

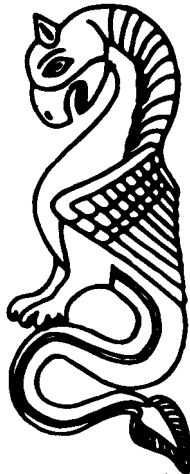
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THE ROGERS' DESCRIPTION OF THE CHESTER PLAYS

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The Rogers' Brevaryes are early seventeenth-century histories of the city of Chester and of particular interest to scholars of the medieval drama because they include the earliest and most extensive descriptions of that city's medieval plays. The Brevaryes, the accounts of guild expenditures and the stage directions in the texts are our principal sources of information about the production of the plays; however, the Brevaryes and the stage directions sometimes seem contradictory and the guild accounts are often vague or inconclusive. When one is confronted by these apparent contradictions, one is inclined perhaps to dismiss parts of the Rogers' descriptions on the grounds that they were written down some 35 years after the last performance, whereas the guild accounts and the texts reflect more closely the actual conditions of performance. The Brevaryes are, none the less, contemporary or near-contemporary documents and should not be dismissed unless there is clear proof of their inaccuracy. Some of the details in the Brevaryes have never been disputed; others have been. As a result, the whole description is regarded with considerable suspicion and is often enough rejected as being inaccurate.¹ Despite the unlikelihood of resolving all the problems raised by the descriptions, an examination of the Brevaryes to determine their usefulness as pieces of evidence is certainly worth-while.

Anyone who attempts an assessment of the Brevary descriptions is immediately confronted by several difficulties, some of which need to be stated at the outset. First, there is no definitive Brevary; instead, there is a series of editions which are often similar in some points but divergent in others. The descriptions are general rather than particular and thus we should assume that they are more valuable for providing guidelines to our understanding of the productions than for solving problems of individual guild presentations. The authorship of the Brevaryes is unclear. David Rogers attributes the Brevary to his father, Archdeacon Robert Rogers; however, David was clearly involved in more than just copying the Brevaryes between the years 1609 and 1623. Further, it is possible that much of the Rogers' information

comes from earlier sources and, therefore, it would be inaccurate to claim either one as sole "author" of the contents. The Brevaryes may be collections of materials compiled by Robert or David Rogers or both, or the descriptions may be the recollections of Robert or David or of some anonymous recorder. An examination of extant sources of the Brevaryes may tell us something about the methodology of the two Rogers and may lead us to a better understanding of the reliability of the descriptions. Finally, we should keep in mind that the man responsible for the final versions of the Brevaryes is an antiquarian and not a literary man. This distinction is important because it may help to account for the hostile note that appears at times in the descriptions. The antiquarian is interested in any local custom; however, an antiquarian, particularly one who is also a Reformed Christian, may be offended by the content of the plays and the means of presenting that content and may feel obliged to attack the literary work for its improprieties. We should not conclude, however, that such an attack is proof of the antiquarian's inability to transmit accurately the outward manifestation of the custom he is describing.

The number of variables noted above which impinge upon our interpretation of the Rogers' descriptions should suggest the difficulties of assessing their value as evidence. Nevertheless, because the Brevaryes are potentially of great importance to our understanding of the plays, and because there are available some unpublished documents which might further clarify the statements in the descriptions, a re-examination of the Brevaryes seems desirable. The purpose of this discussion, therefore, is to examine the Brevaryes, their sources and make-up, their authorship and purpose, to determine how reliable they may be and to establish the extent of their usefulness in discussions of the production of the plays. The discussion will be confined as much as possible to an analysis of the Rogers' descriptions as opposed to the advancement of further speculations about the structure of the stage in Chester.

The extant 'Brevaryes' and their authorship

Four copies of the Brevary in David Rogers' hand are extant (see the transcriptions in the Appendix): one at the Chester Archives, one at the Cheshire Record Office, and two at the British Museum, as well as some nineteenth-century transcriptions from a fifth copy which I have been unable to locate thus far.² The Chester copy (Chester) is undoubtedly the earliest; it is dated and signed by "D. Rogers" in the upper left-hand corner of the title-page and at the end of the preface, "3 July 1609." On fol. 87r, at the end of Chapter 7, which deals with the earls of Chester,

there is a reference in the last entry to "this presente yeare 1610" and another signature, "D Rogers: desember 1610." These signatures and several references in the text indicate that David Rogers made the copy between July 1609 and December 1610. The basic text is written in a brown ink; however, there are numerous corrections and deletions in black ink, again in David's hand, and there are additions, in black ink, to the lists of earls, bishops and deans which bring the material up to the year 1619. Furthermore, there are abundant numbers of blank pages at the end of each chapter and at intervals throughout the text which suggest that David left space for later additions.

The earliest British Museum copy, MS Harl. 1944, seems to have been directly transcribed from the corrected Chester copy. The note on the title-page, now almost obliterated, and the signature at the end of the preface merely note the date as 1609; however, most of Harl. 1944, including the updated lists, is written in the same brown ink and would appear to have been written at one time in 1619. The blank pages have been drastically reduced and now occur only at the ends of chapters. Especially interesting are a series of short black lines which appear periodically in the play section of the Chester copy and which apparently indicate stopping places in the process of making the Harl. 1944 copy. Four of the six marks in the Banns, for example, occur at a place corresponding to the end of one page and the beginning of another in Harl. 1944.³ This suggests that, though there are a few additions in the Harley play account, the Harley MS was copied directly from Chester. These two Brevaryes are virtually the same in content and I shall refer to them as the early Brevaryes. The early Brevaryes contain, in Chapter IV, the description of the performance and pageant wagons, the late Banns, a list of the companies and their parts in the play, and two short attacks on the plays' "Ignorance" and "Abomination of Desolation."

The third copy (CRO) in David's hand is now in the Cheshire Record Office and appears to have been written about 1619, or, in other words, shortly after David had made the second copy of the early Brevary. The title suggests David's increased participation in the composition of the Brevary:

A breauary or Collectiones of the moste anchant Cittie of Chester reduced into these chapters followeing: by the reuerend: Master Ro: Rogers Bachelor in diuinitie, Archdeacon of chester, and one of the prebundes of the Cathedrall Church in Chester: written a new by his sonne DR: a well willer to that anchant Cittie (CRO, fol. 1r).

The latest date in the original hand is in the final entry in the list of Bishops (fols. 69v - 70r), where David mentions that John Bridgman was made bishop on 13 June 1619. Though the format and content of this copy are essentially the same as those of the early Brevaryes, there has been some rewriting, correction of factual information, expansion of some entries and deletions in others; David, obviously, has begun to revise the work of his father. The play entry has been revised and contains only the description of the performance and the list of companies and their parts.

BM Harl. 1948 is a later version which has undergone further revision and condensation. Though there is no date on the title-page, there are indications in the text that the revision was undertaken during the years 1619-23, the copy being made, therefore, sometime in 1623 or shortly thereafter.⁴ With the exception of some deletions and additions and some consolidation of material, Harl. 1948 is, in the main, a reproduction of the early Brevaryes; however, the description of the plays in chapter four has been rewritten and, as in CRO, the Banns and the attack deleted. Thus Harl. 1948 contains only the description, albeit an altered one, and the list of companies and their parts in the play.

The fifth copy (Lysons) of the Brevary was used by the Lysons brothers in their writing of the Magna Britannia.⁵ All that remains in the Lysons volume of notes is a single sheet of paper containing a nineteenth-century transcription of four entries from chapter four. Unfortunately, not enough of the Brevary exists in the notes to establish the priority of this copy over that of Harl. 1948 or vice versa. Nevertheless, the title indicates that it is a later version than Chester, Harl. 1944 and CRO, and the St George's Day Race entry, absent in the early Brevaryes, contains the 1623 date. The notes contain the entries describing the various homages to the drapers, Archdeacon Rogers' commendation of the changes made in these homages under Mayor Gee, as well as the Sheriffs' Breakfast, the St George's Day Race and the account of the plays. The description of the homages and Rogers' commendations are virtually the same as those in Harl. 1948 and give assurance, I think, that the whole sheet is an accurate transcription of a version identical with Harley at this point. The other entries are significantly different in a number of details and could not have been derived from Harl. 1948 or any other extant copy. My conclusion is that the Lysons Brevary is another version of the late Brevary. The play entry, though different in a number of details from Harl. 1948, contains, like it, only the description of the performance and the list of companies and their parts in the plays. The entry ends with an attack on the plays; it is a shortened version modelled on the attack in the early Brevaryes.

In summary, we are in possession of five copies of the Brevary containing four different versions of the play descriptions, all of which, written between the years 1609 and 1623, have a core of similar details as well as some variations.

David Rogers' contemporaries and succeeding generations of antiquarians associated the Brevary with the Archdeacon Robert Rogers who died about 1595.⁶ This attribution, quite naturally, arises from the titles of the late Brevaryes and from the Preface of the early ones. The Preface, in part, states:

this worke heare followinge was the collectiones of
a lerned and Reuerende father within this Cittie:
which worke I muste craue the readers hereof not
to contemne, because of the defectes herein,
assuringe you, that whatsoeuar is wantinge, either
for lerninge or Readinge it is not for the wantes,
that weare in the author hereof . . . But the Reson
whye it was not perfected was the ereukeable will
of God. whoe before he coulde finishe this . . .
called hime and gathered hime to his fathers . . .
Therefore againe I craue the Readers hereof to
Impute the defectes herein to the vnskillfull writer . . .⁷

The titles of all the copies of the Brevary, as well as the Preface, suggest that the material is a collection left unassembled at the death of the Archdeacon and put together by his son, David.

Though the titles and prefaces attribute the Brevary to Archdeacon Rogers, the existence of several versions, all made years after the Archdeacon's death, argue that David played a larger role in their composition than he admits. Also, not only is there no definitive Brevary but the versions contain material which is mutually contradictory or which seems to disagree with external evidence. Professor Salter, for example, notes that the early description says the pageant had six wheels, the late one, four.⁸ He also argues that certain facts in the description of Harl. 1944 do not seem to agree with our other sources of information: e. g. that the pageants are said to contain two rooms, one atop the other, with the top one being "open" (i. e. roofless), that the city crier read the banns when the records show they were ridden by the companies, that the description mentions 24 parts and that David lists 25, and so forth.⁹ These contradictions and the ambiguous statements about authorship justifiably raise the question of the accuracy of the descriptions. Rather than reject the descriptions out of hand, however, I think an investigation of the process of the compilation of the Brevaryes may resolve some of these apparent contradictions.

The Rogers' sources

The remainder of this article will be concerned with a discussion of the Brevaryes and the accuracy of the play entries. Though we may remain sceptical of the writer's abilities as an historian, we cannot suppose that David invented the whole entry. Either the description is an eyewitness account or it is based on sources which, themselves, may be eyewitness accounts. Eyewitness accounts are not infallibly accurate; we cannot prove that Rogers did not "mis-remember" the play productions or that his source, if he had one, was reliable. The contemporaneity of the descriptions, however, should dispose us towards the acceptance of their accuracy unless we can find evidence which negates Rogers' assertions. Unfortunately, we do not have the sources for the descriptions themselves; but we do have sources for other items in the Brevary and perhaps by analyzing them we can come to some conclusions about the nature of the material and Rogers' treatment of it.

The key-words in the titles of the various copies are "Collectiones," "reduced," and "scatered notes." These words, together with the statements in the preface, suggest that the Archdeacon left a quantity of material on Chester which David arranged and/or edited, or condensed into the chapters as they now stand. Some of the material was copied from still extant records; for example, the description of the streets and wards of the city is taken verbatim from the prefatory material in the Chester Assembly Book, begun in 1532, or some like source, while the list of mayors and sheriffs included in the Chester Brevary and at the end of Harl. 1944 is related in some way to similar lists compiled before 1594 when Mayor Aldersey undertook the making of a new and more accurate list.¹⁰ The lengthy sections on the earls of Chester is probably derived from sources which were shared by a parallel group of early histories frequently bearing the name of the Breiffes of Chester.¹¹ Though the Brevary and Breiffes contain similar material, there are sufficient differences in the texts and arrangement to suggest that they have no direct relationship to each other. Other parts of the Brevary cannot be traced so directly or even indirectly, but the materials copied verbatim from earlier accounts may suggest that neither David nor the Archdeacon was responsible for much of the content of the material and that, if the description of the plays was also copied verbatim, it may be based on eyewitness accounts of the sixteenth and possibly of the fifteenth century. This argument is by no means conclusive; the fact that the Archdeacon and/or David copied most of their material from older sources does not mean that all of it was copied. Nevertheless, if it can be shown that their usual practice was merely to transcribe their material, then one must have reservations about attributing

the authorship of the description of the plays to either of them.

A related, and perhaps more plausible, alternative in the light of the four variant descriptions, is that the Archdeacon collected data about the plays from several sources and that David compiled his description from these notes. This possibility is suggested by the fact that the late Banns, which occur in the early Brevaryes, also appear at the beginning of the 1600 and 1604 copies of the plays and thus demonstrably predate the early Brevaryes. Furthermore, the list of companies and the parts they played apparently exists as an independent document; if this is the case, the discrepancy between the 24 parts mentioned in the description and the 25 parts listed after the Banns may be attributed to David's casually pulling together his material without paying too much attention to its content. The unnecessary repetition of the sites for the performance of the plays in the early Brevaryes may also suggest a pulling together, though clumsily, of disparate notes. Lastly, the four versions of the descriptions are not totally independent accounts of the plays. There are frequent similarities in phraseology, and the statements about the construction of the pageant wagons and the sites of the performances are virtually the same in all the descriptions. There are enough differences, including those of organization, to indicate that the later descriptions were not copied directly from the earlier or from each other, and this fact, in turn, suggests that David may have returned to his original notes each time he wrote a new Brevary, or that he revised the descriptions in the light of new material which came into his possession after the compilation of the 1609 Brevary.

That David did come into possession of new information and used it to revise the Brevary is demonstrable in his treatment of the first performance of the plays. In the early Brevaryes and CRO, Chapter VIII on the governance of the city ends with this note:

In the time of the firste maior of Chester whoe is thoughte to be Sir Iohn Arnewaye the Whitson playes weare made by a Monke of Chester, and was by the saide maior published and sett out at the charges of euery company with their pageantes as is afore expressed, And the said monke Rondulph whoe did make the saide playes lyeth buried in the Marchantes Ile within the Cathedrall Church of Chester . . .

(Chester, fol. 105r)

An early tradition in Chester asserted that Arnewaye was the first mayor of that city and, in fact, the list of mayors in the Chester copy begins with Arnewaye under the date of 1329. Tradition also connected Arnewaye with the first production of the plays. The item above is dropped entirely from Harl. 1948 and we can see a significant alteration in the reporting of the tradition in the following descriptions:

. . . this monke in a good desire to doe good published the same. then the firste Maior of Chester. namely Sir Iohn Arnewaye knighte he caused the same to be played . . . (Chester, fol. 18r)

The time they weare firste sett forthe, and played was in anno: 1339: Sir Iohn Arnewaye beinge mayor of Chester. (Harl. 1948, fol. 64r)

. . . the firste time they were acted or playd was in the time of Sir John Arnewaye aboute the firste yeare of his Maroltie aboute Anno Dom. 1328 . . .

(Lysons, Add. 9442, fol. 295r)

Both the late Brevaryes alter the text so that the emphasis is shifted from the "firste Maior" to the first performance of the plays. Rogers obviously has discovered that Arnewaye was not the first mayor of Chester as the older tradition had asserted; nevertheless, he has maintained the other tradition, which was not disputed until modern times, that the plays began in Arnewaye's mayoralty. David's new source was probably Mayor Aldersey's list, begun in 1594, and therefore unlikely to have been available to the Archdeacon, which replaced Arnewaye as first mayor with Sir Walter Lynnett.¹² A thorough examination of the Brevary would undoubtedly turn up other revisions and corrections of this kind; it is only necessary here to show that David went back to his old materials and came into possession of new material, all of which was used in compiling the later Brevaryes.

It is possible, I think, to discern the vague outlines of the process of composition of the Brevary. In 1595, Archdeacon Rogers died leaving his collection of materials about Chester in a disordered state. This collection consisted of material copied verbatim from or based on material in earlier sources, and included the general topics of other collections such as the Breifffes of Chester. In 1609, David began to take up the work of his father; he apparently was uncritical and merely put together the materials left. Periodically he brought some of the material up to date by adding

the most recent dean's or bishop's name to the lists. This work was carried on until 1619. During that 10-year period, David became aware that there were inaccuracies as well as inelegancies and repetitions in the text. Between 1619 and 1623, he carried out a series of revisions based on more accurate material or, at least, material he believed to be more accurate.

It would be fruitless to try further to attach the authorship of the descriptions to David or the Archdeacon or to some unknown eyewitness; my own inclination is towards the view that David was working from pieces of information gathered and/or composed by the Archdeacon; however, there is no definite proof of this except perhaps in David's own statements about the Brevary. Nor is there any definite proof that David himself composed the descriptions since he disclaimed the authorship.

The attacks on the plays

Most of the material in the Brevaryes is reported in an unbiased and neutral fashion; however, in the chapter on the city's "lawdable exercises," there are several hostile remarks, one of which is an attack on the plays' "Clowde of Ignorance" and "Abomination of Desolation" (Chester, fol. 23r). These attacks and other notes of hostility raise the issue of the author-compiler's ability to transmit accurately a description of the production of the plays. Professor Salter asserts that three items contain hostile remarks about the plays and implies that this hostility may prejudice the evidence.¹³ The hostile remarks are included in

- (1) the marginalia of the late Banns;
- (2) the continuation of the Banns, which appears only in the early Brevaryes;
- (3) the attacks at the end of the Banns and the company lists.

All of this material, with the exception of a short attack at the end of the company list in Lysons, occurs only in the early Brevaryes. Frequently, the tone is not so much one of hostility as of condescension. Further, it is not possible to determine whether the sentiments are those of the author or whether they are merely reported by him.

The marginalia, which appear alongside the banns and throughout much of the Brevary, may have been written by David; they are, however, cue notes to, or a condensed version of, the principal points of the accompanying text and, where they display any attitude

at all, it is that of the text to which the marginalia refer. Compare, for example, the following gloss and its text:

Marg: heare[he]confesseth, that the liued in the
time of Ignorance wantinge knowledge to vse
the holy thinges of God arighte, yet this monke
had a good entente to doe good, thoe blyndlye
he did shew it: /

Banns: As all that shall see them shall most wellcome be,
so all that doe heare them, we most humbly praye
not to compare this matter or storye,
with the age or tyme wherein we presently staye
but to the tyme of Ignorance, wherein we doe straye,
and then dare I compare, that this lande througheout
none had the like, nor the like durste sett out.

The glossator, like the writer of the Banns, talks about the crudity of the former age; he does not attack the plays. In fact, he appears to be apologizing for the naïvety of the text and the production in order to gain a sympathetic audience.

The continuation of the Banns, no matter who wrote it or when, is in much the same vein:

ffor then shoulde all those persones that as Gods doe
playe
in Clowdes come downe with voyce & not be seene
ffor no man can proportion that Godhead I saye
To the shape of man face nose & eyne
But sethence the face gilte doth disfigure the man that
deme
A Clowdy Coueringe of the man a voyce only to heare
And not God in shape or person to appeare.

It will be seen that the continuator is not hostile towards the plays. He does not attack the content but comments on the naive and improper production methods of his ancestors. Salter suggests, on the grounds that the continuation is initialled "D. R.," that David wrote it for a proposed revival in 1600. But even Salter is sceptical about the authenticity of the reputed revival plans; furthermore, he does not explain why he thinks a man hostile to the plays would be writing additional texts for their revival.¹⁴

The statements at the end of the Banns and at the end of the company lists are quite obviously hostile. It is peculiar that such notes should appear at the end of pages of material devoted to the plays. The attack on the plays is deleted from CRO and Harl. 1948,

and only part of it appears in the Lysons version. Are we to conclude then that David was hostile to the plays in 1609 and again in 1623 when he wrote the Lysons copy, but not in 1619 and 1623 when he wrote CRO and Harl. 1948? It seems likely that David is either reporting sentiments found in his notes or, if he himself wrote the attack, that he included the lengthy section on the plays because of their antiquarian interest. However, I do not see that even if hostility is proven one can conclude that the witness is inaccurate. He may be lack-lustre in his task; he may be incomplete in his descriptions; but he need not be inaccurate in what he does say.

An analysis of the descriptions of the plays

It is proposed at this point to re-examine the descriptions of the plays in order to reconcile, where possible, discrepancies which appear in the different versions and to substantiate, where that can be done by reference to other records, the validity of the descriptions. Throughout the discussion which follows I will adhere to David's arrangement of the material in the Chester copy. The reader should note that David altered his plan of organization in the later copies.

The popular tradition in Chester was that the plays were written by a monk of the Abbey of St Werburgh named Rondoll and were performed under the first mayor, Sir John Arnewaye. This monk has frequently been associated with Ranulf Higden, the author of the Polychronicon; but, as Professor Salter has convincingly argued, the attribution is undoubtedly a local fiction which perhaps arose in response to agitation against the plays.¹⁵ We are unlikely ever to know the author of the plays, if indeed there was a single author, but it is conceivable that a man named Rondoll did write most of them and that, as time passed, this monk was identified with Chester's well-known historian.

That the plays were first performed under Arnewaye is no doubt equally erroneous. Again Salter's argument is convincing; he believed that the tradition that the plays were produced for the first time under the supposed first mayor arose in order to bolster up the plays by claiming antiquity for them.¹⁶ But we know that Arnewaye was not the first mayor and that his mayoralty cannot be connected with the years cited by Rogers. The earliest lists of mayors and sheriffs usually assign Arnewaye to the years 1327-29; however, William Aldersey began a new compilation based on documents in his possession which placed Arnewaye's mayoralty in 1268-78 and which demonstrated that the first mayor was Sir

Walter Lynnett.¹⁷ Aldersey's list is undoubtedly the accurate one, as extant charters prove; moreover, it may be significant that Aldersey does not include the notice of the first performance of the plays under Arnewaye's name. Since his entries are made on the basis of documents in the city's possession he may have been sceptical of the tradition and decided to delete it from his list.

David Rogers did not invent this tradition; he merely transmitted it. In fact, he probably drew the information from the late Banns, as is suggested by similarities of phraseology in the marginalia, the banns, and the description. He apparently believed that the monk Rondoll wrote the Banns and thus accepted them as authoritative.¹⁸ It is clear that he found out that Arnewaye was not the first mayor; as a result, he altered his statement about the first performances of the plays in the later Brevaryes. Altogether, he gives us a considerable choice of dates for the first performance: 1329, 1332, 1339, 1328.¹⁹ The first and last dates can be traced to the list of the mayors in the Chester copy of the Brevary; the original entry recorded 1329 and was later corrected to 1328. The 1339 date is probably a mistranscription of 1329; the 1332 date is unsupported by any extant lists of mayors and seems to be a drastic mistranscription. Finally, the accuracy of the description cannot be impugned on the basis of the transmission of this bit of local fiction. Clearly the tradition arose as part of the attempt to maintain and continue an ancient custom; other documents, particularly city and guild charters, claim the continuance of privileges because they have been held "tyme out of mynd," and the same intention probably lies behind the association of the plays with the supposed first mayor and the city's most famous literary figure.

David tells us that the play was divided up into 24 parts according to the number of companies in the city, but he then attaches a list of those parts which adds up to 25. Clearly Rogers got the number "24" from the Banns themselves: "This matter he [the moncke] abreuatiated into playes xxiiij^{tie}" (Chester, fol. 18v). In the margin of the Banns each of the 24 companies is numbered as it is called forth. Furthermore, all the play manuscripts number the plays 1-24, even though the individual scribes recognized some confusion over play 16.²⁰ The list of the companies and their parts, which appears after the Banns, apparently exists as an independent document; and if each day's assigned pageants is added up - a task David did not attempt - one arrives at the figure of 25. This juxtaposition of contradictory material once again suggests that David was uncritically copying from his collection of source materials. The description and the Banns probably depict the cycle when the two parts of play 16 were a single pageant, while the company lists describe the cycle before

the amalgamation. David's source materials, therefore, derive from two different periods of the cycle's history. The fact that David's collection of notes may come from various points in the history of the plays may be significant in explaining other discrepancies or apparent contradictions between the descriptions of the productions and the production suggested by the texts of the plays in their present state. Lastly, it may be significant that David deletes the reference to the 24 parts in CRO and the late Brevaryes after he has begun to examine and revise the materials in his possession.

The confusion, pointed out by Salter, over the reading and riding of the Banns can easily arise; but if one compares the two versions of the early Brevaryes with each other and with the guild accounts, the whole issue can be straightened out.²¹ The Chester Archives copy states:

there was a man which did Ride as I take it vpon
Saint Georges daye throughe the Cittie and there
 published the tyme and the matter of the playes
 in breeife.

Harley 1944 concludes by adding the clause: "which was called the reading of the banes." The additional phrase at the end is clearly derived from the heading of the late Banns and is roughly the same as the running title of an introduction to Bellin's copy of 1600. Bellin undoubtedly saw the plays; therefore, his testimony to the reading of the banns must be accepted. The fact of the matter is that the banns were both read and ridden. The Smiths' accounts contain the following item of expense noted by Salter:

1554 for ridinge the banes xiiij^d the Citty Crier ridd.²²

Later accounts indicate the crier was paid one penny for his services:

1561 Cost vs the rydinge the banes our horses and
 ourselues of the which symyon was one ij^s

(Harl. 2054, fol. 16v)

1567 to Newton [the citty Crier] for the banes j^d
 Rod the banes xij^d (fol. 18r)

1568 for gloues & horsbred when we rid the banes xviiij^d
 to newton & presoners vj^d (fol. 18v)

1571 ffor the Banes
 to the Cryor j^d (fol. 19v).

The Shoemakers' and Painters' accounts show similar disbursements: one penny for the crier and quite a bit more for horsebread, gloves and other expenses attendant upon the company's riding the banns. Furthermore, that the Crier must have ridden the banns as well as read them is suggested by the following items from the Painters' accounts:

1568 It for oure horsses at the Rydynges of the banes xvj^d
I to newton for Rydyng of the banes j^d (fol. 35r)

1572 Im for our horssces at the Rydyng of the banes xvi^d
for ryddyng the banes i^d (fol. 47r)

1575 it for bred to oure horses when wye rede the banes viij^d
it to rycharson at the banes rydeng j^d (fol. 59r).

Surely the stewards of the companies who were making payments to the various participants knew what they were paying for; the accounts suggest that the city crier was paid one penny by each company for reading the banns and presumably for riding with them. The whole action of reading and riding the banns is included in the expression "riding the banns." In fact, the early Banns suggest this dual nature:

The comen bannes to be proclaymed & Ryddon with
the stewardys of euery occupacon (Harl. 2150, fol. 86r).

David's account is incomplete but is not inaccurate; one man did read the banns at the same time that the companies rode them.

Whether the city crier was dressed as St George or whether the Banns were read on April 23rd is not confirmed by any documents other than the Brevaryes. The Banns were certainly not read on that day before the last two performances; John Hankey applied to the Council on 29 April 1572 and Sir John Savage on 30 May 1575 to have the plays performed in the city in those years.²³ Since there already had been an attempt to ban the plays in 1572, the plans for the 1575 performance did not get under way until later than usual. Further, the rapidity with which the prohibition was issued by Archbishop Grindal may indicate that there was opposition in 1572 which delayed the meeting of the council that year. Since the last two performances were carried out against strong opposition, we cannot be sure that the pattern for presenting the plays was the normal one. For performances in earlier years it is possible that the crier dressed as St George and that the expenses for his costume as well as his services account for the

relatively high payment of 24 pence; this sum is equivalent, for example, to that paid to the principal actors in the Painters' Shepherds' Play (Guild Accounts, fol. 36v). There is, however, insufficient evidence to support the assertion that the crier dressed as St George for the riding of the Banns.

There is no doubt that the plays were performed on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Whitsun week. The late Banns (Chester, fol. 19r), the company list attached to the early Banns (Harl. 2150, fol. 85v), and the early Banns themselves (fol. 88r) all agree on this point. These documents are further supported by an item in the Smiths' accounts for the performance in 1568:

for bacon on tewsdaiy moring for players brekfast x^d
(Harl. 2054, fol. 18v).

It has been assumed, and it is certainly the intention of the documents to suggest, that the plays were performed in at least four places: before the Abbey gates in Northgate Street, before the Pentice at High Cross, and somewhere in Watergate and Bridge Streets. The most likely places for the latter two would be at the gates themselves where there was some open space; however, Rogers does not designate the exact locations. Rogers' itinerary is supported by the Smiths' accounts and other documents:

1554 for bred in northgate streat ij^d
we drank in the watergate street vj^d
(Harl. 2054, fol. 15r)

1561 for makinge the players to drinke in the watergate
street v^d
for drinke to the players in the bridgstret iij^d
(fol. 17r)

1572 for small beare in bridgstreet iiij^d (fol. 19v).

If, for example, the players had a drink after each performance, then the Smiths' accounts would seem to support Rogers. Furthermore, in June 1568 Mistress Webster was involved in a court case over the possession of a mansion house for the Whitsun plays in Bridge Street; the dispute indicates there was a playing area in Bridge Street.²⁴

Not only do the Brevary descriptions name four locations, however, but some also iterate that the plays were performed in "euery streete." Some critics have seen a contradiction in this remark, but Rogers may be merely making the common distinction

between "streets" and "lanes." He would be familiar with this differentiation because the lists of streets and lanes in the Brevary make such a one. At the end of the Chester Archives and Harl. 1944 copies he says that the pageants moved "to the bridge streete. through the lanes & so to the estegatestreete." To get from Watergate to Bridge Street and from there to Eastgate, one would have to travel through the lanes. When Rogers says, therefore, that "euery streete had a pagiant playinge before them at one time" (Harl. 1948), he means that the four "streets" of the city were the playing areas.

If the plays were performed in four places, why is Rogers' description so vague about the precise locations of the latter two sites? The clue is possibly to be found in the Lysons version:

The firste place where they begane was at the Abaye gates where the monkes & churche mighte have the firste sighte; and then it was drawne to the high Crosse before the Mayor & Aldermen .

The first two locations may have been so precisely designated because it was at those places that the city's two sets of dignitaries, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, watched the plays. It should be noted that Rogers specifies the "monkes" of the Abbey; this suggests that his source may have been pre-Reformation. There is no indication of ecclesiastical disapproval of the plays until 1572 when the Archbishop of York attempted to ban them and we have, therefore, no reason to assume that the plays did not continue to be performed before the Abbey gates.²⁵ The absence of the word "monkes" in the other descriptions may suggest a conscious deletion on Rogers' part or the use of post-Reformation sources. The weight of the evidence confirms Rogers; four locations would readily accommodate the crowds if, as Rogers says, "all both farr & neare came to see them [the plays]" (Lysons copy).

The greatest controversy over the Rogers descriptions has centred on the structure of the pageant carts themselves. Salter noted that there is a discrepancy between Harl. 1944 and 1948 over the number of wheels, that the pageants could not have been roofless ("open on tope") because windlasses were necessary for ascents, that there was no apparent necessity for a lower dressing-room and that this two-tiered structure would be very ungainly.²⁶ Professor Wickham later argued that there would be insufficient playing space in such a structure and that Rogers must have misunderstood his records; consequently, Wickham suggested that there may have been a dressing-room behind the playing area and that the cart was drawn up to a platform stage

which would give greater freedom of movement to the actors.²⁷ In short, every detail of the Rogers description of the cart has been challenged.

Nevertheless, there is a consistency, though some variation, in the descriptions that Rogers gives. The description is short and general and quite obviously could not fit all the pageants; for example, it does not accord with the description of Noah's ship reported in the texts. But it may be an accurate description of some of the pageants or of the basic design of the carts. The discrepancy between the six and four wheels in the early and late Brevaryes can be attributed to a mistranscription of the information in Rogers' sources. The Chester Archives copy uses the Roman numeral "vj," which could very easily be a reversal of "iv"; when Rogers copied Harl. 1944 from Chester, he converted the number into Arabic "6." However, when he began revising the Brevary and went back to his sources, he accurately converted the number to Arabic "4" in CRO, Lysons and Harl. 1948. The carts, therefore, probably had only four wheels.²⁸

The meaning of the phrase "open on the tope" is not entirely clear. The term may not mean "roofless," although some pageants may have been so. We cannot assume that all pageants were roofed in order to accommodate machinery for ascent by windlasses if only because all the plays do not have ascents. Furthermore, the text of play XX states quite clearly that Christ goes to another place when it is time for him to ascend (cf. stage direction following l. 96). He could ascend into the roof - this strikes me as being somewhat awkward - or the players may have used some natural feature of the performance area for these ascents. The opening stage directions of the Noah play, for example, suggest the use of some high place for God, and the Treasurer's accounts of the Dean and Chapter note expenses for the cloth for the mansion over the gates. Perhaps the companies used the gates at the Abbey, Water- and Bridgegate, and the permanent platform at High Cross as the high places for heaven and as the structures to support ascents.

On the other hand, some of the pageants may have been roofed. The CRO copy certainly suggests this in the phrase, "a high foure square building." Many of the plays call for a room or temple and it would seem natural that these rooms would have roofs. The phrase "open on the tope" may refer, therefore, not to whether the pageant had a roof, but to the higher room's being open at the sides and front so that "all behoulders mighte heare & see" (Harl. 1948). The phrase may thus distinguish between the higher room's being open as opposed to the lower room's being "hanged aboute richly and crosse" (CRO).

In the early Brevaryes and Harl. 1948, Rogers states that the carts were two-tiered and that the upper room was used as a stage and the lower room as an apparelling area. Leaving aside the question of the ungainliness of such a two-tiered structure, we must ask whether there is any necessity for an apparelling space. Many of the plays do not permit much opportunity for the doubling of roles, and thus there would be no need for the changing of costumes during the performance. The Painters' accounts list payments of wages for each of the roles individually and the text requires all the characters, with the possible exception of the angel, to be on stage together at some point; consequently, there appears to be no doubling in the play. The Smiths' accounts also list wages according to roles, even though it would be simple enough for Simeon, Anna and the two angels of the Presentation to double for the three doctors and Christ in the next scene. If we assume that payment according to role indicates expenditure for individual actors, then there would seem to be no doubling in these plays and no need for a dressing-room.

The longer and more complicated plays of the passion sequence, on the other hand, suggest the possibility of doubling. In 1572 the Coopers paid a total of 9s. 5d. to Hugh Gyllam, Thomas Marler, John Stynson and Rychard Kalle, all apparently members of the guild.²⁹ In 1575 the only actors' wages are for the "turmenters" (4s. 6d.), "annas" (22d.) and "pylat and to him that carried arrates clothes" (6s. 6d.) (fol. 8r). The last item suggests that Pilate doubled as Herod and that someone carried the costumes from place to place.³⁰ Furthermore, the four actors in the 1572 list and the six in the 1575 list are too few to perform all the roles in the first part of play 16. If the Coopers and the Ironmongers shared the expenses of the play, as the amalgamated text of MS H suggests, then both must have contributed actors to the performance of the entire play. The Passion has 23 roles: nine characters are introduced in the Coopers' part of the play and fourteen new ones appear in the Ironmongers' half. The maximum number of actors on stage together in part one is eight (cf. ll. 255 ff); in part two, the maximum is twelve (e. g. ll. 384-440, 730-804). The 23 parts, therefore, could possibly have been played by 12 actors.

Though some of the pageants may have required apparelling space, there seems little purpose in constructing a two-tiered cart for this reason alone. Professor Wickham, as noted above, has suggested that the apparelling room was at the back of the playing area. It is equally plausible that the actors changed costume behind the cart where they would be cut off from the audience's view. The tradition of a two-tiered cart may have arisen from an assumption on Rogers' part that the enclosed

undercarriage was used for costume changes. In CRO, Rogers says the

Pagiant was a scaffold, or a high foure square buildinge, with .2. rowmes a higher and alower, the lower hanged aboute richly and close, into which, none, but the actors came, on the higher they played their partes

The guilds probably hung cloths round the sides of the carriage. Possibly they stored props and some of their costumes under the carriage. Though there seems to be evidence for a dressing area, the few extant records do not give us support for Rogers' conception of a two-tiered stage; at the same time, they do not rule out the possibility. Arguments based on the impracticability or awkwardness of such a stage require documentary support before we can confidently reject the Rogers' plan.

Professor Wickham has suggested that the pageant carts were drawn up to platform stages in order to increase the playing area; such an arrangement would certainly seem desirable in the New Testament plays where there are large crowd scenes and considerable movement. If such platforms were used one might expect some mention of them in the documents; but there is little to support Wickham's suggestion. In Harl. 1948, however, Rogers concludes his description with the following item:

and also scaffoldes and stages made in the streetes in those places where they determined to play their pagiantes.³¹

Rogers uses the term "scaffold" to refer to the two-tiered structure itself in CRO and Harl. 1948, while in the early Brevaryes he refers to the "Pagiantes" as a "carige" and in the Lysons copy as a "buildinge." Apparently, to Rogers, "scaffold," "carige" and "buildinge" are interchangeable terms. If the "scaffoldes" are the playing structures, then the "stages" may be platforms such as those suggested by Wickham. According to Wickham, these stages would be fixed and used by all the guilds. If that were the case one might expect to find that the guilds individually contributed to their construction or that the corporation paid for them. There seems to be no such expenditure on the part of the guilds. The Treasurer's accounts for the city are few and not continuous for the period. Though they record the city's expenditures for morris dancers at midsummer and the 1564 Triumph, there are no indications of expenditure on the Whitsun plays.³² However, the lack of evidence cannot be considered conclusive since the extant Treasurer's accounts, with the

exception of those for 1571-2, are for years in which we know the plays were not performed.³³ Nevertheless, in 1572, when the plays were performed under Hankey, there are no expenses recorded for city entertainments except for the morris dancers. The extant records, therefore, do not obviously support either Wickham's reconstruction or Rogers' statement.

One other possibility exists which may explain Rogers' reference to the erection of "stages." In the Smiths' records the following items appear:

1567 for the steple & the Trestle or forme iij^s viij^d
 1575 for 9 men to Carry our Carryche & one tressell
 & 2 that did help me in the mornnge 3s. 9d. o^b.

Though there are probably numerous uses for trestles, it is possible that the guild extended its playing area by setting up a trestle stage before the pageant cart which contained its necessary sets. The other guild accounts do not make any references to trestles; but this may merely mean that all the pageants did not require or use such an expanded stage.

Two final points need to be noted. In all but the Chester copy, David states that the plays were performed annually, and in all copies he says that the last performance took place in 1574 under Sir John Savage. The last performance did take place under Savage, as the corporation minutes and the subsequent proceedings against Savage prove; however, the performance took place, not in 1574, but at Midsummer, 1575.³⁴ Rogers' list of mayors places the mayor's name next to the year of his accession. Sir John became mayor in the autumn of 1574 and was mayor at the time of the performance in 1575. Thus Rogers has merely used the accession year as the date of performance.

The statement that the plays were performed annually is certainly not true of post-Reformation productions. Even the Rogers' descriptions seem to belie this assertion, for the CRO copy notes that the Banns "published that the playes were [to be] played that yeare," and, elsewhere, Rogers notes that the Midsummer show and the Whitsun plays were not performed in the same years.³⁵ The Chester copy of the Brevary does not mention annual performance; the statement is inserted into the copy, Harl. 1944, made from it. Most of the customs noted took place annually and it is possible that Rogers rather carelessly assumed that the Whitsun plays were performed annually also. An alternative is that Rogers' sources are pre-Reformation and that the statement refers to a time when the plays were annual. The Brevaries are the earliest documents to suggest annual

performance, and there is no corroborative evidence from the period of the plays themselves.

Many of the details of the Rogers' description are corroborated by external evidence; the most important detail - the description of the pageant cart - is unfortunately neither substantiated nor clarified by the records. If one turns to the texts of the plays for indications of the kind of playing area necessary, one readily sees that a great variety of structures is needed. Some of the pageants could be modest indeed; others seem to call for several rooms or loci. The actors quite clearly used the streets when riding horses, camels and asses.³⁶ The fact that a wide range of structures is indicated in the texts does not force us to conclude that the Rogers' description is totally inaccurate; his plan, in fact, may be accurate for some of the pageants and may be generally true of a great many others. It is clear that the Rogers' description is not a detailed one; its very organization, which allots about one sentence each to the plays' beginnings, their manner of performance, time of performance, and so forth, suggests that the description was intended as a short note on one of the city's ancient customs.

David Rogers was quite clearly working from written sources which may have been compiled by eyewitnesses, one of whom might have been his father; in reducing these notes into chapter form he may have made some errors and created some misunderstandings about the production of the plays at Chester. Nevertheless, we do not have sufficient evidence to repudiate the descriptions and, since much of them appears to be accurate, we should be reluctant about rejecting any part of them until they have been fully examined side by side with the stage directions in the texts.

APPENDIX

I. Rogers' Breuary, Chester Archives copy and BM Harl. MS 1944.

[The Chester copy provides the base text below; substantive variations in Harley 1944 are noted in the footnotes. The italics signify the expansion of common abbreviations; brackets indicate erasures or deletions made by Rogers or gaps in the manuscript, as well as additions made by the editor.]

A Breuary or some fewe Collectiones of the Cittie of Chester. gathered out of some fewe writers, and heare set down. And reduced into these Chapters followinge.

- 4 Of the buldinge & changeinge of some parishe Churches in Chester, Certayne lawdable exercises¹ and playes of Chester.

Chapter .4. [18r]

Now of the playes of Chester called the whitson playes. when the weare played and what occupationes bringe forthe at their charges the playes. or pagiantes.

Heare note that these playes of Chester called the whitson playes weare the worke of one Rondoll. a moncke of the Abbaye of Sainte Warburge in Chester. whoe redused the whole historye of the bible into englishe storyes in metter. in the englishe tounge. and this monke in a good desire to doe good published the same. then the firste Maior of Chester. namely Sir Iohn Arnewaye knighte he caused the same to be played. the manner of which playes was thus they weare deuided into 24 pagiantes.² acordinge to the companies³ of the Cittie. and euerye companye broughte forthe their pagiant which was the cariage. or place which the played in. And⁴ before these playes weare played. there was a man⁵ which did Ride as I take it vpon Saint Georges daye throughe the Cittie and there published the tyme and the matter of the playes in breeife.⁶ the weare played vpon mondaye tuesedaye and wensedaye in whitson weeke And thei firste beganne at the Abbaye gates. and when the firste pagiante was played at the Abbaye gates then it was wheled from thense to⁷ pentice at the highe crosse before the maior and before that was donne the seconde came. and the firste wente into the watergate streete & from thense vnto the Bridgestreete and so⁸ one after an other tell all the pagiantes weare played appoynted for the firste daye. and so likewise for

the seconde and the thirde daye. these pagiantes or carige was a high place made like a howse with 2 rowmes beinge open on the tope. the lower rowme theie. apparrelled and dressed them selues. and⁹ the higher rowme[s] theie played. and thei stode vpon vj wheeles. and when the had donne with one cariage in one place theie wheled the same from one streete to another. firste from the Abbaye gate. to the pentise. then to the watergate streete. then to the bridge streete. through the lanes & so to the estegatestreete. And thus the came from one streete to another kepinge a directe order in euerye streete [18v] for before thei firste Carige was gone from one place¹⁰ the seconde came. and so before the seconde was gone the thirde came. and so tell¹¹ the laste was donne all in order withoute anye stayeinge in anye place. for worde beinge broughte howe euerye place was neere doone the came and made noe place to tarye till the laste was played: Heareafter followeth the Readinge of the Banes which was reade before the begininge of the whitson playes beinge the breeife of the whole playes [The Late Banns follow.]

[21v] And thus muche of the Banes or breife of the whitson playes in Chester for if I shoulde heare resite the whole storye of the whitson playes. it woulde be tooe tedious for to resite in this breauarye. As also the beinge nothinge profitable to anye vse excepte it be to showe the Ignorance of oure forefathers: And to make us theire offpringe vnexcusable before god that haue the true and sincere worde of the gospell of oure lord [and only] and sauioure Iesus Christe. if we apprehende not the same in oure liffe and practise to the eternall glorie of oure god.¹² the saluation and comforte of [22r] oure owne soles. Heare followeth all the companyes as the were played vpon there seuerall dayes. which was. Mondaye. Tuesedaye, and Wensedaye in the Whitson weeke. And how many Pagiantes weare played vpon euerye daye at the Charge of euerye companye. [The list of companies and their parts follows.]

[23r] and these whitson playes weare played in Chester anno domini . 1574. Sir Iohn Sauage knyghte beinge mayor of Chester. which was the laste tyme that¹³ the weare played. And we haue all cause to power out oure prayers before god that neither wee. nor oure posterities after us. maye neuar see the like Abomination of Desolation, with suche a Clowde of Ignorance to defile with so highe a hand. the moste¹⁴ sacred scriptures of god. but oh the mercie of oure god. for the tyme of oure Ignorance he regardes it not [As well in euerye mans particular corse as also in general corses]¹⁵ And thus muche in breife of these whitson playes.

II. Cheshire Record Office MS DCC 19.

A breauary or Collectiones of the moste anchant Cittie of Chester reduced into these chapters followeing: by the reuerend: master Ro: Rogers Bachlor in diuinitie, Archdeacon of chester, and one of the prebundes of the Cathedrall Church in Chester: written a new by his sonne DR: a well willer to that anchant Cittie

Now of the Whitson playes in Chester:

[39v]

the origenall of the whitson playes Concerning the whitson playes of Chester The origenall of them was. In the time of Sir Iohn Arneway. who by most copies was the first maior of Chester, about anno. domini :1332: then the weare firste played and sett forthe: The Author or maker of them was one Randoll A monke of the Abbay in Chester, whoe made the same in partes as it was:

the author

the matter The matter of these playes weare the historie of the bible, composed by the said author in a holy deuotion, that the simple mighte vnderstand the scripture, which in those times was hid from them:

the Actors The actores or players, weare the Companies or tradesmen of the Citti of Chester, who at their owne Costes and Charges, sett forth and alsoe played the same playes yerelye: the last time they weare played in Chester was: anno domini :1574: [40r] Sir Iohn Sauage beinge maior of Chester master Iohn Allen & master William Goodman beinge shereffes:

the time of the yere when they were played The time when they weare played was, 3 dayes together, on monday: Tueseday: & Wenseday in Whitson weeke,

The [time of] places where the played The places where they weare played were in euery streete of the Cittie, that all people that would mighte behoulde the same: The manner [of the playes] manner of these playes was, euery Company made a Pageant on which they played their how the plaied partes, which Pagiant was a scaffold, or a high foure square buildinge, with .2. rowmes a higher and alower, the lower hanged aboute richly and closse, into which, none, but the actors came, on the higher they played their partes beinge all open to the behoulders, this was sett on .4. wheelles, and soe drawne from streete to street, they first beganne at the Abbay gates, where when the first pagiante was played, it was

wheled into an other streete, and the second pagiant came in the place thereof and so till all the pagiantes for the day weare ended, soe into euery streete and, it was soe orderly attended, that before the [40v] one Pagiant was played an other came in place to satisfye the beholders in euery streete at one time: Also euery yere that these playes were played, on Saint Georges day before, was the banes read, which was a man did ride warlike apparaled like Saint George throughe euery streete, with drume musicke and trumpetes, And there was published that the playes were played that yere, And that the breife or banes of the playe was reade what euery Company should playe, which was called the Readinge of the bannes, the wordes of which conclusion was this:

All those that be minded to tary
On monday. tweseday. & wensday in whitson
weeke begins the storye:

for the better explaninge I haue here sett downe the, Companies seuerall Pagiantes and partes the played, in those whitson playes: [The entry concludes with the list of companies.]

III. BM Harl. MS 1948

A BREUARYE or some Collectiones of the most anchant & famous Cittie of Chester, Collected by the Reuerend: master Robert Rogers, Batchlor in Diuinitye Archdeacon of Chester, and Prebunde in the Cathedrall Church of Chester, & parson of Gawsorth,¹⁶ written by his sonne Dauid Rogers, and reduced into these Chapters followeing

Now of the lawdable exercises and playes of Chester, yerelye there vsed: [58r]

Now of the playes of Chester Called the whitson playes: [64r]

The author of them:	The maker and first Inuenter of them was one Rondoll a monke in the Abbaye of Chester whoe did transelate the same, into Englishe, & made them into partes and pagiantes, as they then weare played: The matter of them was
The matter of them:	the historye of the bible, mixed with some other matter: The time they weare firste sett
The first time played:	forthe, and played was in anno :1339: <u>Sir</u> Iohn Arnewaye beinge mayor of Chester: The actors and players, weare the occupations &
The players &	Companies of this Cittie, the Charges and

charges thereof: costes thereof which weare greate, was theires also: The time of the yeare they weare played was on monday, tuesday & wenseday in whitson weeke: The maner of these playes weare, The manner of them: euery Company had his pagiant or parte which pagiants, weare a high scafolde with 2. rowmes ahiger & alower, vpon 4 wheeles In the lower they apparelled them selues, And In the higher rowme they played beinge all open on the tope that all behoulders mighte heare & see them, : The places where the played them was in euery streete, They where the begane first at the Abay gates, and when the played them: firste pagiante was played, it was wheeled to the [64v] highe Crosse before the mayor, and so to euery streete, and soe euery streete had a pagiant playinge before them at one time tell all the pagiantes for the daye appoynted weare played, and when one pagiant was neere ended worde was broughte from streete to streete that soe the might come in place thereof, excedinge orderlye and all the streetes haue there pagiantes afore them all at one time playeinge togeather to se which playes was greate resorte, and also scafoldes and stages made in the streetes in those places where they determined to playe there pagiantes: [The list of companies and their parts follows.]

the laste time these playes weare played in Chester was [67r] anno domini :1574: Sir Iohn Sauage beinge mayor of Chester Iohn Allen & william Goodman sheriffes thus in breife of the playes of Chester:

IV. The Lysons copy, BM Add. MS 9442, fol. 295r.

Certayne collections of anchiante times concerning the anchant and famous cittie of Chester, collected by that Reverend man of God, Mr. Robert Rogers, bachellor of divinitie, archdeacon of Chester, parson of Gooseworth, and preband in the cathedral of Chester; being but in scatered notes, and by his son reduced into these chapters following. [The title is quoted in Magna Britannia (London, 1810), II, ii, 584, note u.]

Nowe of the Playes of Chester called The Whitson playes. These playes were the worke of one Randall Higden a monke in Chester Abye whoe in a good devotion translated the bible into several partes & playes soe as the comon people mighte learne the same by their playinge and also by action in their sighte & the firste time they were acted or playd was in the time of Sir John Arnewaye

aboute the firste yeare of his Maroltie aboute Anno Dom. 1328 we muste judge this monke had no evil intention but secret devotion there in soe also the cittizens that did acte & practise the same to their great coste.

Here I muste shoue the maner of the performinge of these anchante playes (which was) all those companyes & occupation which were joyned together to acte or performe their sevral partes had pagents which was a buildinge of a great height with a lower & higher rowme beinge all open & set upon fower wheelles and drawne from place to place where they played. [295v] The firste place where they begane was at the Abaye gates where the monkes & churche mighte have the firste sighte: and then it was drawne to the high Crosse before the Mayor & Aldermen & so from streete to streete and when one pagent was ended another came in the place thereof tell all that were appoynted for the days was ended; thus of the maner of the playes all beinge at the cittizens charge, yet profitable for them for all both farr & neare came to see them.

Now follow what occupations bringe forth at their charges the playes of Chester and on what dayes they are played yearely - these playes were sett forth when they are played upon Monday Tuesdaye & Wensdaye in the whitson weke/ [The list of companies and their parts follows.] these whitson playes were played in Anno Domini 1574 Sir John Savage Knight beinge Mayor of Chester which was the laste time they were played & we may praise God & praye that we see not the like profanation of holy scripture, but O the mercie of God for this time of our Ignorance God he regardes it not as well in every man: particular as above in general causes.

NOTES

- 1 See F. M. Salter's analysis of the Rogers' document in Mediaeval Drama in Chester (Toronto, 1955), pp. 54 ff. (hereafter referred to as MDC). I would like to thank Professor Martin Stevens, Professor A. C. Cawley and Dr David Mills for reading and making suggestions for revising this article.

- 2 Chester Archives, unnumbered MS (hereafter referred to as Chester); Cheshire Record Office MS DCC 19 (hereafter, CRO); BM Harl. MSS 1944 and 1948; and BM Add. MS 9442, fol. 295 (hereafter, Lysons). Complete titles and texts of the descriptions are included in the Appendix. I wish to thank the Corporation and City of Chester, the Cheshire Record Office and the Trustees of the British Museum for permission to publish the Rogers' descriptions and other documents noted below. Italics in all citations indicate editorial expansions of common abbreviations.

- 3 The black line in the Chester MS at

(a) 18v "This matter he . . ."	begins 22v in Harl. 1944
(b) 19r "If the same . . ."	22v
(c) 19v "This worthie . . ."	begins 23r
(d) 20r "The appearinge . . ."	begins 23v
(e) 21r "The Skynners . . ."	24r
(f) 21v "And not god . . ."	begins 25r.

The marks at (b) and (e) do not correspond to the beginning of a page in Harl. 1944. The marks at (a), (d) and (f) appear at different places on the page in Chester but correspond to the beginning of a page in Harl. The other mark, (c), is at the top of the page in Chester.

- 4 The MS, fol. 63r, notes a change made in 1623 in the St George's Day race.

- 5 Magna Britannia (London, 1810), II, ii, 590-1. The missing original is described by R. Stewart-Brown in "Annals of Chester," Cheshire Sheaf, 27, 3rd ser. (1930), 50, and by W. Fergusson Irvine in "The Annals of Chester," Cheshire Sheaf, 29, 3rd ser. (1934), 1-2. The MS has the title of the Lysons copy, is dated 1637 and is possibly in Randle Holmes II's hand. If the copy is in Holmes' hand, then the date probably refers to the year in which he made the copy. Irvine, p. 1, says the MS was bought by a person interested in the history of Cheshire.

- 6 For this ascription see, for example, Harl. 2159, fol. 46r, Harl. 2133, fol. 50r, and Harl. 1989, fol. 43r, which contain extracts from the "Archdeacon Robert Rogers'" Collections. Though Salter accepts 1595 as the date of the Archdeacon's death, he cites R. V. Burne (MDC, p. 124, n. 1) to the effect that Robert Rogers died in 1587. David, however, notes that his father was in the process of copying the Sancta Prisca on 11 January 1594 (Chester, fol. 7r).

- 7 Harl. 1944, fol. 4r. Note that David makes a distinction between the author, his father, and the writer, himself. The shift from copyist to reviser-author is noted in the later Brevaries:

A breauary . . . of . . . Ro: Rogers . . . written a new by his sonne DR: (CRO)

A BREUARYE . . . Collected by . . . Robert Rogers . . . written by his sonne . . . (Harl. 1948)

Certayne collections of . . . Robert Rogers . . . being but in scatered notes, and by his son reduced . . . (Lysons).

- 8 MDC, p. 56.
- 9 MDC, pp. 54 ff.
- 10 Chester Archives, Chester Assembly Book, AB/1, ff. 33v-35r. Lists of mayors similar to those of Rogers can be found in BM Add. 29779 and Harl. 2125 (the first list, fol. 23v ff.). The Aldersey lists are in Harl. 2133 and 2057 and BM Add. 29780.
- 11 Harl. 2125 and BM Add. 29779, 29780.
- 12 See n. 10 above. David apparently took no note of the fact that Aldersey had established Arnewaye's mayoralty in 1268-78 (Harl. 2133, fol. 13r). George Bellin, who corrects his list to include Walter Lynnett, still lists Arnewaye under 1328 (Harl. 2125, fol. 23v). When Rogers set about revising the Brevary before making the GRO copy, he was obviously unsure about who was the first mayor:
- The origenall of them was. In the time of Sir Iohn Arneway. who by most copies was the first maior of Chester
- The "copies" he refers to are the mayors lists.
- 13 MDC, pp. 45, 54, 56-7.
- 14 "Banns," RES, 15, 433-4.
- 15 MDC, p. 37. Rogers identifies Rondoll with Higden only in Lysons. If Randle Holmes made the copy, he may have inserted Higden's name. Other documents copied by Holmes show such insertions. See, for example, the addition made at the beginning of the early list and Banns (Harl. 2150, 85v). The Lysons reference is the earliest record I can find of the identification of the monk Rondoll with Higden. The Newall Proclamation of 1531-2 says they were devised by Sir Henry Francis, a monk of the monastery (Chester Archives, Assembly Files, A/F/1, fol. 12r).
- 16 MDC, pp. 38-41.
- 17 See MDC, p. 116 n. 7 and n. 10, and BM Add. Charters 50004-6 for support of the Aldersey list.
- 18 GRO, fol. 112v: ". . . the whtson playes made by a monke of Chester Abbey . . . And the said Rondoll the author in the prolounge before his booke of the whitson playes doth shew [the parts each company played]."
- 19 Chester, fol. 18r; GRO, fol. 39v; Harl. 1948, fol. 64r; and Lysons, BM Add. 9442, fol. 295r, respectively.
- 20 See Salter, The "Trial and Flagellation" with Other Studies in the Chester Cycle, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford, Malone Society, 1935), pp. 6-13, for a discussion of the amalgamation and division of the play.

- 21 Note the lengthier description near the end of CRO.
- 22 MDC, p. 57. Salter claims that Holmes, the transcriber of the accounts, added the note about the crier; however, since the entire sequence of accounts is in Holmes' hand, it is impossible to attribute the note to him.
- 23 Chester Archives, Assembly Files, A/F/3, fol. 25r; Harl. 2173, fol. 107v.
- 24 Chester Archives, Mayors Book M/B/19, fol. 52r. Leonard Powlick argues that the mansion under dispute was actually used for mercantile purposes rather than for viewing the plays; but, regardless of the purpose of the mansion, its location would indicate that the plays stopped in Bridge Street. See "The Staging of the Chester Cycle: An Alternative Theory," Theatre Survey, 12 (1971), 132-33.
- Alan H. Nelson has argued that while "mansion" refers to a locus in the drama, "mansion" in legal parlance refers to a house or a hall. He cites the Webster case and the reference to the "doore" in the Banns continuation (Chester, fol. 21v) as evidence that the plays were performed indoors during the later years of performance. See "Configurations of Staging in Medieval English Drama," in Medieval English Drama, ed. Jerome Taylor and Alan H. Nelson (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 130-31. However, a legal dispute over possession of a "mansion" for commercial purposes apparently outside a dwelling is recorded on 2 October 1571 (Chester Archives, M/B/20, fol. 49r). A "mansion" may, therefore, be a stall or temporary structure. The evidence cited in the text above and in note 26 for the itinerary of the plays and for a structure over the Abbey Gates argues for processional staging throughout the period. The suggestion that to any who "disdayne" to see the plays "open is the doore" may either be a colloquial expression or it may possibly mean that the Banns continuation was read in camera before the mayor and/or the ecclesiastical officials of the city.
- 25 Powlick, "Staging," argues that the plays were performed at a fixed location on the Roodee (137 ff.) and that they certainly would not have been performed before the Abbey Gates because of post-Reformation ecclesiastical opposition (129-30). The records prove otherwise. In 1572 the Coopers spent two shillings "at the brengeng vp of yt [the Carriage] to the menster gatte for cordes & penes to sette vp the howsyunge of the caryghe" (fol. 3r). The Treasurer of the Dean and Chapter of Chester Cathedral disbursed 6s. 8d. "for a brode clothe againste the witson pleaes" and 6s. "for a barell of bere to yeue to the pleares to make them to drinke" in 1567; 8s. for the same in 1572 as well as 6s. "for the hyre of a clothe for the mansyon ouer the gates" (pp. 52, 120). Salter, MDC, p. 73, and Joseph C. Bridge, "The Chester Miracle Plays," Journal of the Chester Archaeological and Historic Society, n. s., IX (1903), 97, print the relevant records. I wish to thank Mr A. Edwards, steward of the Coopers' guild, and Canon Jarman, Chester Cathedral, for allowing me to look at the MSS in their possession and to print these excerpts.
- 26 MDC, pp. 64-72.
- 27 Early English Stages (London, 1959), I, 171-4.

- 28 Professors R. M. Lumiansky, with whom I spoke privately, and Alan H. Nelson, in his article, "Six-wheeled Carts: An Underview," Technology and Culture, 13 (1972), 415-6, independently came to the same conclusion.
- 29 Hugh Gyllam was admitted to the company in 1537 and Richard Calley in 1544. See The Rolls of the Freemen of the City of Chester, Part I: 1392-1700, ed. J. H. E. Bennett, The Record Society for the Publication of Original Documents Relating to Lancashire and Cheshire, 51 (1906), pp. 21, 42. In 1575 the guild "spend apon Thomas marser to get him to play ij" (fol. 7v).
- 30 Salter believed that the payment to carry Herod's clothes was to a page who held up the king's train. See MDC, pp. 78-9.
- 31 Greg, Trial, p. 166, reads "staves" for "stages"; however, the descenders of David's "g's" curve to the left, whereas those of his "y's" are terminated by a sharp diagonal upwards to the right. The bowl of the "g" is only partially closed at the top and this undoubtedly led Greg to misread it as "y."
- 32 Late Treasurer's accounts exist for 1554-5, 1555-6, 1558-9, 1563-4, 1564-5, 1568-9, 1571-2, 1574-5 (?). The date of the last may be 1575-6.
- 33 For dates of performance of the plays, see my article, "The Chester Plays: Frequency of Performance," Theatre Survey, 14 (1973), 46-58.
- 34 Chester Archives, Assembly Files, A/F/3, fol. 25r.
- 35 Chester Brevary, fol. 23v. Rogers' assertion seems to be generally true for post-Reformation performances. The guild accounts do not show expenditure on both the midsummer show and the Whitsun plays, with the exception of 1568, in any of the years in which we know the plays were performed. See the Smiths' midsummer expenses for 1568 (Harl. 2054, fol. 19r) and for the plays (18r-18v).
- 36 See the stage directions, for example, at 5.152, 6.440 and 8.112.

NOTES TO APPENDIX

Chester

Harley 1944

- 1 and playes of Chester] in Chest: yearelye their vsed and of the
playes in Chester:
- 2 pagiantes] pagiantes or partes
- 3 the companyes] the number of the Companyes
- 4 And] And yerelye
- 5 man] man fitted for the purpose
- 6 breeife.] breife which was called the readinge of the banes.
- 7 to] to the
- 8 so] soe all
- 9 and] and in
- 10 from one place] om.
- 11 and so before the seconde was gone the thirde came. and so tell]
and so the thirde, and so orderly till
- 12 god.] god and
- 13 that] om.
- 14 moste] om.
- 15 This sentence is crossed through and difficult to read in Chester; it is
omitted in Harl 1944.
- 16 & parson of Gawsworth] added in a later hand in Harley 1948.