shrunken incomes, soon began to lend their playing garments to nearby communities, and the region continued some kind of mimetic celebration during years when the larger towns abandoned or at least muted observance of their own customs.

Both Yeovil and Sherborne would begin to pay more attention to their own traditions in the 1560s; the last rental to another community within their small dramatic region was in 1572–3. In 1566–7 the Yeovil wardens approved a payment of 3s 4d for the making of new costumes for 'pleers'.³⁷ Citing payments for ribbon lace for Little John's horn, a green silk ribbon for the sheriff, and the refeathering of Robin Hood's arrows, Stokes concludes that in early Elizabethan 'Yeovil performance had at least three traditional characters. It occurred in conjunction with the gathering and the ale, included costumes and properties, and involved ceremonial use of the drum at the ale/dinner'.³⁸ Thus after the revival of Yeovil's Robin Hoods in Mary's reign, greater emphasis on the dramatic content of Yeovil's tradition seems to have emerged in the 1560s and 1570s, despite the shadow cast by a dishonest Robin Hood whom Yeovil sued in the hundred court.³⁹

Meanwhile, Sherborne, after Edward's death, scurried to refurbish the church for the old worship, re-instituting, in particular, the Easter customs of the pre-Edwardian church.⁴⁰ But, although the junior churchwarden-to-be again presided over the Whitsun ale beginning in 1554–5, for more than a decade no evidence indicates that Sherborne staged any kind of dramatic performance. Only the rental of Sherborne's costumes may have kept the memory of her dramatic traditions alive and also supported drama in neigh-

bouring communities where Sherborne citizens might go to watch. The parish, nonetheless, sold its costumes in 1561–2; at the same time Sherborne rather grudgingly complied with the Elizabethan settlement by selling banner and sepulcher cloths.⁴¹

Changing social climate and the death of a vicar whose survival through four reigns suggests that compliance with authority was his greatest virtue⁴² may have encouraged Sherborne to a renewed interest in the drama in the late 1560s. Also influential may have been the initiative taken by John Dyer, probably a Sherborne townsman, who rented playing garments from Yeovil in 1566–7 and a room in the Sherborne church house in 1567–8 ‘to playe his enterludes yn, thre seuerall tymes’.⁴³ Four years later, in 1571–2, Sherborne paid Dyer to make garments for Corpus Christi plays, also paying for a cope and banner for the play and for the making of a giant.⁴⁴ In 1572–3 and 1573–4 Sherborne invested great time, money, and energy to produce a Corpus Christi play in its churchyard, renting standings on the church roof and in the churchyard to spectators, setting up tents as dressing rooms for the players, making many purchases for costumes and props, and perhaps indulging in spectacular special effects.⁴⁵ John Dyer’s influence appears again in a payment to him for ‘gilding of a face / for the playe’ in 1573–4.⁴⁶ Sherborne performed the play once more, apparently for the last time, in 1575–6.⁴⁷ Three of the payments show that the play treated the story of Lot’s wife and the burning of Sodom.

I have argued elsewhere that the Sherborne Corpus Christi play of the 1570s was a different play from the play of the 1540s.⁴⁸ More than twenty years separated the two productions, the old play book and costumes were gone, and Sherborne showed no immediate interest in reviving the earlier play for fifteen years after Mary’s accession. The 1540s production was partly performed inside the parishioners’ splendid, newly-acquired church, while the play of 1572–5 seems to have been entirely outdoors. The 1570s choice of subject is also representative of the early Elizabethan turn to Old Testament stories. Since the 1570s play was a new one and not a revival, Lot’s wife’s story seems a good selection for a parish interested in expending dramatic energy on a safe, non-controversial subject. Surely no one could quarrel with displaying the punishment of sinners; the spectators on the church roof could be as celebratory as they chose. In fact, parish celebration, not parish fund-raising, seems the major point of the production. In 1572–3 the play took in only £1 3s 4d in return for total expenditures of £8 16s 1/2d.⁴⁹ Much smaller expenditures in 1573–4 and 1575–6 still exceeded receipts, and it seems unlikely that the parish saw the play as a money-maker, particularly when the church ale regularly

brought in more than £20 in the 1570s.⁵⁰ The play, rather, provided an occasion for a dramatic outpouring of communal feeling. The costumes and the story encouraged common rejoicing at the punishment for sin.

Sherborne had taken earlier advantage than Yeovil of the opportunity to revive parish ales; Yeovil had been the first of the two to reinvest in the sorts of properties that would give seasonal festivities dramatic expression. While reviving its own Robin Hood play, Yeovil had taken over Sherborne's role as a supplier of costumes to others. John Dyer may have been influenced by Yeovil's example when he began to re-interest Sherborne in plays and interludes. Whether through his influence or some other stimulus, Sherborne's Corpus Christi production, at the very least, impressively proves Sherborne's ability to give communal feeling dramatic expression. Both Yeovil and Sherborne, moreover, seem not to exhibit steadily declining interest in seasonal festivities. If anything, the two communities exhibit stronger festive and dramatic traditions by 1575–6 than in 1559, proving something of an exception to the pattern Hutton describes of 'attrition [of seasonal customs and pastimes that] commenced in the middle of the 1560s and remained steady until the end of the reign'.⁵¹

That state of affairs changed radically in the late 1570s. Sherborne mounted its final parish-sponsored play in 1575–6. The church ale raised £20 in 1577; after that year comparable funds were raised by a 'collector', who, like the organizer of the church ale or the Henrician 'king of Sherborne', became junior churchwarden the following year. By 1588 the town sponsored a 'street ale', but the parish ale in the church house had disappeared from the records.⁵² There is no evidence that Sherborne resented abandoning the expressions of communal feeling that the play of Lot's wife may have evoked. Town institutions were developing and changing. Although outside pressure⁵³ may have led to the transformation of the Sherborne ale to a collection, the Sherborne parish seems to have been satisfied with existing outlets for community. The town's appetite for the dramatic may have found satisfaction in witnessing sometimes more sophisticated performances of companies of players in the church house; those players, moreover, paid the parish for playing space instead of costing the parish money.⁵⁴

Robin Hood festivities disappear from the Yeovil accounts after 1577–8, when the unusual simultaneous tenure of the Yeovil John Dyer as both senior warden and Robin Hood may indicate a parish response to special circumstances or to special pressures. The parish continued to report a church ale in most years for which an account survives. In evidence against the Yeovil churchwardens in the 1607 Quarter Sessions court, Yeovil complainants charged

that it was then 'vsuall' for the Robin Hood games 'vpon the saboth daye to have minstrelsie and dauncinge & carrynge men vpon a covell stafe' and for a band of parishioners to gather contributions from the parish. Those who refused to cooperate with the games were ridiculed or threatened.⁵⁵ Citing this case, Stokes argues that after 1578 Yeovil stopped recording the names of Robin Hoods out of 'some fear of official scrutiny', and that the games continued or were revived at some point before 1607 'in defiance of institutional pressure'.⁵⁶ Yeovil's mimetic expression of community, originally so well constructed to unite the separate parts of the parish, as respected elders adopted the guise of a bountiful bandit, had taken on a different role, says Stokes, who argues that between 1578 and 1607

social relationships, and the weight of opposition to the games must have shifted within Yeovil Minstrelsy, dancing and carrying a caviil staff had become antithetical to proper observance of the sabbath; communal acceptance of the Robin Hood metaphor had broken down; to approach a parishioner ... and demand a penny or a loaf of bread to be sold at the parish ale was now, for some, a form of extortion and assault rather than a metaphorically and dramatically conceived act of charity.⁵⁷

Yeovil's 1607 Robin Hood perhaps should also be seen against the background of a larger movement of resistance in James' reign to increasingly frequent attempts to suppress ales and revels in Somerset. In 1606, Thomas Coryate of Odcombe, muster master for Yeovil, led a mock muster from Odcombe to Yeovil where he gave an oration in favour of church ales, claiming the antiquity of such festivals against the attacks of any 'captious and carping wits', rhetoric surely designed to combat known local enmity toward church ales. According to Coryate, Yeovil entertained Odcombe worthily and in turn visited Odcombe in force at what Coryate – in his long welcoming speech – hoped would be a profitable ale.⁵⁸

What can we learn from the comparative history of Sherborne and Yeovil's very different festive traditions? Sherborne, a religiously conservative parish, perhaps was initially unified by the hostility felt by both town and outland toward the huge abbey that dominated the town and the Sherborne landscape. When the parish seized the opportunity to transform the religious rites of her Corpus Christi observance into a 'play' in the former abbey church, the secular mimetic tradition of Sherborne's king revel quickly succumbed. The parish was also a coherent and compliant community that could work together effectively to pay the large sums demanded by Sir John Horsey for the abbey

church and to keep at least some of the trappings of Catholic worship in the hands of wealthy parishioners during the Edwardian Reformation, but which quickly abandoned Corpus Christi observance when the government clearly disapproved. In the atmosphere of the 1570s the parish again seems to have surrendered peacefully to pressures to end the new Corpus Christi play and to convert the parish ale to more acceptable forms of fund-raising. It may be appropriate that Sherborne's most elaborate expression of community was a play that told the story of a foolish woman and a sinful town punished for their failure to obey authority.

Whereas Sherborne's secular king revel yielded privilege of place to the religious celebration of Corpus Christi, in Yeovil the religious ritual succumbed to the secular. Yeovil's mimetic tradition focused on the metaphor of an outlaw who marshalled contributions to benefit the community. Yeovil chose its Robin Hoods to unite disparate elements of the parish, asking a respected elder to represent a benevolent bandit at the Yeovil ale and lead a noisy band through the town, gathering funds for the parish. The perhaps-subversive Yeovil Robin Hoods of 1551–2 forecast the underground tradition of late-Elizabethan or at least early-Jacobean Robin Hoods.⁵⁹

Despite their differences, Yeovil and Sherborne's mimetic traditions responded to the pressures and opportunities of Tudor policies in remarkably parallel ways. Evidence suggests that Yeovil, and more particularly Sherborne, saw the Reformation of the 1530s as a release from constraint. Both parishes introduced a Corpus Christi play (unless Yeovil borrowed Sherborne's), although Robin Hood's Whitsun revels soon became the dominant mimetic tradition in Yeovil, to the exclusion of Corpus Christi. Both parishes initially abandoned what seem to have been coherent and effective expressions of community when both ales and Corpus Christi plays faced the displeasure of Somerset's regime. Sherborne's determined decision to rent its costumes – to let parish property serve dramatic activity that the town itself could not stage – may also represent a feeble parallel to Yeovil's defiant double Robin Hood gathering in 1551–2. The two parishes quickly revived their money-making ales when Mary's regime allowed them to do so. In the late 1560s both towns also supported a revived mimetic tradition, Yeovil by reinvesting in costumes and equipment for Robin Hood, the sheriff, and Little John, and Sherborne by allowing John Dyer to stage interludes in the church house. Finally, the central mimetic tradition of each community was apparently thriving in the 1570s when Sherborne mounted the elaborate Corpus Christi play telling the story of Lot's wife and Yeovil's Robin Hoods gathered £17 a year. In each town enthusiastic celebration of its dramatic tradition seems to have been suppressed

or driven underground in the late 1570s, although we know Yeovil's Robin Hood survived or was revived in the early seventeenth century.

More remarkable than this separate but parallel history of response are the interwoven reactions of Sherborne and Yeovil to the lean mimetic years of the early 1550s. Confronted with the loss of customs apparently important to their towns, Yeovil and Sherborne each considered using rentals of playing garments to smaller neighbours to support its own purposes, perhaps finding in such rentals a much-needed, if meagre, supplement to shrunken incomes, perhaps recognizing a way to continue mimetic expression indirectly within the region shaped by costume rentals. Although their motives and the purposes of the renting communities may remain a mystery, it is nonetheless striking that the two very different neighbours with distinct traditions seem to have cooperated to foster local drama within a small region, participating in a small industry that supported local mimetic activity in their common neighbourhood. After Sherborne sold its playing garments, moreover, a loan of costumes from Yeovil to Sherborne's John Dyer may have spurred the revived interest in drama that Sherborne expressed so grandly with a new play on Corpus Christi day in the 1570s.

Generally, Sherborne and Yeovil's dramatic histories both jointly and separately support and elaborate on the patterns of practice and decline of traditional celebrations described in Ronald Hutton's *Rise and Fall of Merry England*. The two towns' cooperative fostering in the 1550s and 1560s of what may have been *new* seasonal observances in small neighbouring communities, however, suggests a creative and complex response to the pressures, first of Somerset's Reformation and later of rapidly altering official religion, a response that does not quite correspond to Hutton's model. Similarly, both Yeovil's re-outfitted Robin Hoods of the later 1560s and 1570s and Sherborne's 1570s production of a new Corpus Christi play are too new and too flourishing to correspond neatly to the 1570s decline of Hutton's description.

Notes

- 1 Table 1 summarizes the entries in the two towns' churchwardens' accounts that provide evidence for their hiring out of costumes. Maps 1 and 2 detail the region in northern Dorset and southern Somerset defined by Sherborne and Yeovil's mid-sixteenth-century costume rentals. Most of the records that provide evidence for this essay are in James Stokes with Robert Alexander (eds), *Somerset including Bath*, 2 vols, REED (Toronto, 1996), and Rosalind Conklin Hays

and C. E. McGee (eds), *Dorset*, in Rosalind Conklin Hays, C. E. McGee, Sally L. Joyce, and Evelyn S. Newyn (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, REED (Toronto, 1999).

This paper grew out of discussions with James Stokes, REED editor for Somerset. All references to Yeovil are derived from Stokes' research, and his responses to earlier drafts have contributed significantly to my thinking. The final version of the article also owes a great deal to the skilled editorial assistance of Gloria Betcher. The responsibility for any errors is, of course, my own.

2 See the entries for 1561–2 and 1566–7 in Table 1, below.

3 Each REED collection publishes documents from either a single city or from a county. Editors' frequent conversations and the masterful command of the whole project by its director and executive editor stimulate frequent cross-collection comparisons, but the organization of the project encourages REED editors and REED users to focus on materials confined within or separated by geographical boxes or to see the materials as they relate to sweeping regional or national topics. Similarly the location and organization of archival materials disposes social and cultural historians to the same focuses.

Splendid examples of the superb studies that may be generated by such an approach include, for example, Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge, 1987), a study based on Wiltshire records. Ingram's work and those studies cited in note 4, below, all utilize sources represented in REED collections; the very different interests of their authors make them useful to the historian of drama for the broader context they can offer. The present essay is meant to illustrate the profit to be gained from deliberately stepping over traditional boundaries, however.

4 Valuable regional studies by social historians include, for example, Robert Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1989) and David Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603–1660* (Oxford, 1985). For criticism of Underdown's too schematic a division between cultural survivals in chalk and cheese regions, see Ingram, *Church Courts*, 101–2, and Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford, 1994), 161–3. Among many sweeping studies that survey the whole of England, one may mention Marjorie Keniston McIntosh, *Controlling Misbehavior in England, 1370–1600* (Cambridge, 1998), and Alison Wall, *Power and Protest in England 1525–1640* (London, 2000).

5 Ronald Hutton's *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* provides an extraordinarily detailed account of the practice of seasonal festive culture in England, locating local celebration and performance in wider contexts of religious festival and religious conflict, and economic, social, and political change. His model

incorporates both national patterns of change and regional variations. Much of his case for the celebration, continuation, or decline in seasonal customs relies on churchwardens' or borough accounts or on other documents prominent in REED volumes. Although it is impossible to reproduce the subtleties of Hutton's interpretations in a brief space, a sketch of some of his conclusions in the chapters relevant to this study may be useful for readers not acquainted with his work.

Hutton indicates that Henry VIII's reforms were vigorously enforced on the local level (73) but had relatively little effect on local seasonal customs (77). In the first eighteen months of Protector Somerset's regime, on the other hand, the abolition of religious guilds, the campaign against shrines and images of saints, and official disapproval of processions and other practices linked to Corpus Christi, Whitsun, and Easter, 'virtually demolished the seasonal rituals of the English Church' (85) and had 'almost as shattering an effect upon the secular or semi-secular customs of the ritual year' (87), discouraging parish ales, Hocktide customs, maypoles, and celebrations on Plough Monday (87–91). Mary Tudor's restoration of the Church allowed 'the seasonal festivities of early Tudor England' to reappear 'on a grand scale', permitting the revival of dramatic activity associated with Corpus Christi, Whitsun, and the veneration of saints (95–101). The costs of restoring Catholic ritual also encouraged the revival of church ales, Robin Hood customs, Hocktide gatherings, and hog-gling – Robin Hoods and hoggles were particularly popular in the southwest – although these communal fund-raising activities were not so frequent as before (100). Although local festive culture remained lively during the first decade of Elizabeth's reign, surviving the early years of the Elizabethan settlement almost unabated, the rest of Elizabeth's reign witnessed a long decline in seasonal celebration. The queen herself enjoyed such activities, which probably delayed their diminution, but by the early seventeenth century, pressure from religious reformers, together with concerns about the disorder often associated with festival, had greatly diminished the prevalence of popular celebration of traditional customs. Parishes also had shifted their fund-raising emphasis from ale or revel to the assessment of pew rents and church rates, which further contributed to the disappearance of seasonal festivities from the records (chapter 4). A 'slightly tougher sabbatarian line' (155) in the early years of James I's reign and determined attacks and literary defense of traditional culture were among the complex of factors setting the stage for a 'battle for merry England' in the period before the puritan revolution (chapter 5 *passim*).

The pattern Hutton describes often relies on so many examples that amending a single case may leave his analysis intact. For example, Hutton

includes Sherborne among the parishes that set forth a boy bishop (12). The Sherborne boy bishop was almost certainly a monastic not a secular custom. Vestments for the boy appear in church inventories from 1538–9 until they were sold in 1550–1, but it seems probable that the garments were ‘bowgt from the abbey’, like twelve albs also in the 1538–9 inventory; there is no evidence that the parish ever revived the abbey custom, particularly after the prohibition of boy bishops in 1541 (see Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 258–62 and 358). But Hutton’s description of boy bishops in secular parishes rests on so many other cases that removing this one example from his evidence makes little difference to his conclusions.

On the other hand Hutton’s contention that church ales revived in Mary’s reign is confirmed by Sherborne and Yeovil evidence, although neither Sherborne nor Yeovil is among the forty-seven parishes Hutton cites as holding church ales in the 1560s (*Rise and Fall*, 113 and n7). The Sherborne ale was held in each of the years from 1554–5 to 1578–9 for which a churchwardens’ account survives. Yeovil’s Robin Hood presumably presided over the festivities connected with the Yeovil ale in the years of the nine Yeovil churchwardens’ accounts between 1557–8 and 1569–70 in which he appears (see Table 1).

- 6 A modern Sherborne tourist map lists distances from Sherborne as follows: Yeovil, six miles; Wincanton, Somerset, ten miles (Wincanton was the most distant town that rented costumes from Sherborne); Blandford Forum, Dorset, nine miles; Shaftesbury, Dorset, seventeen miles; Dorchester, Dorset, nineteen miles. Other sizeable towns in Tudor Dorset – Lyme Regis, Bridport, Weymouth, Wimborne Minster, Wareham, and Poole – were all farther from Sherborne.
- 7 In contrast, citizens from southern and western Dorset were likely to travel to London through Dorchester and Wimborne Minster; travellers from Weymouth or Bridport would pass through Yeovil, but not Sherborne, if they went by road to Bristol. A symptom of what were probably fairly frequent communications between Yeovil and Sherborne may be seen in the long-term tenure of a standing by the Sherborne church stile held by Edward Spicer of Yeovil; see, for example, Joseph Fowler, ‘Sherborne All Hallows Churchwardens’ Accounts’, *Notes and Queries for Somerset and Dorset* [*NQSD*] 24 (1943–6), 27 [1527–8], and ‘Post-Reformation Churchwardens’ Accounts for S. Mary the Virgin, Sherborne’, *NQSD* 25 (1947–50), 259 [1554–5].
- 8 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 23–5.; Joseph Fowler, *Mediaeval Sherborne* (Dorchester, 1951), 404–5; Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 2.450, 455, and 482; J. H. Bettey, *Wessex from AD 1000* (London, 1986), 49, 117, and 137; Underdown, *Revel, Riot, and Rebellion*, 7.

- 9 See James T. Stokes, 'Robin Hood and the Churchwardens in Yeovil', in *Medieval and Renaissance Drama in England* 3 (1986), 1–25, and Rosalind Conklin Hays, "'Lot's Wife" or "The Burning of Sodom": The Tudor Corpus Christi Play at Sherborne, Dorset', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 32 (1994), 99–125.

The evidence for Sherborne is almost entirely derived from the long run of surviving churchwardens' accounts; there are accounts for 112 years between the early sixteenth century and 1642. The Dorset Record Office (DoRO) treats the accounts for the pre-Dissolution parish church (All Hallows) and the converted abbey church that replaced it (St Mary's) as a single series. Excerpts from the accounts are printed in A. D. Mills, 'A Corpus Christi Play and Other Dramatic Activities in Sixteenth-Century Sherborne, Dorset', *Malone Society Collections* 9 (1977 for 1971), 1–15. The DoRO has reformed the catalogue numbers for the manuscripts since Mills' article and Hays' "'Lot's Wife'" appeared. For the differences between my dating and Mills', see Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 356–60. Most of the churchwardens' accounts before 1560 are printed in Fowler, 'Sherborne All Hallows' and 'Post-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts', *NQSD* 23–6 (1942–55), *passim*. References in the accounts to dramatic activity are printed in Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 250–73.

The Yeovil churchwardens' accounts are not nearly as complete as those of Sherborne. Many were too fragile to be produced when Stokes first worked on Yeovil, and some survive only in antiquarian transcriptions. For a summary of the condition of the accounts, see Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 2.481–2, and Stokes, 'Robin Hood', notes 9–10. Excerpts from the accounts and other records relating to dramatic activity in Yeovil are printed in Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.405–13.

- 10 According to Hutton, official disapproval of Corpus Christi celebration was a part of an effective campaign against saints and many seasonal customs after July 1547 (*Rise and Fall*, 79–83). Citing documents from the diocese of Wells, Hutton says that royal visitors in western England forbade church ales (88).
- 11 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 7.
- 12 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.406; Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 7. Pointing out that this is the only recorded performance of a Corpus Christi play at Yeovil, Stokes speculates that the play may have been performed by visitors from Sherborne (*Somerset*, 2.482); a gap in the Sherborne accounts means we cannot tell whether or not Sherborne staged a Corpus Christi play before 1542–3.
- 13 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 67.
- 14 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 4–5.

- 15 James T. Stokes, 'Drama and the Resistance to Institutions in Somerset', *Research Opportunities in Renaissance Drama* 33 (1994), 158.
- 16 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 8.
- 17 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 87.
- 18 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 2:967
- 19 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 8–9. No documents record a Robin Hood presiding over an ale or gathering in Yeovil between 1552 and 1557. Hutton emphasizes that there are almost no parishes holding church ales in the final four years of Edward's reign; in addition, visitors to the rebellious or restless southwest in 1547 specifically forbade them (*Rise and Fall*, 87–8).
- 20 For Sherborne's king and the tents, see Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 250–8. Early churchwardens' accounts printed by Fowler (see notes 7 and 9, above) yield many examples of Sherborne's pre-Reformation seasonal religious practices.
- 21 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 356.
- 22 For a more detailed interpretation of the pre-Reformation parish in Sherborne, see Hays, "Lot's Wife", 100–4, and Fowler, *Mediaeval Sherborne*, chapters 9–12. For a detailed account of the fire, see also M. M. C. Calthrop, 'Abbey of Sherborne', in William Page (ed), *The Victoria History of the County of Dorset*, 2 vols, The Victoria County History of the Counties of England [VCH] (London, 1908), 2.67–8. For the foundation of the Yeovil almshouses, see Chancellor T. Scott Holmes, 'Religious Houses' in *The Victoria History of the County of Somerset*, 7 vols, VCH (1911; reprint, London, 1969), 2.161.
- 23 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 358.
- 24 Cerne Abbas, for instance, is said to have entered a period of economic decline (Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 58 and 103.
- 25 Fowler, 'Sherborne All Hallows', *NQSD* 24, 287–8. Total expenses in 1537–8 (the last complete account before the arrangement was made with Sir John) were £40 6s 4d.
- 26 A 'yarde' of the All Hallows tower sold for 5s in 1543–4 (Fowler, 'Post-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts', *NQSD* 25, 25).
- 27 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 259–61 and 358–9. The playbook first appears in the inventory for 1544–5.
- 28 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 258. Sherborne's ale was less important for parish financial health than Yeovil's, particularly after 1542. The 'king ale' had raised from £12–17 in the 1530s. Ales from 1542 to 1547 raised £9–15 per year; there are no ale receipts for 1548, and the ale of 1549 netted only 9s. (Hays, et al. [eds], *Dorset/Cornwall*, 255–71). Total receipts per year, 1542–7 might fall to only £35, but sales of leads from the old church and other building

materials might also raise receipts to more than £120 (Fowler, 'Sherborne All Hallows' and 'Post-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts', *passim*), and Sherborne also had a steady income from rents.

- 29 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 83. No guild at Sherborne was among those dissolved by the chantries act of 1547; see M. M. C. Calthrop, 'Ecclesiastical History', in *VCH: Dorset* 2.27. For the sale of church goods, see Fowler, 'Post-Reformation Churchwardens' Accounts', *NQSD* 25, 122, and J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), 101 and 103–4. Although Hutton claims the Corpus Christi procession was revived in Mary's reign, I find no evidence in the accounts to confirm such a revival; the Corpus Christi play of the 1540s had replaced the Corpus Christi procession, only to collapse under pressure from Somerset's Reformation. See Ronald Hutton, *The Stations of the Sun: The History of the Ritual Year in Britain* (Oxford, 1996), 309.
- 30 For the unprofitable ale of 1549–50, the special ale 'for the maynteynyge of the palyenge Garmentes', and the revived ale in 1554–5, see Hays et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 262–3.
- 31 These rentals are summarized in Table 1, below.
- 32 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 262–3.
- 33 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 265.
- 34 At a much later date, and in different circumstances, Martin Ingram suggests, 'church ales survived best in *small* villages' (*Church Courts*, 101); it is possible a similar pattern operated in this region of northern Dorset and southern Somerset in the 1550s, perhaps because the authorities were most interested in forbidding the "many inconveniences" of church ales in larger communities (Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 88).
- 35 The accounts for revived Sherborne ales and Yeovil Robin Hood collections from 1554–5 to 1565–6 report nothing but the money made by the parish. In 1566–7 Yeovil rented players' garments to (*blank*) Dyer of Sherborne; John Dyer may have used the costumes of that rental to stage the interludes for which he rented a room in the Sherborne church house in 1567–8. In 1566–7 Yeovil also had new gowns and jerkins made for players. For the records see Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.407–8, and Hays et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 263–5.
- 36 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 85.
- 37 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.408.
- 38 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 5.
- 39 Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 7 and n24. The Yeovil Robin Hood must thus be added to the three Devon Robin Hoods and the Abingdon one whom Hutton notes appeared at parish feasts in the 1560s (*Rise and Fall*, 114).

- 40 DoRO: PE/SH, CW 1/26 sheet [2] and CW 1/31 mb [2].
- 41 DoRO: PE/SH, CW 1/35 sheet [1]; Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 265.
- 42 John Chetmill retained the living in Sherborne from 1538 (before the parish took over St Mary's) until 1566. See Bettey, *Wessex*, 165–6, and Fowler, *Mediaeval Sherborne*, 277, 286, and 322–3.
- 43 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.408; Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 265. Citing entries from the Sherborne and Yeovil parish registers, Stokes argues convincingly that the Sherborne John Dyer and a Yeovil John Dyer who was Robin Hood in 1577–8 are different men (*Somerset*, 2.970–1).
- 44 The parish rewarded the queen's players in the same year. Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 266.
- 45 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 267–70.
- 46 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 269.
- 47 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 270–1.
- 48 See Hays, "Lot's Wife", *passim*.
- 49 Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 267–8.
- 50 In 1573–4 receipts for the play were 13s 10d, which could help to offset the 20s 5d the parish spent on the play that year, particularly since 6s 1d was spent to ready space for paying spectators, including boards to lay on the church leads, men to keep the leads, and leaves to strew upon the boards on the day of the play; similarly, 10s paid the parish for standings on the church leads on the play day in 1575–6 defrayed part of the 14s spent for gunpowder, 'necessaries', and costume repair. See Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 269–71. For church ale revenues see Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 266–70.
- 51 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 119.
- 52 For street ales and collectors, see Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 361. The Henrician 'kyng of the Towne', 'kynges Ale', or 'kyng of Shirborne' appears in the records printed in Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 250–8.
- 53 In *Rise and Fall*, chapter 4, Hutton argues that pressures against local celebration could come from evangelical protestantism or from local elites fearful of disorder and could carry weight at county, town, or village levels; see, particularly, pages 143–6.
- 54 Two groups of players paid the parish in 1588–9 and again in 1589–90; one group paid in each of the years 1590–1, 1597–8, 1598–9, 1599–1600, 1600–1, 1601–2, and 1602–3. Hays et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 271–3.
- 55 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.411 and 2.481–3.
- 56 Stokes, 'Drama and the Resistance', 159–60.
- 57 Stokes, 'Drama and the Resistance', 160. This interpretation of Yeovil's experience fits well with Hutton's paradigm. By the end of Elizabeth's reign,

Hutton says ‘the drive against the secular and semi-secular customs of the old ritual year ... succeeded in severing the link between those customs and parish and municipal affairs in most communities of the realm. Furthermore, reinforced by economic pressures it produced a new intolerance of those entertainments when carried on by persons acting outside of any official framework’ (*Rise and Fall*, 151, and see 160 for his interpretation of the Yeovil case).

- 58 Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.189–200; for Stokes’ interpretation of Somerset controversy about traditional entertainment, 1594–1633, see 1.453–4, 475–7, and 485–8; for Somerset mock musters, see Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 2.492. For more on Coryate, see James Stokes, ‘Landscape, Movement, and Civic Mimesis in the West of England’, *Early Theatre* 6.1 (2003), 40–2.
- 59 Hutton, *Rise and Fall*, 118–22.

**Table 1: Church Ales, Robin Hoods,
and Rentals of Playing Garments¹**

The following table lists rentals of playing garments by either Yeovil or Sherborne between 1549–50 and 1572–3. In years in which Yeovil records a Robin Hood or Sherborne accounts refer to a church ale, ‘RH’ or ‘C’ is placed in the appropriate column. If the accounts indicate that Sherborne or Yeovil hired out their costumes, but do not specify the community renting the garments, the table lists the name of the individual renter or lists the renter as ‘unnamed’.

Year	Yeovil Rentals	Sherborne Rentals
1549–50	—	C Unnamed 5s
1550–1	—	Ale to maintain playing garments
1551–2	RH	—
1552–3	—	— Unnamed 10s
1553–4	— East Coker 6s	—
1554–5	—	C
1555–6	<i>No account</i>	C henry Gardener 12d men of yatemester ² 1s 8d
1556–7	<i>No account</i>	C wyncalton ³ 5s
1557–8	RH	C george churchell 12d castyll cary ⁴ 2s 6d wyncarnton 3s 4d cawndell ⁵ 1s 4d

1558-9	RH			C	ffuller of Byere ⁶	2s 4d
1559-60	<i>No account</i>			<i>No account</i>		
1560-1	—	Unnamed ⁷	2s	<i>No account</i>		
1561-2	RH	Unnamed	2s	C	Sale of costumes to Richard [blank] of yevyll ⁸	5s
1562-3	RH	William Strood	2s	<i>No account</i>		
1563-4	RH			<i>No account</i>		
1564-5	RH	Unnamed Unnamed ⁹	3s 4d 4s	<i>No account</i>		
1565-6	—			C		
1566-7	RH [blank]	Dyer of Sherborne	7s	C		
1567-8				C		
1568-9	RH			C		
1569-70	RH	Lye ¹⁰ Unnamed	2s 4d 1s 8d	C		
1570-1	—			C		
1571-2	—			C		
1572-3	RH	Place unnamed	3s	C		

Notes to Table 1

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- 1 The information about Sherborne is from Hays, et al. (eds), *Dorset/Cornwall*, 262-7. The information about Yeovil is from Stokes, 'Robin Hood', 7-10 and notes 41-2, and Stokes with Alexander (eds), *Somerset*, 1.406-9.
 - 2 Yetminster, Somerset.
 - 3 Wincanton, Somerset.
 - 4 Castle Cary, Somerset.
 - 5 Purse Caundle, Stourton Caundle, or Bishop's Caundle, Dorset.
 - 6 Probably Beer Hackett, Dorset.
 - 7 Although references to loans of playing garments in 1560-1 and 1561-2 to unnamed customers occur in 'Robin Hood', Stokes does not print the entries in the records of *Somerset*.
 - 8 Yeovil, Somerset.
 - 9 This rental was levied in the account for 1566-7 (Stokes with Alexander [eds], *Somerset*, 1.408).
 - 10 Leigh, Dorset.