

TOWN WAITS AND THEIR TUNES.

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Annotations, [in brackets thus], by James Merryweather, April 2006

PART I. - THEIR ORIGIN.

“THE music of Waits - rude as may be their minstrelsy - breaks upon the mid-watches of the night with the effect of perfect harmony.” So writes Washington Irving, and though the experiences of those present will perhaps fail to endorse this description, we may, I think, spend an hour profitably in considering the origin, history, decay and disappearance of this old musical combination.

[CAVEAT! We only guess what were his motives, but Prof. Bridge willfully misused a convenient passage from Washington Irving (1783-1859): *The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent*ⁿ (1848). Here is the original in full:

“CHRISTMAS Even the sound of the Waits, rude as may be their minstrelsy, breaks upon the mid-watches of the winter night with the effect of perfect harmony. As I have been awakened by them in that still and solemn hour, “when deep sleep falleth upon man”, I have listened with a hushed delight, and, connecting them with the sacred and joyous occasion, have almost fancied them into another celestial choir, announcing peace and good-will to mankind.”

So, Bridge used a description of the Christmas Waits (post Municipal Corporations Reform Act, 1835) and amended the text to suit his purpose: to show that the original waits were decent musicians whilst taking a swipe at their replacements in his time. Irving, through Geoffrey Crayon, Gentⁿ, evidently very much enjoyed his own experience in England of the Christmas waits' music, despite the rudeness of their minstrelsy. Rude, also, could be the minstrelsy of the true waits (there is plenty of evidence in the archives), even, sometimes, that purveyed by we modern waits (we can admit). Bridge, by deliberately misquoting an irrelevant passage, misleads us from the beginning. It is obvious from this, the first paragraph, that **readers of this paper should be on the lookout for interpretations driven by prejudice and misinformation.** We must be honest in our researches and conclusions, and we must never be tempted to mimic Bridge. That being said, there is a lot of good stuff in this paper, so read on with a pinch of salt close at hand.]

Very little justice has been done to them by historical writers. Mrs. J. R. Green in her otherwise excellent *Town life in the Fifteenth Century* dismisses them in a single sentence, but I hope to show you that they were important town officials, and in many cases skilful musicians.

In the first place let me say that *Wait* was a *Watchman*. The word may be traced through various Teutonic dialects from the Anglo-Saxon *Wacian*, up to the modern German *Wachter* - both meaning to watch, or guard. The earliest mention of the word seems to be in a treatise *De Naturis Rerum*, by Alexander Neckham, Abbot of Circencester, who died in the early part of the thirteenth century. *Assint etiamexcubia: vigiles (veytes) cornibus suis strcptum et clangorum facientes.* “Let there also be watchmen (Waytes) on guard making a loud noise and din with their horns.”¹

[Everybody quotes Neckham. Several of us have checked and cannot find this passage. See separate discussion devoted to the Neckham passage.]

The Norman-French could not pronounce the W and the word becomes *Guet* and *Gaite*, so that “bon-gaite”

¹ Quoted by M. Arthur F. Hill in his article on “Waits” in the *Handbook of the Worshipful Company of Musicians*. [True, but Hill, too, fails to provide the Neckham reference in full.]

was a morning salutation, and old writers, misled by this, often speak of *les wayts* or *le wayt* as if the name came from the French. [Although it is far from complete, we have a more extensive survey of the etymology of 'wait' at www.waits.org.uk]

It has given us "the occupational surnames of *Gait* (common in Durham and on the Northern border) and *Wait* (common in Chester and on the Welsh border), also *Wakeman* (as at Ripon).

First of all then they were night watchmen in Castles and walled towns who "piped watch" at stated hours during the night - perhaps for the purpose of changing guard - and awoke certain persons at appointed times by soft music at their chamber doors - giving "bon-gaite." Here are the instructions to a typical wait in a nobleman's castle temp. : Edward IV (1461-1483).²

"a wayte that nightly from Michelmas to Shreve Thorsdaye pipeth the watch within this Courte foure tymes, in the somers nyghtes II times and makeyth bon gayte at every chamber door and offyce as well for fear of pickers and pillers."³

[Also see separate discussion of previous quotation of the wayte text from the *Liber Niger* which are fraught with differences.]

He had an allowance for livery (*i.e.* food) and clothing. One of the towers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne walls is called the "Waits' Tower."

We also find tenure of land by wait-service. Temp. . Henry III. Simon le Wayte held a virgate of land at Rockingham by tenour of being castle-wayte or watch; and in Cornwall the tenants of the Duchy who kept watch at the castle-gate at Launceston owed suit to a special court in the, nature of a Court Baron, called the *Curia Vigiliae*, *Curia de Gayte*, or Wayterness Court.

When Castles were disused and towns grew large and demanded better protection than a musical policeman, a proper watch was formed and the waits became a mere musical combination, or town band, and, in most places, *civic officers*.

In Richard Isaac's *Memorials of the City of Exeter* he states "1408. The musical weightes (*sic*) were first received and entertained in this City." This is the earliest mention of the waits *as a civic body* that I have met with. Then follow

Coventry, 1424, Norwich, 1433.

Doncaster, 1457. - "Allan Pyper and William Pyper are elected Pipers or Wayts."

Chester, 1484-5. - Petition of William Master, Thomas Williams and Christopher Burton to Sir John Savage (Mayor) and the Justices asking "For the roome and charge of the Waitemen of the said City in place of Wm. Smethly deceased."

The office of *Wait* had therefore existed for some time in the city.

We have seen a wait's duty in a private castle temp. Edward IV. Now let us see what he did some eighty years later as a city musician at Norwich.

1552. - "This day it is agreed by this house that the waytes of this Citie shall have liberty and licens every Sondag at night and other holly days at night, betwixt this and Michaelmas next comyng, to come to the Guyldhall: and upon the nether leades of the same Hall next to the Counsail House, shall betwixte the hours of 6 and 8 of the clok at night, blow and playe upon their instruments the space of half an houre, to the rejoicing and comfort of the hearers thereof."

Again,⁴ "The waites *i.e.* the musicians of the City who attend ye Maior, and Aldermen on principal Festivals to and from Church, at public feasts. The word 'waite' signifies *watching* and still the late form remains of their going about the City with their musick from Hallowmanns to Christmas playing under ye windows of all good citizens and bidding ym good morrow by name. . . . They divide the City into four parts - to one part one night to another ye next and so go over ye whole in four times, *viz.*, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday

² From the *Liber Niger Domus Regis* which contains an account of the household establishment of Edward IV.

³ Thieves. [It could have read "for fyre [fire] or pickers or perelliz". Myers quotes "perelliz" rather than "pillars" ?= perils. As with Neckham, many versions exist and different interpretations are possible.]

⁴ Kirkpatrick. [Unfortunately there's no more to this ref.]

mornings from midnight to about daylight, and then begin again, and in Xmas time they go about dayly to receive benevolence of the Citizens for ye same.”⁵

It is open to doubt whether these nightly performances were always welcome. Barclay in his *Ship of Fools* says,

“What joy have ye to wander thus by night
Save that ill-doers always hate the light,”

and in John Cleland’s “*Essay on the origin of the Musical Waits at Christmas*” appended to his *Way of Things by Words and to Words by Things* (8vo. 1766) is the following passage upon these nocturnal disturbers of our slumbers:

“But at the ancient yule, or Christmas time especially, the dreariness of the weather, the length of the night, would naturally require something extraordinary to wake and rouse men from their natural inclination to rest and from a warm bed at that hour. The summons, then, to the Wakes of that season, were given by music going the rounds of invitation to the mirth and festivals which were awaiting them. In this there was some propriety - some object : but where is there any in such a solemn piece of banter as that of music going the rounds and disturbing people in vain? For surely any meditation to be thereby excited on the holiness of the ensuing day could hardly be of great avail, in a bed between sleeping and waking. But such is the power of custom to perpetuate absurdities.”⁶

There is a paper in the *Tatler*,⁷ which says “By letters from Nottingham, we have advice that the young ladies of that place complain for want of sleep, by reason of certain riotous lovers, who for this last summer have very much infested the street of that eminent City with Violins and Bass-violis, between the hours of twelve and four in the morning.”

The writer then proceeds to say “as the custom prevails at present, there is scarce a young man of any fashion in a Corporation who does not make love with the town music; the waits often help him through his courtship, and my friend Banister⁸ has told me he was proffered £500 by a young fellow to play but one winter under the window of a lady that was a great fortune but more cruel than ordinary.”

Another function of the waits was to meet any illustrious stranger when he arrived at their town and play him to his lodgings. This was always a great perquisite of the Waits of Bath who were good musicians. Pepys - no mean judge - says (June 13th, 1668). “By and by comes music to play to me, extraordinary good as ever I heard at London; almost or anywhere.” So *Matthew Bramble* in *Smollett’s Humphrey Clinker* was serenaded on his arrival in Bath.

At Whitehaven the waits attended weddings and the arrival of seafaring men from their voyages, and also in Liverpool where “they were in the habit of going to the houses of the Masters of vessels on the day after that of their arrival in port, and playing before their doors by way of welcoming them home.”

In the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, February, 1756, we find that in making the freemen of Alnwick,⁹ “They are generally met by women dressed up with ribbons, bells and garlands of gum-flowers, who welcome them with dancing and singing and are called timber-waits; players on timbrels, *waits* being an old word for those who play on musical instruments in the streets.”¹⁰

Now let us consider some of these town waits.

First of all we naturally turn to the City of London. But we not only have the City Waits but Waits in all the wards such as Blackfriars, Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Finsbury, and also in the City of Westminster. Charles II at his entry into London was entertained by music from eight waits in Crutched Friars, six in Aldgate and six in Leadenhall Street.

⁵ Kirkpatrick. [Unfortunately there’s no more to this ref.]

⁶ N and Q III. 1. 337.

⁷ No. 222, September 9th, 1710. Probably written by Addison.

⁸ He was the son of a Wait.

⁹ Northumberland.

¹⁰ I am by no means satisfied that this derivation is correct, but no one has been able to explain the term in any other way.

Early in the seventeenth century we have very interesting references in Beaumont and Fletcher's amusing Comedy of the *Knight of the Burning Pestle* - written c. 1613.

"Hark! are the Waits abroad?
Be softer! Prithee 'tis private music"
and then comes the amusing dialogue -

CITIZEN : What stately music have you? You have shawms?

PROLOGUE : Shawms? No.

CITIZEN : No? I'm a thief if my mind did not give me so. Ralph plays a stately part and he must needs have shawms. I'll be at the charge of them myself rather than we'll be without them.

PROLOGUE : So you are like to be.

CITIZEN : Why so I will be. There's two shillings - Let's have the Waits of Southwark! They are as rare fellows as any are in England; and that will fetch them all o'er the water with a vengeance, as if they were mad.

PROLOGUE : You shall have them."

In Shirley's play of *The Witty fair one* c. 1633, he says, "We will have the City Waits down with us and a noise of trumpets." And a few years later, in 1656, when Davenant gave his dramatic entertainment "after the manner of the ancients" it included a "Concert of music imitating the Waits of London" - Yet in that very year in a debate on a "Bill touching rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars," in Cromwell's Parliament of 1656, Mr. Robinson hoped that "fiddlers and minstrels would be included, as they did corrupt the manners of the people and inflame their debauchery by lewd and obscene songs." Sir Thomas Wroth "would have harpers included," and another worthy member ejaculated, "Pipers should be comprehended" whereupon Alderman Hooke said, "I hope you intend not to include the *waits* of the city of London which are a great preservation of men's houses in the night"¹¹

Ned Ward in his *London Spy* gives an amusing account of the City Waits, speaking in very disparaging terms of their nightly performances, whereupon he says his friend laughed at him. . . . "Why what," says he, "don't you love music? These are the topping tooters of the town; and have gowns, silver chains, and salaries for playing *Lilla Bullera* to my Lord Mayor's horse through the City." Marry, said I, if his horse liked their music no better than *I* do, he would fling his rider for hiring such bugbears to affront his ambleship.' For my part, when you told me they were *Waits*, I thought they had been the Polanders; and was never so afraid, but that their bears had been dancing behind them." [The printer seems to have got the inverted commas muddled here.]

A century later Burney tells us that Blackfriars Waits were the best, but Hawkins seems to show that Tower Hamlets ran them close.

Now let us turn back to the City of London Waits. At the Court of Burgmote of Canterbury, 1490, we find full particulars of the yearly Watch which it is "enacted and agreed every maier shall continue and kepe in the even of the Translation of St. Thomas the Martier."

There was a grand "riding" of the Mayor, Sheriff and Aldermen and the hired music shows "Solut XI dies Julii Tubicensis Londoniensibus pro vigilia Sci Thomæ 5s." ; and we have a later entry in English :

"In rewarde yeven [y = g, not thorn]to the Wayts of London on Seynt Thomas night going before the Watche 5s."¹²

The waits evidently used horns and trumpets. There is in the London Guildhall a tombstone which says- "Godfrey the Trompou lies here God on his soul have mercy," [he was a trumpeter, but not necessarily a wait] {Not necessarily even a trumpeter! Lynn Town Clerk in late 16th century records purchase of a set of "five instruments known as waits' trumpets", where I suspect he means shawms.} and there is, or was, a Trump St. near the Guildhall where doubtless the Waits lived. [doubtless?!]

Thomas Morley in dedicating his "Consort Lessons" to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen in 1599 says" as the

¹¹ N and Q. 1. 3. 171.

¹² It is obvious that the Canterbury Waits were not very efficient.

ancient custom of this most honorable and renowned City hath ever been to retain and maintain excellent and expert musicians to adorn your Honour's favours, feasts and solemn meetings - to these your Lordship's waytes, I recommend the same - to yr [y^t It's a y this time] servants' careful and skilful handling"; and Dudley, Earl of Leicester, writes to the Corporation in 1582, asking that a protégé [*sic* : protégé] of his should be admitted a Waite. These two instances show how great was the reputation of the City Waits.

It will easily be seen that these town bands must supply themselves with special music and almost every town had its own particular tune, a few of which are still extant. [careful]

Some are evidently for wind and some for string instruments, but all are of a simple nature, for they had to be memorised and moreover often played with very cold fingers. The City of London tune is the only one we possess that is partly vocal, but we have evidence of vocal tunes at York and other places [Getting dangerous]. The old German Watchmen had their own songs, and in some out of the way places have them even at the present day; and you will remember one in the third act of *The Meistersinger*. These songs were generally based upon the notes of the Horn and so is our London example.

Now some of the Waits were excellent musicians and soloists.

Orlando Gibbons was the son of a Cambridge Wait, and his brother, Ferdinando, was a Lincoln Wait. John Bannister was the son of a wait of St. Giles in the Fields, and Farmer and Nicholas Staggin were sons of London Waits. Burney tells us that "Woodcock, one of the Waits of Hereford was sent for far and near to perform Vivaldi's *Cuckoo Concerto* which was the wonder and delight of all frequenters of Country Concerts."

At Shrewsbury, William More was "the principal Cithern player in England."

William Hirst of Rotherham in his will, May 17th, 1622, gave to his son Henry - being one of the Waits of Retford - "all my instruments of music and all my tooles wherewith I do make instruments of musique."

Hawkins has left us an interesting sketch of a Tower Hamlets Wait - He says :-

"John Ravenscroft was one of the waits of the Tower Hamlets and in the band of Goodman's Fields playhouse was a Ripieno violin, notwithstanding which he was a performer good enough to lead in any such concerts as those above described, and to say the truth was able to do justice to a Concerto of Corelli or an Overture of Handel. He was much sought after to play at balls and dancing parties, and was singularly excellent in the playing of Hornpipes in which he had a manner that none could imitate. It seems that this was a kind of music which of all others he most affected; so that by dint of a fancy accommodated to these little essays, he was enabled to compose airs of this kind equal to those of the ablest masters; and yet so little was he acquainted with the rules of composition that for suiting them with basses he was indebted to others.¹³ Ravenscroft was a very corpulent man, a circumstance which made the neatness of his performance the more remarkable." He died about 1745.¹⁴

London Waits were nine in number to correspond to the Muses. In 1789 there were eight. In 1802 they were replaced by Trumpeters. In 1854 it was decided to fill no more vacancies. In 1914 they were abolished and it was decided to employ the Trumpeters of the Household Cavalry in their stead.

We will now perform the following Wait Tunes:

[Bridge presumes that tunes with the word wait(s) in the title were waits' signatures. This is not necessarily the case and we should not jump to the same conclusion. It might be true of some, but all of them? All lions have a tail, but not all animals with tails are lions. We need a detailed study of all waits-associated tunes to discover which might have been played by waits, which were songs about waits, which were written by waits and which just have the word in the title.

It would also be interesting to clarify the development of the Christmas carol *Past Three O'clock* from the Playford tune *The Waits* (1665) or *London Waits* (1690). Similar waits' night watch cries occur in other sources, so it must be real. The dance tune includes a passage of the same shape as the

¹³ Burney says "I remember very well in my musical life and have heard one of the four waits of Shrewsbury vamp a bass on all occasions, being unable to read one that was written." MS. quoted by Hill. This wait and Ravenscroft would have made a good pair.

¹⁴ Why a fat man cannot play well on a violin I have yet to discover!

words. So, was W^m. Chappell, who applied the words to the tune in 1861 familiar with the cry and thus able to quote it from first hand experience? The one we know today is a conflation of this and its composer Woodward's own version (1924).]

(1) London Waits - First version from *The Dancing Master*, 1665.

(2) London Waits - A more modern version.

(3) Colchester Waits - The "oysterous boisterous" town of Colchester, as Theodore Hook terms it, was very early celebrated for its waits.'

The steward of Lord John Howard ("Jockey of Norfolk") c. 1469, says "Item, the 21st day of April, my master gaff to the Waytes of Colchester, 1s. 4d."

(4) Tower Hamlets - Two of Ravenscroft's Hornpipes.

At this point of the lecture the Rev. Canon Galpin also showed a real old "Wayte-pipe" and played *London Waits*, second version.

PART II. - MINSTRELS AND WAITS.

To resume. Although a Wait was necessarily a minstrel every minstrel was not a Wait.

At Shrewsbury, "1479. Pd. for livery of the minstrels called Waits each of them Vs."

At Shrewsbury, "Pd. for bringing a minstrel called a Wayte from Northampton to Shrewsbury." IIIs.

In London, 1502, five of the City Waits petitioned the Corporation complaining that the "mynstrels" would not allow them to "trade" within the city unless they became members of the Craft.

At Chester the Fraternity of Minstrels was also kept quite apart from the City Waits. At York, on the other hand, the Guild of Minstrels (revised at the late date of 1593 when Guilds were decaying) included the Waits.

Such Guilds were Trades Unions and governed by similar restrictions, and "peaceful picketing" was freely indulged in. No minstrel at York could accept an apprentice for less than seven years with the exception of the Waits who were allowed to hire assistance when civic functions were more numerous or more pressing than usual. No musician could perform in that City unless he were a member of the Guild, but such rules led to retaliation, and we find that at Doncaster an itinerant musician was promptly ordered to leave the town because "he was one of the Waytes of York." York were good musicians and frequently assisted in the Minster services.

1602. - The Earl of Mar, the Scotch Ambassador, came to York and attended service and we find - "To the Waites for their Music at services to the same Lo: Imbasiator 13/4.

1623. - The Cathedral Rolls give "Item. To the Waytes of York for playing in the Quire five services this year 33/4."

At Chester the Dean and Chapter paid to the Waits, 1591, XIIId., in 1666, £1 0s. 0d., in 1668, 10s.

At Durham, November, 1733. The Dean and Chapter agreed "to add five pounds a year to Peter Blenkinsopp's salary upon his giving up his wait's place."

Blenkinsopp was one of the singing men and would scarcely be fit for daily service after being out all night as a wait.

A very tight hand was kept on the Waits by the Civic authorities.

Coventry, 1467. - "Also yt [y^t This time it is a thorn, in an abbreviation of 'that'] ye wayts of yis [y^{is} = 'this'] Cite yt now be and hereaft to be shall not passe yis Cite but to Abbott's and Priors within ten myles of yis Cite."

This rule was enacted in many places.

York, 1561.- Thomas [Mower] Wait has "respite to learne and applie himself in the instruments and songs belonging to the sayd wayts, and to leave his unthrifty gamyng upon payne to be putte forth of that office."

But sometimes the Civic authorities were held at defiance.

Robert Gryce, a Doncaster Wait in 1594, was a terrible thorn in the side of the Common Council there. He had been assaulted in the town by a citizen and his servant, and instead of summoning these persons before the

local bench (in which apparently he had not the slightest faith) he went to London and took out a writ in the Court of Queen's Bench, and so on August 20th, it was "agreed at a Common Council, held in the Guildhall, that, Robert Gryce, one of the Waits of the town, be displaced from the said office because he has sued the Queen's writ out of the Queen's Bench to bind to the peace William Clarke of this town and William Battye his servant, instead of demanding the writ at the hands of the Mayor or other justice of the peace within this town, to their great discredit and disgrace.

"Upon complaint thereof being made to Edward Stanhope, Esqr., one of the Council of the North and Recorder of Doncaster he (Gryce) was sent for and moved to stay his former warrant for the peace which he utterly denied to do, whereupon the Common Council was called and it was agreed that he should be Displaced."

At Durham we find similar insubordination.

CONSISTORY COURT DEPOSITIONS.

May 9th, 1684. - "Ralph Sherwood, one of the waits or musicians of the Cittie of Durham lays information, that about Christmas last John Harrison, Esq., Mayor of the Cittie of Durham did discharge and forbidd Thomas Waide, one of the Waits of the said Cittie, that he should play noe more publiquely in the said Cittie nor suburbs thereof and thereupon did take the silver badge of the said cittie from him for indecent expressions - he has plaied since as well by himselfe alone as some time in the company of this informant and his partner, saying he will soe doe, being a freeman of the Cittie of Durham, agst all opposicion whatsoever."

But undoubtedly [doubtless!] Waits were troublesome people. Although they made harmony for others, they were rarely harmonious amongst themselves.¹⁵ [Nonsense, though sometimes they got into trouble.] For sheer unresolved discord the Waits of Leicester seem the worst. They were dismissed from office in 1563 and again in 1602. "The Waits because they cannot agree together are therefore now dismissed from being the Town Waits from henceforth."¹⁶

Some years later they were re-instituted, but in 1670 they were again dismissed and the Waits from Northampton were appointed to play in their stead on Easter Monday.

At Canterbury, in 1640, an Escutcheon previously painted for the waits to wear is recalled "on account of disorders and misbehaviour," but, says an old writer, "upon the restoration of the Monarchy 1660 and the return of the idle part of the Community to jollity and revelry they were again permitted to perform."¹⁷ Not a very good testimonial this!

At Chester, 1612, they disappeared entirely, and left the Corporation in the lurch.

Chester, 1612.- "Geo. Callie Musitian exhibiteth his petician desiring that he and his fellow musitians may be admitted Waytes of this Cittie instead of the waytes now absent, finding instruments of his own charge to perform the service; which is deferred to be graunted untill it may be understode what are become of the ould waytes"¹⁸

What became of them I have never discovered. They were meteoric and vanished into space! Many waits probably suffered from "swelled head" as good players were in demand and there was rivalry between neighbouring towns and bribery to obtain their services.

¹⁵ It is only fair, however, to give the following from the Wakefield Cathedral Registers "The Waites of this town of Wakefield began their Watch upon the 17th day of October in the year of our Lord God, 1670. Their names are as follows:-

Wm. Shaw,
Thos. Shaw *fratres in unum.*"
Thomas Watson.

It is hoped this fraternal spirit lasted!

¹⁶ See "The Drama," etc., in Leicester by William Kelly. This resolved the discord!

¹⁷ Brent "Canterbury in the olden time."

¹⁸ "Chester during the Plantagenet and Tudor periods," by the Rev. Canon Morris, p. 348.

“Rochester, February 6th, 1640.- Edward Rolfe and John Aleworth, Musicians, were sworne this day Freemen of this Citty, and in regard their freedoms were given them freely by the Citty, they do promise in lieu thereof to play through the Citty every morning upon their lowde musicke called the weightes between Hollantide and Candlemas as is usually done in the Cittyes of London and Canterbury.” [Interesting: shawms as late as 1640 {Careful! We don't know what the writer meant by weightes in this instance!}]

During the Commonwealth such professional musicians lost their employment, so at Exeter, in 1660, “the musical waits after many years sequestration were restored to their places and pensions.”

And as late as 1667 at York “Four waits were admitted freemen of the City, *gratis*.” [After the Civil Wars when a complete new band was required. See *York Music*]

We shall now perform the following tunes :-

(5) York Waits - This is an old hornpipe - Early in the eighteenth century some doggerel rhymes were fitted to it and it was sold as a broadside.¹⁹

The words are scarcely worth quoting or reprinting. [Oh, but they are! They tell us about a band of waits in the late 17th or early 18th c., listing instruments (cornet, *sic* fiddle, theorbo, curtal), and there is a very rude passage if you are able to *penetrate* the allusions: ‘pleasant cliff’ is not an aging pop star and the Rigaudon was, it seems, a very merry dance.]

(6) Stamford Waits - This is from an old MS. in the British Museum c. 1690.

(7) Warrington Waits - A very delightful Minuet.

PART III. - ORGANISATION.

The numbers varied. There was no rule on the subject. *Coventry*, in 1423, fixed the number at four. *Leicester* had three in 1524 increased to five (c. 1660) and later to six. *Norwich* had five, sometimes six. *Chester* had three and later four. *Bristol* had four, but in January, 1619, the Council thought that the band needed strengthening and resolved to give 26/8d. “to a fifth man to play with the other musitions of the City on the saggebutt to make up a fifth part.”²⁰ The “saggebutt” had already been bought for £4 in 1611. *London* had nine - equalling the number of Muses. There was generally a chief wait to keep order and organise their services.

At *Coventry*, 1435, it was enacted “that the Trumpet schall have the rule of the wayte and of them be Cheffe.”

At *York* the Chief Wait “wore on his head a red tattered or pinked cap, a badge of some antiquity, the origin of which has not been discovered.” [It has - to a degree. See *York Music*]

At *Liverpool*, appropriately enough, the chief was called the “Captain of the Waits.”

At *Leicester*, the Trumpet player was chief. At *Norwich* he was styled the “Headman.” At *London*, in 1660 the City Waits appeared in their gowns and silver chains “with one quartermaster, one conductor.”

Each Wait had a boy under him as an apprentice to the art, and these apprentices were under the strictest rules and were not admitted as Waits until they had duly passed an examination.

At *Kingston-on-Hull* the Coopers Hall was used as an instruction room for the apprentices. Such was the resultant noise however that an objection was lodged by the neighbours.

Sometimes the Waits had outside instruction :- *Doncaster*, May 13th, 1763. “Ordered that if Mr. Miller, the organist, will undertake to instruct the Corporation band of music to play on the hautboy and Bassoon, the Corporation will be at the expense of the instruments.”²¹

DRESS AND BADGES.

The Waits were always provided with official dress. This was generally given every second year. [Variable?]

¹⁹ A copy is in Cheetham's Library, Manchester. [I have a photocopy. It also has the words.] The words are given in “The Christmas Waits and Minstrels of bygone York” by T. P. Cooper.

²⁰ Latimer's “Annals of Bristol 17th C.”

²¹ No one undertakes to pay Mr. Miller!

London.- Blue gowns, red sleeves and red cap.

Leicester.- Orange or tawney, and later, scarlet gowns edged with silver lace, and later with gold lace. Changed into cloaks. The cost in 1524 was 16s. and in 1677 £10 17s. 8d.

Norwich.- Cloaks of blue stamell cloth, and robes.

Henry VI, 1433-4

“To Richard Pindaunce in full payment of the vesture of the wayts this year 35s. 4d.” Henry VI, 1437-8 --

“To Simon alsoken for four robes for the Wayts and for one robe for Thomas Aylemer 33s. 11d.”

Stamford.- Scarlet cloaks and gold lace.

York.- Scarlet gowns and gold laced hats and a “pinked” cap for the principal wait. Livery provided every six years.

Northampton.- When they met the Judges of Assize the four Waits wore long black gowns - a depressing and symbolical dress!

Doncaster.- November 4th, 1708, order “that the chamberlains do buy at the Corporation’s charge three cloaks of scarlett coloured cloth for the waits or music of the Corporation but at the decease or departure of any of the paid waits out of this town the cloaks shall be left to the use of the Corporation.”

On the sleeves of these gowns or on their cloaks many Waits wore an embroidered badge. This was a survival or an imitation of the badges worn by the dependents of great noblemen. [Not necessarily]

Leicester, in 1583, also gave each apprentice a gown and ordered “scutcheons or cinquefoils to be worn suspended by green ribbons or laces about their necks.”

But the greatest glory of the Waits was in the Silver Collars, badges and chains with which they were provided by many Corporations. Some of these were unfortunately sold when the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 was passed,²² but some examples have been recovered and we have a description of others. These badges were of considerable monetary value and the Waits had to enter into a bond to re-deliver them up in good condition on demand.

The following is a list of badges and chains now in existence, or known to have been so in past times, but I do not guarantee that it is exhaustive. Such a list, however, has never yet been published and this may be found useful. [see www.waits.org.uk]

Bristol.- Two badges (but no chains) now in possession of the Corporation.

The badges were, first of all, enamelled shields *temp.* Queen Mary, but later were fixed on to roundels with borders c. 1683. They are 2½ inches long and beautiful specimens of art. Since 1715 they have been worn by the City Trumpeters. “A vacancy having occurred in the band of civic musicians, the Mayor and Aldermen elected David Hughes and ordered that he enter into the usual bond for the re-delivery of the chain and badge worn by the said Wait player and pay £10 to the widow of his predecessor.”

Beverley.- Badges and Chains sold in 1636 (?) but two have since been recovered and belong to the Corporation. They date from 1550.

The chains have a number of tablets and links alternately in the form of displayed eagles and beavers.²³

Canterbury.- A silver badge was used worth 100 shillings. This was returned at the end of the year to the City Chamberlain.

Coventry.- Silver badges and chains sold in 1710.

Leicester.- Three silver badges and chains or collars. These were sold in 1836 but one has been recovered and is

²² It is extraordinary to read of the proceedings of civic authorities [*sic*] at that period. They seem to have lost their heads entirely and Leicester is a typical instance. In 1836 that Corporation resolved that “the true dignity of the Mayoralty does not consist in antiquated pageantry,” and so they proceeded to sell five maces, the silver plate, the waits’ collars and other reliques. They were no worse than many other towns however.

²³ These are in a very rare form illustrating a curious legend regarding beavers which will be found in the *Itinerary of Giraldus Cambrensis*. Everyman Edn., p. 108.

now in the Museum.

In 1539 the “Weyts Collars” weighed twenty-three ounces and a half, and they were subject to hard wear by the entries of repairs:

1548, “an ounce of silver and twelve pence in wayght for the reparacions.”... 9s.

1576, “paid to Dodd the Goldsmith for xv ounces of silver for the’ Weytes Collars’ and for mending or making of them new.”... £5 10s. 0d.

1614, “mending the Muzicans silver collars and scutcheon that wanted certen peeces of silver.” 5s.

When the number of waits increased ribbon was bought for the extra players to hang their “scutcheons” on --
1618. Paid for two yards of ribbon for one of the wayts to hinge his scutchin in att the maior’s feast.

1621. For two yards of ribbon for the waits bores to hang their schuchions in ... 13d.

1626. Payed for two elnes of eightpennie broade ribin to hang the waits collars in ... 1s. 4d.

1562. Each wait had to find a surety for the return of “collar.”

In 1583 *two* sureties from each were demanded.

Norwich.- Two collars or chains of silver parcel-gilt with badge. The finest chains in existence. The chains are formed of 14 turreted castles of silver with gilt portcullises, alternating with as many gilt lions passant guardant. c. 1550. Arms of Norwich on the Escutcheon. Henry VI, 1432-3. “To Richard Beve Goldsmith for silver skochon of the Arms of the City for a minstrel (*histrion*) weighing six and a quarter ounces minus two dwt. at thirty-two pence the ounce and making the same, ... 24s.6d.

1630. “It is ordered John Alken, a wait, has a silver chayne guilt weighing nine ouces [*sic*: real or typo?] and a quarter of an ounce, one Trumpett, two Sackbutts and one Flagge so long tyme only that he holds office and on demand must deliver them up whole, sound and unminished.”

Stamford.- The Waits badges are of silver and six in number - Four dated 1691 and two 1823. They are in the form of shields measuring 3¼ by 2¾ inches bearing the towns arms *England* impaling *Warrenne*. On the reverse of the older badge is engraved “The town arms of Stamford in the County of Lincoln, 1691,” and on the later ones “The Corporation of Stamford, 1823.” They were worn on the sleeves of the official coats.

Wakefield.- One badge of silver five inches long, charged with a fleur-de-lis and “Wakefield Waits, 1688.”

York and Ripon had silver badges but they are non-existent. [No longer true of York - see Merryweather essay] When the waits went round to the houses of the citizens to ask for donations or Christmas vails [OED: A casual or occasional profit or emolument in addition to salary/dole or gratuity i.e. a wait’s ‘Christmas Box’.] it was customary to display their silver badge as showing their *bona-fides*. [Source?]

PART IV. - INSTRUMENTS.

These varied, but there is little doubt that at first they were wind instruments as being more effective and better heard in the open air.

Early players Trumpets (called shawms [wrong]) and other brass instruments, but most of the earlier waits seem to have been very partial to an instrument of the Hautboy family which was called a *wayte* [= shawm]. There has been great discussion as to whether the instrument took its name from the player or *vice versa*; but there can be no doubt on the matter, for we have the derivation of *Wait* or *Watchman*, but we have no derivation whatever for *wayte* as an instrument other than that it was derived from the player.²⁴ These “waytes” were the later Cornetts [wrong]; as time went on string instruments were added though these must have been rather

²⁴ Canon Galpin has met with the old form of “wayte-pipe.” “Pype” was gradually dropped and “wayt” only remained. No doubt this is the solution. He explained this at the meeting. [If we knew what Galpin said at the meeting, we might be able to appreciate the depth of knowledge about shawms at that time. Galpin’s book *Old English Instruments of Music* (1910), 160-2 shows that he understood them a lot better than Bridge, here in 1928.] {The third edition of *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, published in 1928, has the following entry: WAIT (Wayte, Waight), an obsolete musical instrument of the hautboy type used by WAITS (*qv*) or watchmen and identical with the earlier SHAWM.}

feeble out of doors and they could not have been used when the Waits rode in processions as they often had to do.

Sometimes the instruments were provided by the town and sometimes by the players, and this last arrangement naturally gave rise to many squabbles.

Chester, 1590. “William Massie Mayor. At which day matter was, in question between Ales Williams, late wife of Thomas Willams, late one of the Waytsmen of the Cittie on the one part, and Christopher Burton and William Maddock the other Waitman of the said Cittie, for and concerning their instruments of music, viz. the howboies, the Recorders, the Cornets and Violens whereof the said Ales claymeth a part as to her said late husband in his lief tyme belonginge, which they deny to yeld unto : but are contented and soe are now agreed and it is now fully ordered by assent, that the said instruments shall from hensfforth for ever remayne continue and bee the own proper goods of the said Waitesmen and of the survivors of them. . . . or else to remayne forever to the said Citie. . . .”

Norwich, 1622. “The Waytes discharged and desired to deliver their instruments several of which they had sold, but delivered as follows: Three Sackbuts, four Hoboyes and an old one broken, two Tenor Cornetts, one Treble Recorder, two Counter-Tenor Recorders, five Chaynes and five Flaggs.”

The waytes are again permitted to use their profession and promise to bring in £4 in lieu of the Sackbut they had sold.

Every trumpet or shawm had a banner attached.

Norwich. “Pd for four new banners of the wayts shalms made of whyte and red damaske.”

At Leicester when the Waits “effects” were sold in 1636 their instruments consisted of “Two horns, two clarionets, [Perplexing. Clarion trumpets perhaps] four piccaloes (probably Recorders) and a bassoon. [At this date, surely a curtal?] {This whole quote is very dubious - I strongly suspect that the date Bridge gives is wrong, and that he has mis-read it. All the instruments listed are too modern. If the date were 1836, it would make sense, especially as the council would then be likely to be selling off the instruments after the 1835 corporations act.}

THE WAITS’ WAGES

The standing wage was not large, but it was substantially increased by the fees received for riding in processions, playing at mayors’ banquets, weddings, etc., and it must be remembered that the waits were a Trade Union and allowed no “free trade” in music. Leicester regulations may be taken as typical (spelling modernised). In 1581. “It is agreed that every Inhabitant or housekeeper in Leicester (being of reasonable ability) shall be taxed (at the discretion of Mr. Mayor) what they shall quarterly give to the Waytes towards the amending of their living. In consideration whereof the said Waytes shall keep the Town, and to play every night and morning orderly, both winter and summer, and not to go forth of the town to play except to fairs and weddings, and then by licence of Mr. Mayor. Item, that no strangers, viz. Waytes, minstrels or other musicians whatsoever be suffered to play within this town, neither at weddings nor fair times or any other times whatsoever.”

Next year, 1582, it is agreed that the twenty-four (*i.e.* leading men of the town [Aldermen]) shall give twelve pence per quarter and forty-eight sixpence per quarter for Wayts’ wages and the other inhabitants to be taxed by the Mayor from time to time. Later the fixed payments were sixpence and threepence respectively in 1603.

In 1628 they received *collectively*, a salary of £5 per annum and their cloaks and liveries so that they must have looked to casual work for most of their remuneration.

Stamford Waits.- (Four in number) received 50s. per annum and had to play three nights a week from SS. Simon and Jude Fair to Christmas, at which time they called on the inhabitants for a gratuity.

Coventry, 1458.- “Hit was ordyred yt an honest man in every ward should be assnyed by ye Meir to go wt ye Wayts, to gader their wages quarterly at the peticon of ye Wayts then beyng.” [Useful exercise in interpreting abbreviations using the ‘thorn’: yt = y^t = that; ye = the; w^t = with; d = δ = th, therefore gader = gather as ledder = leather]

As late as 1833 London Waits received £5 13s. 4d. per annum and £2 16s. 0d. for livery.

WAITS AS PLAYERS OF INTERLUDES, Etc.

The Waits from early times took part in public Plays, Interludes, Pageants, etc. In fact no public ceremony or procession was complete without them, and they frequently rode on horseback. They were sometimes called “actors” or “histriones.” [Careful! “entertainers”?] *Shrewsbury*, 1483- “For the livery of the Common histriones called the waytes of the town 15s.”²⁵

In the household book of Hickling Priory amongst the items of expense in the year 1517-18 is “Regiis histrionibus vocatis waytes.”²⁶ Here the King’s players are accorded the title. [So why mention them in this context?]

At York, the Guild of Minstrels (including the Waits) were bound at their own charge “to bring forth and cawese to be plaid the pageant of Corpus Christi, viz. Herod and Messenger enquiringe the Thre Kyngs of the Child Jesu, sometime accustomed to be brought forth at the charg of the late Masons of this Citty on Corpus Christi Day.”²⁷²⁸ [For a very short time, the York waits performed the Mystery play about the three kings’ visit to Herod. I seem to remember that the original called him ‘Harowld’ or similar]

Although Chester was the home of one of our greatest [surviving] series of Miracle plays, the Waits were not much employed as the City could draw on a large fraternity of minstrels, and the musicians from the Monastery.

At Coventry, in 1474, at the “Receavyng Prynce Edward” when he came out of Wales, various pageants with speeches were given attended with “mynstralcy of the Wayts of the Cite.”

In 1511 a play of *The Holy Martyr St. George* was represented at Basingbourne, in Cambridgeshire, at which “a mynstrell and three waits of Cambridge” assisted.

Norwich, 1550.- “This Paggeante was done by the wagghts of the Cytte of Norwich. There was a Skaffoold made at Sancte Peters of Houndegate Church. Styelle rounde like a Pavyllion: Richele adorned, full of targetts, with a Morien on the topp standing naked, with a targett and a great Darte in his hand; within which stood an Auncyente personage who represented Tyme, hauing the speeche to the Mayor as he came forby, following the procession, etc.”

Again at Norwich in 1570 “the whole company of waytes of this Citie did come into this Court and craved that they might have leve to play comedies and Interludes and such other pieces and Tragedes which shall seem to them meete; which petition is granted, they not playing in the Tyme of Divine Service and Sermons.”

At Lincoln, a most curious Christmas poem was recited or sung by the three City Waits as a warning beforehand for the right keeping of Christmas time. This was called “Crying Christmas.”

(1565).- The Three waits personified three senators or wise men, and each in turn sang one verse. I select three verses :-

First Senator.

The Aungells with myrthe the schepperdes did obey,
When they sang *Gloria in Excelsis* in tunes mysticall;
The byrdes with solemnyte sang on every spray,
And the beastes for joye made reverence in every stall.

Second Senator.

Therefore with a contrite hart let us be merye all
Havyng a stedfast faith and a love most amyable,
Disdayning no man of power greate or small
For a crewell oppressor is nothyng commendable.

²⁵ Owen and Blakeway, *History of Shrewsbury*.

²⁶ N. and Q., v. ID, 494.

²⁷ York Corporation Minutes, 3 Eliz. XXII.

²⁸ [I can find no footnote number in the text, but must still include the ref. And maintain the sequence] *The Antiquary*, vol. 32, p. 191. Historical MSS. Committee 14th Report.

Third Senator.

That is the chiefe cause hither we were sent,
To gyve the people warning to have all thyngs perfityly,
For they that do not, breaketh Mr. Mayor's commandement
And according to the order, punysshed must they be.²⁹

This tendency to dramatic performance existed up to the end of the 17th century.

In 1677, before the Lord Mayor of London, one of the Waits "with a well-composed voice" began a new song of entertainment and then another wait "being attired like to New-Bedlamite with appropriate action and audible voice singeth the second song to the tune of Tom-a-Bedlam."

The next year "the City music, after a little consideration and consultation one with another, conclude to habit themselves for the performance of a song in three parts *in stilo recitativo* on a musical interlude presented by three persons - *Crab*, a West Country man, *Swab*, a Seaman, and *Self*, a Citizen. *Crab* sings a few notes of the Canarys and danced to it." The next year, 1679, before the Lord Mayor, a wait sang "a pertinent frolic called the *Coronation of Canary*."³⁰

PART V. - THE WAITS OF NORWICH.

There is scarcely a town of any size that could not contribute some interesting information as to the Waits, but I must conclude my paper with a few more particulars of the most celebrated of all, *viz.* those of the City of Norwich. I have already mentioned their interludes, instruments and beautiful chains of office. They were undoubtedly singers, actors and instrumentalists of more than ordinary ability and their fame was widespread.

In 1578, Queen Elizabeth made a great entry into Norwich and "at the gate of the city were placed the loud musick, who cheerfully and melodiously welcomed Her Majesty into the city, this song being sung by the best voices in the choir." Two of the verses are appended.

The dew of heaven drops this day
On dry and barren ground,
Wherefore at fruitful hearts I sing
Of drum and trumpet sound.
Yield that is due, show what is meet,
To make our joy the more,
In our good hope and her good praise,
We never saw before.

Full many a winter have we seen
And many storms withall
Since here we saw a King or Queen
In pomp and princely pall.
Wherefore make feast and bow quite still
And now to triumph fall
With duty let us show good will
To glad both great and small.
The dew of heaven, etc.

At numerous other points in the City Her Majesty was greeted with songs and interludes, so that it is quite possible that the tradition is true which tells us that she gave each of the five waits an instrument and also a

²⁹ Ferdinando, the brother of OrIando Gibbons, was a Lincoln Wait, and no doubt [*no doubt?*] often "cried Christmas." (Information kindly supplied by Dr. W. H. Grattan Flood).

³⁰ See an article on "Waits" by F. A. Hadlam [Hadland] in *Musical News*, September, 1915.

house in King Street. The waits also frequented an old house called “The Music House” which was anciently the great message of Moses the Jew,- “a great man in the time of William Rufus.”

And now Sir Francis Drake comes on the scene. Though not a gentleman born yet he kept up great state when in command of his ship, and we have a vivid picture of the man and his ship’s company, when he made his celebrated voyage round the world, from the pen of Don Francisco Zarate, the Captain of a Spanish frigate captured by Drake on April 4th, 1579. The Captain dined at Drake’s table and writes as follows :-

“He has with him nine or ten young gentlemen, younger sons of the leading men in England who form his Council; he calls them together on every occasion and hears what they have to say, but he is not bound by their advice though he may be guided by it. He has no privacy. These of whom I speak all dine at his table. . . . the service is of silver richly gilt and engraved with his arms; he too has all possible luxuries even to perfumes, many of which he told me were given him by the Queen. None of these gentlemen sits down or puts on his hat in his presence without repeated permission. He dines and sups to the music of Violins.”

Unfortunately we do not know who these violinists were who went this wonderful voyage, but if they survived they must have been very proud musicians for the rest of their lives.

Alfred Noyes has celebrated them in his poem “*The Golden Hind*, a song of the skilled musicians of Francis Drake.”³¹

In 1589 Drake was preparing to sail as second in command of a fleet under Sir John Norris in order to “sing the King of Spain’s beard,” and this time he applied to the Corporation of Norwich, for the Waits to accompany him as his private band. It is obvious that their reputation must have stood high and we should know more probably on this point, if we, had Sir Francis’ letter before us. Unfortunately this was purloined from the Corporation archives many years ago. But we *do* know what was said in reply, for we have two Corporation Minutes - January 25th, 1589.

“This day was redd in the Court, a letter sent to Master Mair and his brethren from Sir Francis Drake, whereby he desyareth that the Waytes of this Citie may be sent to hym, to go the new intended voyage; whereunto the Waytes being here called do all assent, whereupon it is agreed that they should have vi cloaks of stemell cloth made them redy before they go; and that a wagon shall be provided to carry them and their instruments, and that they shall have iiiilb [lb = libre = £] to buye them, three new howboyes and one treble recorder, and xlb. [lb = pound weight] to bear their charys; and that the Citie, shall hyre the wagon and paye for it. Also that the Chamberlyn shall pay Peter Spratt xs. 3d., for a saquebut case; and the Waytes to delyver to the Chamberlyn before they go the citie’s cheanes.”

“1589.- The XXVIIIth of January. Payed to Mr. Petters, Alderman, for cloath for all the Waytes’ Cloaks, and for their Lace, making, and other things bestowed upon them, when they went the Portugal Voyage, by the request of Sir Francis Drake, wh [wh = w^h = which] money was pared by warrante xxxix, ixs, iiijd.”

The voyage was a failure, for it accomplished little beyond burning Corunna, and the mortality was enormous. Of the six waits only two returned.

An historical study often leads to interesting bye-paths and we have one here.

All know the old ballad of the *Babes in the Wood*, but many do not know that this is founded on fact, and that the wicked Uncle lived not far from Norwich. In the old ballads which describe the calamities which fell upon him for his awful crime we find :

“In the voyage to Portugal Two of his sons did die.”³²

They were in the same expedition as the Waits.

Norwich soon recovered the loss of the old waits, and in a few years they had as good a set as before who are duly described by Kemp, the great Morris Dancer, who undertook for a wager to dance the Morris all the way from London to Norwich, and has left us an account of it.

“Passing the gate. . . . I got thorow that narrow preaze into the open market-place; where on the crosse, ready prepared, stood the City Waytes, wh not a little refreshed my weariness with toyling thorow so narrow a lane- as the people left me : such Waytes (under *Benedicite* be it spoken) fewe Citties in our Realme have the like, none better; who beside their excellency in wind instruments, their rare cunning on the Vyoll and Violin, they

³¹ It has been set to music by Dr. Silver.

³² *The Norfolk Chronicle*, July 27th, 1907, article by J. C. Tingey.

voices be admirable, everie one of them able to serve in any Cathedral Church in Christendoome for Quiristers.”³³

I might say much more, but if I did then I fear you would be going to sleep like the “Babes in the Wood” covered up with the leaves of this lecture.

So here endeth the Lay of the Last Minstrel “Vocatus Wayt.”

We will conclude with :-

(1) Oxford Waits - a pretty Gavotte.

(2) Chester Waits -which, I think (though perhaps I am biased [QED on page 1]), as best of all the Waits’ tunes.

I do not perform Savile’s *The Waits*, as that vocal composition is so well known.

My best thanks are due to the firm of J. W. Arrowsmith, Ltd., Bristol, for permission to use the block of Bristol Waits’ Badges; to the Town Clerk of Beverley J. Dennett, Esq.), for photographs of the Waits’ Chains; to the Town Clerk of Norwich (Noel B. Rudd, Esq.), for the loan of a block of a Wait’s Collar; to the Town Clerk of Stamford (Charles Atter, Esq.), for a Wait’s Badge; to the Town Clerk of Wakefield (A. C. Allibone, Esq.); to H. Parkin, Esq., Curator of the Wakefield Museum, for a Wait’s Badge; to John Camidge, Esq., organist of Beverley Minster [whose father John - it is alleged - led the York Waits in the late 18th c.]; to Dr. Bates, organist of Norwich Cathedral, and to the Rev. Ernest H. Knight, Succentor of Durham Cathedral.

The performers at the lecture were: Pianoforte, The Lecturer; Violin, Joshua Goldstein; Horn, C. F. Peters (Scholars of Trinity College of Music).

DISCUSSION.

CANON GALPIN: I am very glad our President, with his usual power of research and accuracy, has told us that the idea of the minstrel-watchman or “wait” taking his name originally from the instrument he played upon, is a mistake. Perhaps I may be permitted to add further confirmation and a suggestion as to the way in which the mistake arose.

In a fifteenth century Latin dictionary I found the word (*calamaula*) which means a “reed pipe” and from which we get the word “Chalumeau” or “Shawm”), translated into English as “the wayte pipe.” But in a seventeenth century manuscript in the British Museum there is a sketch of a shawm with the following description: “a Howboye or a Wayte or a Shawm,” showing that in the ordinary speech of that time the word “pipe” was carelessly omitted after “wayte” and so the mistake came about. Halliwell gives the word “wait,” instead of “wait pipe,” as meaning the hautboy; and he mentions another curious provincialism, namely a “wait treble,” which he says is a sort of bagpipe: by “treble” was evidently meant “triple”; for the bagpipe, with its chanter and two drones, is a threefold shawm or “wait pipe.”

We know how popular the shawm or the hautboy was with these minstrels, for you recollect that in “Othello” Shakespeare brings in players on wind instruments as serenaders at the Castle. They no doubt [now Galpin says “no doubt” when he cannot know] were the town “waits” and certainly [probably, not certainly unless it says so] played on shawms; for as they are beginning, the clown enters and says, “Why masters, have your instruments been in Naples that they speak i’ the noise thus?”, alluding to the fact that the instruments used had a very reedy tone. [no doubt! Three presumptions built upon one another become fact?]

May I thank our President for the interesting paper he has given us, so full of reliable statistics? If I may say so, I was attracted to the Meeting not only by the subject, but by the statement that the President himself was going to read the paper.

MR. W. W. COBBETT : I read in one of William Gardiner’s books - he was a wool-spinner in Leicester and a great amateur of music - the following, which illustrates the fact that string instruments were then used by the waits.

“In the dead of night. . . on one occasion I heard the waits parade the market-place, playing the Minuet from Haydn’s Quartet in D minor, and was much thrilled.”

³³ Kemp’s *Nine Daies Wonder* (1600), p.17.

DR. BRIDGE: It is the first time I have ever read of any definite piece that they played of that kind.

MR. Fox: On what instrument was the piano part played?

THE CHAIRMAN: They scraped away with the violin and the bass viol ['cello?], horns and bassoons; but I had to make the pianoforte part myself.

We are very much obliged indeed to Canon Galpin for coming here to-night and bringing that really valuable instrument, and not only bringing it but being able to play it.

The Meeting terminated with a very hearty Vote of Thanks to the President for his address, which was carried by prolonged acclamation.