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THE ADMINISTRATION OF MINSTRELSY

Administration by Minstrel-Court and Gild

The minstrel population of late medieval England was primarily itinerant.¹ The liveried minstrels attached to king, nobles or prelates were usually required only at the principal feasts, and for the rest of the year they travelled around the countryside earning their living as itinerant musicians. Even those who remained in the household were not necessarily static, for the king rarely stayed long in one place, and other magnates also travelled around in administering their estates.

Those minstrels who were not regularly employed had of necessity to travel. A skilful player could always find some work in his own town; but if he was not to rely entirely on occasional weddings, banquets, miracle plays or the benevolence of visiting nobility, he too had to take to the road. As for the less skilful minstrel, the charlatan and the rogue who used minstrelsy as a cover for all possible deceits, vices and felonies, he could earn a living only by constant travel and attendance at fairs and other large gatherings where money was to be had.

The administrative problems inherent in such a situation were enormous. The liveried minstrels, amongst whom were found the [2] finest performers, needed some protection against less skilful independent musicians; those who paid for minstrelsy – both the noble in whose castle a minstrel played, and the common man – needed protection against the charlatan; [and] some independent minstrels who were good performers and were always welcome in their own district² needed protection from unknown itinerant minstrels. In addition, any large gathering such as a fair raised problems of police control and maintenance of law and order for the magnate or civic authority concerned.

These interests naturally conflicted. There were good independent minstrels, and there were bad or dishonest local minstrels who claimed some privileges over strangers. No administration during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

¹ See Jusserand/*EWL*, pp. 103–15, *passim*.

² See for instance the many minstrels who came regularly to the Scottish Court and to Durham Priory on major feasts: Appendices D and B, *passim*.

succeeded in resolving all of the problems, and most of them seem to have been dismal failures.³

The earliest administration – that at Chester – was the longest-lived and in many ways the most successful. The story of the origin of the Chester minstrel-court in 1210 has often been told, but it will be useful to repeat it here briefly.⁴ Randal, Earl [3] of Chester, finding himself besieged in Rhuddlan Castle by the Welsh, sent for help to the constable of Chester, Roger de Lacy. The force which Lacy could muster was none too large, and he had an additional worry on his hands: the annual fair was under way at Chester, and the town was full of the rabble which such an event always attracted. It was certainly not safe to leave the town devoid of troops, and yet Lacy needed all the soldiers he could find to raise the siege at Rhuddlan.

The constable solved the problem by taking the crowd with him, and the whole noisy rabble marched with the soldiers to the Earl's rescue. The Welsh, seeing and hearing this extraordinary "army", thought themselves about to face a powerful military force, and they therefore withdrew. As a reward to the constable, the Earl conferred on him the right to control shoemakers and minstrels in the city and county of Chester. The rights concerning the shoemakers Lacy kept: those concerning the minstrels were later conferred on the constable's steward, Hugh de Dutton.

Apocryphal as the story might be in detail, it is supported in its essentials by what we know of other such administrations. The Dutton court continued to be held until the eighteenth century, but some earlier information about it has come down to us because one Laurence de Dutton was required to reply to a *quo warranto* dated 14 Henry VII. His answer stated that all minstrels staying in the city and county of Chester were bound to assemble before him or his steward annually on St John the Baptist's Day, to give [4] him four bottles of wine, and to pay him 4¹/₂d for the renewal of a licence to play.⁵ The proceedings included a service in St John's church, to which the heirs of Dutton or their deputies rode in procession, attended by all the minstrels of the city and county playing before them on their instruments.⁶

We should notice that Earl Randal almost certainly did not *create* the rights which later fell to the Duttons. He probably exercised such a control not only over the shoemakers and minstrels in his territory but over many other trades as

³ The view expressed in Woodfill/*Companies*, however, is a little extreme, perhaps due to condensation of the original lecture. The various administrations are discussed at length in Woodfill/*MES*, Chapters I and V, *passim*.

⁴ See Blount/*Tenures*, pp. 156–58; Morris/*Chester*, p. 12; Duncan/*Minstrelsy*, p. 65; and Crewdson/*WCM*, p. 87.

⁵ Every prostitute paid him 4/- on the same occasion. It is not clear how Dutton came to have this right, although it is possible that prostitutes had originally been classed with the lowest type of minstrel.

⁶ Morris/*Chester*, p. 13, n.

well.⁷ Many of the larger land-owners must have found it, if not actually necessary to control minstrels on their land, at least convenient and profitable to levy a tax on them. One of the most powerful land-owners in the middle of our period was John of Gaunt, and in one town owned by him we know that such a control was exercised.⁸ The right had been passed to an ancestor of the wife of a burgess, perhaps as a gift like that of the Chester administration to the [5] Duttons.⁹

John by the grace of God (King of Castile) to our beloved ... steward of our town of Newcastle-under-Lyme ... Whereas it was found by inquisition before you ... that William de Brompton, our burgess of the said town, and Margery his wife and all the ancestors of the said Margery have been wont and ought to have from time immemorial from every minstrel coming to the said town at the feast of St Giles to make his minstrelsy, four and a half pence, and from every bear coming to the same town to be baited one course, we ... command you ... to cause the perquisites and privileges aforesaid to be delivered to them

Given at the Savoy, 26 November, 46 Ed III (1372).

This privilege seems to have been purely financial, since no administration on the part of William and Margery is mentioned. In any case it would be difficult to regulate minstrelsy in quite the same way as weights and prices of merchandise could be controlled.¹⁰ Probably the Chester administration was originally a simple toll- [6] system, and it is interesting that the fee payable, 4¹/₂d, was the same at both Chester and Newcastle.

A year before the entry quoted above, Gaunt had married Constance, Queen of Castile and Leon, and had assumed the title of King by right of the marriage.

⁷ See Jusserand/*EWL*, p. 137, for an account of the control exercised by the Bishop of Winchester over the St Giles Fair there, and the taxes levied on merchants, 30 Ed I.

⁸ John of Gaunt was the favourite son of Edward III. As Duke of Lancaster and Earl of Leicester, he acquired lands of which Richard II could justly be jealous, including the palace of the Savoy in London and the castles of Leicester, Tutbury, Pontefract, Bolingbroke, Kenilworth, and others. See Mosley/*Tutbury*, p. 73.

⁹ This translation is in Rickert/*Chaucer*, p. 232. The original, printed in Armitage-Smith/*JGReg*, ii, p. 98, reads: "Johan par la grace (etc.) a nostre bien ame monsire Godefrey Foljaumbe nostre seneschal de la ville de Noef Chastel souz Lyme ou a son lieutenant illoeques saluz. Pource que trove est par enquest pris devant vous de nostre mandement et retourne en nostre chauncellerie que William de Brompton burgeys de nostre dit ville et Margerie sa femme et touz les auncestres du dit Margerie soleient et devoient avoir de temps dont memoire ne court de chescun ministrat venant a la dite ville en la feste de Saint Gile l'abbe pur faire leur ministralcie iij d. ob., et de chescun ours venant a meisme la ville pur estre chace un cours, voulons et vous mandons que, pris de les (dits) William et Margerie seurtee de faire a nous tant a nostre chastel come al seinte esglise deinz la dite ville ce q'ad este et soleit estre fait en celle cas devant ces heures, leur faites livree de les choses et liberteez avantditz, et ycelles le soeffrez avoir et enjoier pesiblement sanz empeschement. Et cestes (etc.) Donnee (etc.) a la Sauvoye le xxvj jour de Novembre l'an (etc.) xlvj."

¹⁰ C.f. Jusserand/*EWL*, p. 137.

Of the several castles belonging to her husband, Constance chose to live at Tutbury, and so Tutbury castle became the main Lancaster residence. The magnificent household, to which Constance now added Spanish minstrels and other servants, must have attracted a great deal of itinerant minstrelsy. But the Honour of Tutbury was in any case a sizable area, including large portions of both Staffordshire and Derbyshire. Within a few years Gaunt evidently found it necessary to exercise some control over the minstrels there.

Here, as at Newcastle and probably Chester, the control was not new: no doubt the minstrels working near Tutbury had conveniently "forgotten" their obligations while the Lancaster household had been mainly at Leicester. Gaunt's orders of 1380 refreshed their memories:¹¹

[7]

John, by the grace of God King of Castile and Leon, Duke of Lancaster, to all them who shall see or hear these our letters, greeting. Know ye, that we have ordained, constituted and assigned to our well-beloved King of the Minstrels in our Honour of Tutbury, who is, or for the time being shall be, to apprehend and arrest all the minstrels in our said honour and franchises, that refuse to do the service and attendance which appertains to them to do from ancient times at Tutbury aforesaid, yearly on the days of the Assumption of Our Lady, giving and granting to the said King of the Minstrels, for the time being, full power and commandment to make them reasonably to justify, and to constrain them to perform, their services and attendance, in manner as belongeth to them, and has been here used, and of ancient times accustomed. In witness whereof, (etc.)

Given under our privy seal, at our castle of Tutbury, the 22 day of August, 4 Ric.

In the Tutbury administration we find again the main elements of the Chester system. The minstrels were required to attend annually, and although their "services et ministralcies" are not specified, it is a safe guess that homage to the Duke of Lancaster and the payment of some fee were included.

Here again the exact age of the administration is in doubt: "de temps dont memoire ne court" and "dauncien temps" date the Newcastle and Tutbury

¹¹Translated in Plot/*Staffordshire*, pp. 435-36: this modernised version is in Mosley/*Tutbury*, p. 77. The original, printed in Lodge/*JGReg*, p. 341, reads: "... Sachez nous avoir ordenez, constitut et assignez nostre bien ame le roy des ministrax deinz nostre honour de Tuttebury, qore est ou qi pur le temps serra, pur prendre et arester touz les ministrax deinz meisme nostre honour et franchises queles refusent de faire leur service et ministralcie a eux appartenantz affaire dauncien temps a Tuttebury susdit annuelment les jours del Assumpcion Nostre Dame, donant et grantant au dit roy des ministrax pur le temps esteant plein poair et mandement de les faire resonablement justifier et constreigner de faire leurs services et ministralcies en manere come appent et come illeques ad este use et dauncien temps acoustume. En tesmoignance, (etc.). Donnee (etc.) a nostre chastel de Tuttebury le xxii jour d'Augst lan (etc.) quart." (i.e. 1380).

admin-istrations equally vaguely.¹² We can certainly assume, however, that their origins ante-date Gaunt's creation as Duke of Lancaster in 1362.

[8] The information that Gaunt enforced the Tutbury administration through a minstrel-king raises questions concerning earlier methods of control. For Gaunt's orders read as if his Tutbury administration was new in this respect. The Duttons would not have employed a minstrel-king, and would not necessarily have kept their own household minstrels. Perhaps the Dutton administration was enforced through the Earl's retainers, and Gaunt certainly made his steward at Newcastle responsible for enforcing control there.

Towards the end of his life Gaunt lived less at Tutbury. He seems not to have visited Constance at all in the last two years before her death in 1394,¹³ and probably never went to Tutbury again. The minstrel-administration in the honour can hardly have been in a flourishing state, therefore, when in 1399 Gaunt died, Henry Bolingbroke ascended the throne as Henry IV and the castle at Tutbury ceased to be the residence of the Lancasters. The administration certainly survived in some form, but little information on its fifteenth-century history is extant. The evidence of the notorious bull-running shows that it continued before the Reformation:¹⁴ it has been suggested that the bull-running was part [9] of Gaunt's original organisation, but it has nothing to do with the control of minstrelsy, and looks more like a later encouragement to minstrels to support a dying institution.

Without doubt the Tutbury administration was invalid when Henry VI tried to control minstrelsy in 1449. Minstrelsy became more and more a concern of the king as the Middle Ages wore on and the feudal system disintegrated. Edward II tried to control itinerant minstrels as part of a plan to reduce extravagance amongst the land-owners,¹⁵ while Henry IV found it necessary to [10] suppress

¹² See nn. 9 and 11, above.

¹³ Mosley/*Tutbury*, p. 109.

¹⁴ The bull-running dates from the time of Henry VI, if not earlier: see Plot/*Staffordshire*, p. 437. The bull was presented by the abbot of Tutbury until the dissolution of the abbey: thereafter it was the gift of the Earl of Devonshire. See Kirke/*Tutbury*, pp. 109 f.

¹⁵ The shortened version of the mandate of 6 August, 9 Edward II, as quoted in Chappell/*PMOT*, p. 30, is misleading: it was directed less against minstrels than against the nobility. It can hardly have increased Edward's popularity, and seems to have had little or no effect. The text is translated and printed in full in Leland/*Collectanea*, vi, pp. 36 f. After describing the danger to his realm, Edward proceeds to limit the number of meat courses to be served at table: he goes on, "And lykewyse that to the houses of Prelates, Earles, and Barons, none resort to meate and drynke, unlesse he be a mynstrel, and of these minstrels, that there come none except it be three or foure minstrels of honour at the most in one day, unlesse he be desired of the lorde of the house. And to the houses of meaner men, that none come unlesse he be desired, and that such as shall come so, holde themselves contented with meate and drynke, and with such curtesie as the maister of the house wyl shewe unto them of his owne good wyll, without their askyng of any thyng. And yf any one do agaynst this ordinaunce, at the firste tyme he to lose his minstrelsie, and at the seconde tyme to foresweare his craft, and never to be receaved for a minstrel in any house." The ordinance goes on to deal with messengers, runners, archers "and other idle men" in a similar fashion. "Minstrels of honour" must have included all liveried minstrels, and, perhaps, certain well-known and skilful minstrels in

the troublesome minstrels of Wales, spokesmen for Welsh nationalism.¹⁶ These were both in the nature of police action, and were limited in scope. When Henry VI took less limited action in 1449 it was again a police control undertaken for a specific purpose. In practice, however, it took the form of a potentially permanent administration: Henry gave his own minstrels the same powers as the minstrel-king at Tutbury had possessed, extended now to include the whole country except Chester.¹⁷

Whereas many rude husbandmen and artificers of England, feigning to be minstrels and some of them wearing the king's livery and so feigning to be the king's minstrels, collect in certain parts of the realm great exactions of money of the king's lieges by virtue of their livery and art, and though they be unskilled therein and use divers arts on working days and receive sufficient money thence, they fare from place to place on festivals and take the profits, wherefrom the king's minstrels and others, skilled in the art (of music) and using no other labours or misteries, should live: the king has appointed William Langton, Walter Haliday, William Maysham, Thomas Radcliff, Robert Marshall, William Wykes, and John Cliff, king's minstrels, to enquire throughout the realm, except the county of Chester, touching all such and to punish them, to hold the same inquisition themselves or by deputies during good behaviour.

The commission was dated 17 June, 1449: copies of it were [11] sent to sheriffs throughout the country, with a request that assistance should be given to the minstrels to carry out the inquisition. The copy sent to Norwich survives.¹⁸

It is not surprising that independent minstrels should sometimes earn their living less than honestly, nor that some should take advantage of the high status of the liveried minstrel. The distinction between "minstrels of honour" and other minstrels grew ever more acute. Itinerant minstrels had already abused their privileges by 1315¹⁹ – privileges which the nobility now felt less inclined to be-

any area. Edward probably issued a corresponding ordinance to his own minstrels, warning them not to ask too much from casual patrons during their travels: such an ordinance was quoted in the *Liber Niger* of Edward IV, who evidently thought it necessary to repeat the warning to his own minstrels. See *Ords & Regs*, p. 48.

¹⁶The statute of 4 Henry IV (1402) is printed in Chappell/*PMOT*, p. 38: "Item, pour eschuir plusieurs diseases et mischiefs qont advenuz devaunt ces heures en la terre de Gales par plusieurs Westours, Rymours, Minstralx et autres Vacabondes, ordeignez est, et establiz, que nul Westour, Rymour, Minstral, ne Vacabonde soit aucunement sustenez en la terre de Gales pur faire Kymorthas ou coillage sur la commune poeple ilioques." An English version is in Sharp/*Dissertation*, p. 217, n.

¹⁷*CPR*, Henry VI, vol. 5 (1446–1452), p. 262. Langton was in fact dead by this date: *ibid.*, p. 250 (17 May, 1449). See below, p. 16 and n. 32.

¹⁸Hudson/*Norwich*, ii, p. 328. The date given here is 17 Jan., 7 Henry VI, surely a misreading for 17 Jun., 27 Henry VI. Wykes and Cliff do not appear as king's minstrels before 25–26 Henry VI: see below, Appendix A, under that date.

¹⁹See above, n. 15.

stow on the independent minstrel rather than on the liveried retainer. The poverty and high prices of the first half of the fourteenth century, with an actual famine in 1315 and again in 1322, cannot have helped the independent musician to make an honest living. Nor did the second half of the century improve his position, with five minor outbreaks of the Black Death by 1391, following the major plague of 1348-9. After the Black Death the rich were, generally speaking, better-off than before, and this must have helped to increase the difference in status between the liveried and the independent minstrels.

Administration by a feudal authority no doubt gave some [12] assistance to the better class of minstrel: but it was of spasmodic and uncertain benefit. In the day-to-day disputes and injustices which happened between minstrels, settlement had to wait for an annual gathering (as at Chester and Tutbury) or a travelling inquisition (the Tutbury minstrel-king or Henry VI's minstrels). For the greatest protection of their professional rights, therefore, the best of the independent minstrels (and some liveried minstrels, as well)²⁰ had to make an agreement between themselves to keep their standards high and to prevent unskilled players from taking their work and privileges.²¹

Minstrels therefore took full advantage of the gild movement, especially in the fifteenth century, when the organisation of town waits threatened in many places to create a monopoly which could put other minstrels out of work. It would be hard to overestimate the importance which was attached to the medieval gild, or the effect of the gilds on everyday life. In modern times only freemasonry can compare with it, and that only where its initiates - a [13] small minority - are concerned. The gilds were fraternities concerned with the welfare of members and their families, either through charity (the religious gilds) or through the regulation of competition within a certain trade (the trade gilds). All had their religious side, however, and the trade gilds often admitted both the wives of members and men who plied trades other than that of the gild. It was through the gilds that a man became a freeman of his town: indeed, the gilds were in some places virtually synonymous with the town corporation.²² Life was altogether easier for a freeman, and the surviving freemen's rolls contain the names of many minstrels.²³

Many of the characteristics of the English fraternities can be seen in the *Feste du Pui*, a Continental brotherhood which gained a foothold in this country in the

²⁰ The king's minstrels did not need gild-assistance on account of their very high status: minstrels of other nobles sometimes found it worth while to buy their freedom. The "Hugo le Trumpeour" who bought his freedom through the Merchants' Guild at Leicester in 18 Edward III was probably a minstrel of the Earl of Leicester. See Kelly/*Notices*, p. 131. John Brothir, the Lancaster trumpeter, may be another case: see below, p. 220. Town waits also joined gilds: see below, pp. 53 and 238, n. 104.

²¹ Minstrels were among those exempted from the Acts of Apparel, for instance. See Collier/*History*, i, p. 36, and Stevens/*M&P*, pp. 317 f.

²² The Company of St George at Norwich, for instance.

²³ Westlake/*Gilds*, pp. 23, 109 and 118.

late thirteenth century. The ordinances for the English branch, which was established in London, were drawn up between 1306 and 1317.²⁴ The aims and effects of the brotherhood were far too general for the *Feste du Pui* to be called a gild, although its organisation was similar to that of the English fraternities. The *Feste du Pui* was ruled by a Prince and twelve companions, all of whom were elected at a yearly feast. This election bore a surprising resemblance to the Tutbury election [14] of 1680, even down to the ceremonial handling of a cup of wine – handed to the Prince's successor in the case of the *Feste du Pui*, and used to drink the new King's health at Tutbury.²⁵

The social and religious gilds ante-date the trade gilds proper. The minstrel gild of 1350 at Cripplegate, London, was not a trade gild in the sense that it tried to regulate minstrelsy itself. The minstrels' most pressing need was to make their social situation both stable and secure: only then could they resist professional competition. The Cripplegate fraternity was in the first place organised on their own initiative, and existed by agreement between "the minstrels of London and other good people in the same city dwelling".²⁶

The administration of the gild was simple, and was carried out by the wardens, who were responsible for the common box. Each member paid 13d into the common box each year: a member in need could borrow money against security, or could be given help if through no fault of his own he suffered poverty, illness, robbery, maiming, old age, loss of property or wrongful imprisonment. A member who failed to contribute, if he was able to do so, or who persisted in malice towards another member, could be dismissed. In this case any money already paid in by him would remain in the common box, but his name would be included in the list of [15] benefactors to the fraternity inscribed on the obituary roll of the Carmelite Friars. New members could be admitted if deemed worthy and loyal: if they were required to be skilled in minstrelsy, the fact is not specifically stated. If a dispute arose which involved a member, the wardens were to attempt to settle the disagreement. On the death of a member, the gild paid for the burial and for thirty masses to be said for his soul.

The Cripplegate gild seems to have changed little between 1350 and 1389.²⁷ In the latter year its sole assets were 44/5d in the common box, security for 8/- on loan, and a special garment for the company.²⁸

Nothing more is known of the Cripplegate gild, and its poor financial situation leads us to assume that it did not survive long. Almost certainly it would not be strong enough to coexist with the City of London waits when the latter were

²⁴ Unwin/*Gilds*, pp. 99 f.

²⁵ See below, p. 26.

²⁶ A translation of the 1350 ordinances is in Crewdson/*WCM*, pp. 79–81.

²⁷ The copy of the ordinances dated 1350 is part of the return made by the gild in 1389 in answer to the article of enquiry of that year. See Westlake/*Gilds*, pp. 138–238, for a summary of these returns.

²⁸ Crewdson/*WCM*, p. 81. I do not think that this means a gild livery: it perhaps refers to a single garment to distinguish the senior warden, or whoever presided over the gild.

founded early in the fifteenth century.²⁹ The returns of 1389 show that there was also a gild of players and minstrels at Lincoln,³⁰ but that, too, probably failed to survive. For the next eighty years minstrels seem to have bought their protection through religious gilds or gilds of other [16] trades,³¹ while specific area control over minstrelsy was exercised through the minstrel-courts already discussed.

We have seen that when Henry VI organised the control of minstrelsy through his own minstrels he produced what was potentially a permanent administration. His successor, Edward IV, not only confirmed this administration, but constituted it in the manner of a gild in an ordinance of 24 April, 1469:³²

Licence for Walter Haliday, John Cliff, Robert Marshall, Thomas Green, Thomas Calthorn, William Cliff, William Christian, and William Eynsham, the king's minstrels, to establish, continue, and augment a fraternity or perpetual gild, which the bretheren and sisters of the fraternity of minstrels of the realm erected in times past, that they may pray for the good estate of the king and his consort Elizabeth, queen of England, and for their souls after death and for the soul of the king's father Richard, late Duke of York, in the chapel of St Mary within the cathedral church of St Paul, London, and the king's free chapel of St Anthony in the same city. They shall admit other persons, men and women, to the fraternity, and shall form one body and perpetual corporation, and shall elect from themselves a Marshal to remain in office for life and two Wardens yearly for the governance of the fraternity, and shall have the supervision of the art of minstrels, except in the county of Chester, and shall nominate the King's minstrels, subject to the royal assent.

It has always been assumed that the earlier fraternity referred to was the Cripplegate one, even though that was a localised gild, and – in 1389, at least – could hardly have been called a [17] fraternity of minstrels "of the realm". However that may be, both the old and the new fraternities admitted women: it is not clear if non-minstrels could also become members.³³ The Dutton court in the

²⁹ See below, p. 232.

³⁰ *Smith/Gilds*, p. 294.

³¹ See below, pp. 53 and 57.

³² *CPR*, Edward IV – Henry VI (1467–1477), p. 153. The administration was also confirmed by Henry VII, in 1496: see *Veale/GRBB*, text, part iv, pp. 5–8. The very fact that it needed confirmation may suggest that the administration failed to flourish.

³³ Women may have been mentioned in order that wives could join with their husbands: see below, p. 53, for the four Coventry waits and their wives joining the Smiths' Company there. A minstrel's wife, of course, may have known something about her husband's profession, as many wives do today in country districts. In a *Wardrobe book* for 5–6 Ed II, a gift for minstrelsy to Richard Pilke and his wife Helen is recorded: see below, p. 191. It seems likely that Margery, wife of Edward II's trumpeter William, was also a trumpeter: see below, ii, p. 71. Female minstrels were not always so rare as to excite particular comment. There is the famous occasion of the Pentecost feast of 1316 (see *Chappell/PMOT*, p. 31), when a woman dressed as a minstrel and on horseback gained

county of Chester evidently flourished, as that county was excepted from the fraternity's authority. Presumably the Tutbury court was by then dormant.

Probably the reconstituted fraternity was not powerful enough to be of more than regional use. By about 1500 it had given way to (or had itself become) the "Fellowship of the Minstrels Freemen of the City of London", and had therefore no pretensions to control minstrelsy elsewhere. The royal minstrels seem to have made little or no use of the powers invested in them in 1469, [18] and had no connection with the London fraternity.³⁴ The insecurity of the London fraternity, even within the city, made it very jealous of its rights, and in 1502 the company tried to prevent the five city waits from performing, on the grounds that they were not members.³⁵ The waits appealed to the Aldermen of the city, saying that they could not afford the entrance-fee. Their appeal was upheld, and thereafter the city waits always became members of the minstrels' company without payment.³⁶

In the provinces, too, the need to protect themselves from itinerant competition was felt by local minstrels as much as before. The regulations of a minstrels' guild at Canterbury, formed in 1526 or within a few years of that date, ordained³⁷

That all waits and minstrels that noo doo inhabyte, or hereafter shall inhabyte, in the seyde cytye (of Canterbury) or the suburbes of the same citie, shall be one felowshyp, and called by the name of the crafts and mystery of "mynstrells", and so shall continue from henceforth for ever.

Members of the Canterbury guild were forbidden to join with a "foreign" minstrel³⁸ in the performance of minstrelsy, and it was also prohibited [19]

for any fremane usyng or practysyng the seid crafte or mystery of mynstrells, to take any may-game, garland, chyldale, or wedding, out of any other freman's hand, uppon payne to forfeit, for every suche default, 3/4d; nor to any four minstrels to take any suche weddyngs, dedycacons, may-games, or garlands, from any freman usyng or practysyng the seid crafte or mystery, within the

admittance to the hall and gave the king a letter: she was not a minstrel, as it happens, but the door-keepers had to excuse themselves by saying that they had always allowed minstrels into the hall on such occasions. Du Fresne/*Glossarium* has several feminine words for minstrels, such as "ministrallissa". A number of women appear in the Scottish and other accounts as singers and fiddlers, although they were probably not professional minstrels: see especially Appendix D, *passim*. For certain types of minstrelsy in the wider sense, women were usual – as dancers, for instance: see Appendix D.

³⁴ Woodfill/*MES*, p. 6.

³⁵ Crewdson/*WCM*, pp. 20 f.

³⁶ Woodfill/*MES*, p. 40. On the early history of the company, and its fight against professional competition, see *ibid.*, Chapter I, and especially pp. 10 f.

³⁷ These ordinances are quoted from Brent/*Canterbury*, p. 154.

³⁸ A non-member.

seid citie, upon payne to forfeit, for every such default, 6/8d; nor to any such persons, etc., to play upon any instrument of a Sunday in time of masse or evensong, in any inne, tavern, or any other place, except it be at a weddyng, or a place where he is hyred, or at the commandment of Mr Maior of this citie for the time beyng, or any worshippingfull man: ...

The last part of this was no doubt to make a special case for the waits: they had particular duties to perform, and it was as well that they should not be in disagreement with the gild, as had happened at London.

The London gild, like that at Canterbury, had a statute which forbade one member to take work from another. The training of apprentices was carefully regulated: both gilds insisted on a seven-year apprenticeship, and in London, in order that the apprentice should have the best possible training, no freeman except a past master or warden could have more than one apprentice at a time. Nor was any member allowed to teach music to anyone except his apprentice, and the apprentice had to be approved by the gild and made a freeman, as in any other trade, before he could practise his craft professionally.³⁹

[20] Of the later fraternities, that at York was probably new, and it need not concern us here.⁴⁰ Those at Beverley and Tutbury were revivals, however, and we must examine them in order to see how their organisation had altered.

It would be as well first to tabulate the main characteristics of the different types of administration. Those of the minstrel courts (Chester, Tutbury and Henry VI's commission of 1449) are:

- 1 Regional police control by the feudal or civic authorities.⁴¹
- 2 Control through a travelling inquisition.⁴²
- 3 Yearly attendance at a court for the paying of a licensing-fee.⁴³

The characteristics of a gild (Cripplegate, London and Canterbury) are:

- 1 Local control of professional competition.
- 2 Control through a democratic fellowship.
- 3 Payment of entrance-fee and subscriptions, entitling the member to charitable and professional benefits.

[21] The classification of minstrel administrations into court-licensing and gild-approval is, if very useful, partly arbitrary. For to some extent the two types overlapped: the gilds levied fines and prevented non-members from playing,

³⁹ See Woodfill/*MES*, p. 18.

⁴⁰ See *ibid.*, pp. 110 ff., for a discussion of the York fraternity. The ordinances of this gild date from 1561.

⁴¹ Civic authority is included here only as the servant of feudal authority, such as John of Gaunt's steward at Newcastle-under-Lyme.

⁴² The method of control in the case of Chester is unknown. We must assume that there was one, and that it was effective in 1449, 1469, 14 Henry VII and 39 Elizabeth I (in which year the Cheshire minstrels were excepted from a statute against itinerant minstrelsy).

⁴³ Not included in the commission of 1449: the original Chester administration probably did not include it, either.

while the courts – at least in their later forms – attempted to settle disputes between members. The gild system implies a very much closer control over its members, however, and it is significant that during the late Middle Ages minstrel administration moved steadily away from court-control towards gild-organisation.

The fraternity at Beverley and the Tutbury court of the seventeenth century both illustrate this change. The statutes of the Beverley administration as laid down in 1555 are, it is true, those of a minstrel gild: there is the bias against the itinerant minstrel; a member had to be approved before he was allowed to take an apprentice, and he was allowed only one apprentice even so; and after a year and a day, the apprentice had to be approved and made a full brother of the fraternity. Despite the differences (such as the length of the apprenticeship) this shows a close parallel with the fraternities at London and Canterbury.

The preamble to the statutes shows, however, that we are dealing here not with a gild-administration but an example of the minstrel-court type, an administration of minstrels in a wide area, who would come to a specified place annually to [22] choose their officers:⁴⁴

Whereas it is and hath been a very aunciente custome aute of the memorie of dyvers aiges of men heretofore contynually frequented from the tyme of King Athelstone, of famous memorie, sometyme a notable Kynge of Englande, as may appeare by olde bookes of antiquities. That all or the most part of the mynstrell playing of any musicall instruments, and thereby occupying there honest lyving inhabytyng dwelling or servyng any man or woman of honour, and worshype of any cite or towne corporate or otherwise, between the rivers of Trent and Tweed, have accustomed yerely to resort unto this towne and borough of Beverley, at the Rogation days, and then and there to chose yerely one Alderman of the Mynstrells, with stewards and deputies authorized to take names, and receive customable duties of the said Mynstrells' Fraternitie; and the Alderman to correcte, amend, execute and continue all such laudable ordynances and statutes as they have hitherto ever used for the honestee and profit of their science and art musicall, to be only exercised to the honour of God, and to the comfort of man.

The renewal of the statutes follows.

Some sort of fellowship well may have been at Beverley long before,⁴⁵ but if so, it was not effective during the fifteenth century. It seems likely, however, that the fraternity was at least active, if not flourishing, in the first quarter of the [23]

⁴⁴ The statutes are in B.M. MS Lansdowne 896, ff. 153–56v, printed in Poulson/*Beverlac*, p. 303, and Lambert/*Gild*, p. 134.

⁴⁵ The statement of the gild's antiquity is no more precise than those concerning the Newcastle and Tutbury administrations: however, we have seen that feudal control over a wide area generally antedates local control through gilds. Lambert/*Gild*, p. 132, points out that a fraternity claiming jurisdiction over a wide area was typical of French craft-gilds rather than of English ones, and links the Beverley fraternity with the *Feste du Pui*.

sixteenth century.⁴⁶ An organisation that attempted to control minstrelsy over such a wide area was doomed to failure, however, and it seems probable that the statutes of 1555 were part of a last vain attempt to revive the fraternity.⁴⁷

[24] The Tutbury court, too, acquired certain gild-like characteristics at some stage in its history between 1380 and 1680. John of Gaunt's organisation had ceased to flourish by the mid-fifteenth century,⁴⁸ and was not exempted from the statutes of Henry VI, Edward IV and Elizabeth I. Our later knowledge of the court relies entirely on Dr Plot's description of 1680, and as the court did not have an unbroken tradition up to that date, we cannot identify that description too closely with the court as established by John of Gaunt.⁴⁹

It will nevertheless be useful to discuss the court as described by Dr Plot, and to see how it differed from what we know of the Chester court in the fifteenth century and the Tutbury court itself at its foundation. The court was held as before at the feast of the Assumption, and began with a procession in which the minstrels walked

two and two together, Musick playing before them, the King of the Minstrells for the year past walking between the Steward (of the Honour of

⁴⁶ *HMC 54* (Beverley Corporation MSS), p. 169, records a gift of 1/- for drink-silver to the minstrels on the third of the Rogation days, 1502. This may or may not mean the waits: certainly it was not a large gift if many minstrels were included in it. On the other hand the Beverley waits would have been the most enduring part of the fraternity in any case, and we can assume that they formed the nucleus of the gild even when membership was at its lowest.

When the north side of the nave of St Mary's Church was rebuilt in 1524, one of the pillars was donated by the Beverley minstrels: it bears the inscriptions "Thys pyllor made the meynstrels" and "Orate pro animabus histeriorum". The Beverley waits had then existed for over a century, and it has sometimes been thought that the five minstrels carved on the capital of the pillar represented the waits (see Dennett/*Beverley*, p. xix, for an opinion that the scutcheons worn by the minstrels are those of the waits). I think it unlikely, however, that town waits played *bas* instruments at this date (a cittern and a fiddle are depicted), and equally unlikely that the Beverley waits could finance the building of the pillar. That particular act is more characteristic of the corporate charity of a gild. Moreover, one of the minstrels wears a long surcoat such as an Alderman might wear: and although the Alderman of the Beverley gild would no doubt often have been a wait of the town, there is no evidence – at Beverley or elsewhere – that the chief wait ever had a different coat than those of the other waits. On the contrary, Poulson/*Beverlac*, p. 267, prints a payment dated 1502 in which nine yards of tawny cloth are bought for the three waits, presumably to be shared equally. (The gift for drink-silver, calendared in *HMC 54* and mentioned above, is printed on the same page.) On balance, I think it more likely that members of the fraternity are depicted on the pillar, not specifically the Beverley waits. The fact that they wear scutcheons and uniform livery is irrelevant, since the fraternity included liveried minstrels only.

For the pillar, see Hope/*Pillar* and Poulson/*Beverlac*, p. 736.

⁴⁷ Woodfill/*MES*, pp. 116 f, discusses the Beverley fraternity, and comes to the conclusion that it was not a success.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 117 f. See above, pp. 8 f.

⁴⁹ Plot's description is in Plot/*Staffordshire*, pp. 437 f: see also *ibid.*, pp. 435 ff. This material is discussed in Mosley/*Tutbury*, pp. 77 f.

Tutbury) and Bayliff, or their deputies; the four Stewards or under Officers of the said King of the Minstrells, each with a white wand in their hands, immediately following them; and then the rest of the company in order. Being come to the Church, the Vicar reads them divine service, chusing Psalms and Lessons suitable to the occasion. For which service every minstrel offered one penny, as a due always paid to the Vicar of the Church of Tutbury, upon this Solemnity.

[25] The King was by this time a mere figure-head, it seems, with no real administrative powers. The authority of such an officer was bound to wane as the need for guilds lessened during the sixteenth century, for fines and expulsion were then less effective as either punishment or deterrent. It was symptomatic of that state of affairs that the 1555 statutes of the Beverley guild should rely in the last resort on the authority of the king's officers.⁵⁰ By 1680 the Tutbury court was responsible to the Steward of the Honour, an authority which we have seen used at Newcastle-under-Lyme.⁵¹ The King's four assistants, although inherent in the original organisation, and seen in Henry VI's joint commission to a marshal and six other minstrels,⁵² was a product of the guild-movement: so was the religious dedication at the annual meeting.⁵³

According to Plot's description of the 1680 court, the minstrels went to the castle, after the service, to elect the officers for the following year and to attend the court, which was held before the Steward of the Honour. The juries were sworn, and while they retired to elect the new officers the old King and his [26] stewards had a banquet. Later, the juries returned and presented the new officers to the old, at which point the retiring King drank the health of his successor. The new officers had full authority to levy fines, of which half went to the Duke of Lancaster (the king, of course, by 1680) and half was retained by the five officers.⁵⁴ The bull-running followed.⁵⁵

This is the remaining part of the original organisation. The King, the fines, and the hearing of complaints⁵⁶ – now before the Steward, but formerly before the King – belong to the administration of 1380. The election, the banquet, and the retention of money for a common fund⁵⁷ are typical of a guild.

⁵⁰ "... and if any Person ... shewe him selfe obstynate ... Then the Kings Officers be sent for to cary the Offenders to the gaile ...": B.M. MS Lansdowne 896, f. 154. For printed versions, see n. 44, above.

⁵¹ See above, p. 5.

⁵² See above, p. 10.

⁵³ In 1680 the psalms chosen were nos. 98, 149 and 150, while the lessons were 2 Chronicles v and Ephesians v, 1–22 (?21): they speak for themselves.

⁵⁴ Mosley/*Tutbury*, p. 78.

⁵⁵ See above, n. 14.

⁵⁶ This probably took place before the election.

⁵⁷ This money in fact went to the five officers: I count it as a common fund because they must have used it to defray the expenses of the banquet, etc.

The ordinances of 5 Charles I regulated the Tutbury court almost exactly as a trade gild,⁵⁸ and give us some idea of what affairs the court dealt with. No minstrel was allowed to take an apprentice for less than seven years: an apprentice was not allowed to play his instrument for money, and at the end of his apprenticeship he had to be examined by the court and passed as fit to do so. It was still obligatory at that date for every minstrel to attend the court annually: but behind the gild-regulations, little of the [27] minstrel-king's travelling inquisition remained.

The Minstrel-Kings

The King of Minstrels has long been an enigma to the historian of English minstrelsy. It has usually been assumed that "King" was the early title of the officer later known as "Marshal of the king's minstrels". By analogy with the king's household, the minstrel-king of Tutbury must have been at the head of John of Gaunt's minstrels. The supposition was supported by two facts:

- 1 The title of "King of the Minstrels" seemed to have disappeared shortly before that of "Marshal" was first used.
- 2 The marshal of the king's minstrels was given powers formerly held by a minstrel-king.

On the first of these points, I shall show presently that the office and probably the title of "marshal of the minstrels" existed in the king's household in the time of Edward III,⁵⁹ while my last reference to a King of the Minstrels is some years later.⁶⁰ The only real evidence for the second point concerns the travelling [28] inquisitions of the Tutbury minstrel-king and of Henry VI's minstrels.⁶¹ I have already pointed out that the latter was in the nature of a police action for a specific purpose: the office of King of the Minstrels had died out by 1449, and it would seem quite natural that the most pressing of the minstrel-king's duties should be transferred to the king's minstrels, and in particular to the marshal.

It is necessary to make a clear distinction between the minstrel-kings and the minstrels of the royal households, especially as some Kings were elevated from the ranks of the household minstrels. King Robert was a trumpeter, for instance, and William de Morle, *Roy de North*, was a king's harper.⁶² Although they retained their household titles, however, and continued to receive wages and liveries

⁵⁸ Mosley/*Tutbury*, p. 78.

⁵⁹ See below, p. 140. The grant to William Langton dated 14 Oct., 1448, in the Patent Rolls was formerly the first known use of the title: *CPR* Henry VI, vol. 5 (1446-1452), p. 200.

⁶⁰ Rymer/*Foedera*, vii, p. 555: safe conduct for John Camuz, about to go abroad, 2 May, 1387. The minstrel-king of Tutbury continued much later, as we have seen, p. 25, above: but he seems to have been a servant of John of Gaunt originally, and although he retained the title of "King" his office in fact changed to that of the master of a gild.

⁶¹ See above, pp. 7 and 10.

⁶² Robert is described as "king's trumpeter" in E101/359/6, f. 11v (29 Ed I), and as "taborer" in E101/374/16, p. 4 (5 Ed II). For both men, see below, Appendix A, *temp.* Ed I and Ed II, *passim*.

as squires of the household and not amongst those "qui non sunt",⁶³ they seem to have given up their actual positions as king's minstrels: William, I think, was replaced by Henry de Newsom.⁶⁴ Of course, a King who had been a household minstrel would sometimes perform when he was in Court, and the Wardrobe Books do contain entries referring to rewards to minstrel-kings for [29] minstrelsy. Rewards for normal household minstrelsy, however – that is, apart from the big celebrations for the marriage of the king's daughter or the Pentecost feast of 1306 – are extremely rare: King Robert, as far as I know, received such a reward only twice between 29 Ed I and 14 Ed II – a twenty-year period.⁶⁵

The Kings of Minstrels were not always raised from the ranks of the royal minstrels, however: indeed, they were not necessarily minstrels at all. William Volaunt was a herald, and I have found no references at all to John Camuz in my search for minstrels in the Wardrobe Books.⁶⁶ The titles "King of the Minstrels" and "King of the Heralds" were used almost synonymously, at least until the late fourteenth century. King Robert and William Volaunt were known by both titles, while William de Morle and Andrew Norris – both of them king's minstrels⁶⁷ – were no doubt Kings of Minstrels as well as of Heralds, although I have not seen them referred to [30] by the former title.

The connection between heralds and minstrels was in any case close, and it was quite normal for a herald to perform "minstrelsy" of some sort.⁶⁸ The expenses for the marriage of the king's daughter Elizabeth, 25 Ed I, include five Kings among gifts to minstrels:⁶⁹ at least one of these, King Druet, was present also at the Pentecost celebrations of 1306, the summary accounts for which refer to "King Robert and other Kings of the Heralds, and ... other minstrels ...". The full list of minstrels at the latter occasion begins with five Kings and includes other heralds in addition to King Druet.⁷⁰ William Trenchant, a herald, was re-

⁶³ For an explanation of this term, see below, p. 250.

⁶⁴ As n. 62, above: see also Rastall/*MERH*, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Add. 8835, f. 42 (32 Ed I); Nero C viii, f. 84v (5 Ed II). Even these were special days – New Year's Day and the purification of the Countess of Cornwall, respectively.

⁶⁶ Admittedly the Wardrobe accounts for Richard II's reign are not fruitful, and include few minstrel-lists (he would not be included in a minstrel-list after his elevation to King-ship in any case). But if he had been a royal minstrel, the chances are that his name would have appeared.

⁶⁷ Morle is "king's minstrel, called *Roi du North*" in *CPR Edward II*, vol. 4 (1321–1324), p. 210. Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 27, quotes an Issue Roll of Michaelmas, 22 Ed III (1348): "Magistro Andreae Roy Norreys, Lybekino le Piper et Hanekino filio suo et sex aliis Menestrallis Regis ...". See below, Appendix A, *temp.* Edward III, *passim*.

⁶⁸ Apart from the Kings known to be instrumentalists, we need not assume that heralds performed instrumentally: they may have sung or told tales. Wagner/*Heralds*, pp. 29 f., quotes poems known to be by heralds.

⁶⁹ The Kings Page, Morellus, Druet, Monthaut and Jakettus de Scocia: Add. 7965, f. 52; see below, ii, pp. 16 ff.

⁷⁰ The King of Champagne and the Kings Capenny, Baisescue, Marchis and Robert: Carlton was a herald, and Norfolk may have been another, perhaps to be identified with William Taillant de Norfolk (Add. 35292, f. 9, 31 Ed I). It is possible that "Bruant"

warded for minstrelsy in 32 Ed I,⁷¹ while John Teysamit, who escorted the king's sister Eleanor on her way to be married to the Count of Guelderland in 1332, was both "king's herald" and "king's [31] minstrel".⁷² He appears in minstrel-lists after that date, however, and so was not a King at that time, if ever.

The connection between heralds and minstrels was not a one-sided one, for minstrels sometimes undertook heraldic duties. We find that trumpeters, and sometimes other minstrels, not infrequently carried letters for the king: and on at least one occasion minstrels were sent from the Continent specifically to observe a ceremony and to report on it.⁷³

To understand the minstrel-kings, then, we must first discuss the Kings of Heraldry.⁷⁴ The fourteenth century was the golden age of heraldry, partly, perhaps, because of the importance of heraldry during the Hundred Years' War.⁷⁵ Besides the duties of carrying messages, counting the dead after a battle, and so on, the royal heralds had become responsible for regulating the use of armorial bearings, and in this capacity they had authority over the whole country. A herald represented his master, and it therefore became sacrilege to offer violence to a royal officer of arms: in the case of a King of Heraldry this principle was taken a step [32] further, and he not only wore the coat of arms of the monarch whose proxy he was but in addition was crowned and consecrated.⁷⁶

At his coronation a herald-king was given a "kingdom", or area for which he was especially responsible. Thus in 1276 one Peter was King of the Heraldry north of the Trent.⁷⁷ Probably Peter's "kingdom" stretched northwards only as far as the Tweed, for thirty years later King Capenny was King of the Heraldry of Scotland. If there was a herald-king for Scotland in 1276, then Peter's territory was the northern half of England.⁷⁸ It therefore seems likely that the office of "Norroy"

should be identified with Bruiant, King of Heraldry (Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 29: see below, p. 37 and n. 90), and "Robert de Boistous" with Bois Robert, King of the Heraldry of France in 1318 (*ibid.*, p. 32). The list of minstrels is E101/369/6, and the summary accounts are in E101/369/11, f. 96 (both 34 Ed I).

⁷¹ On the same occasion as King Robert: see n. 65, above.

⁷² Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 160: see Add. 38006 and E101/386/7, *passim* (both 6 Ed III).

⁷³ For a more detailed discussion of the carrying of letters, see below, pp. 145b f. and 163. The minstrels of the King of Sicily and of the Duke of Milan were observers at the coronation of Margaret of Anjou, 23 Hen VI: Devon/*Issues*, p. 452.

⁷⁴ Also called Kings at Arms, by which title they are still known.

⁷⁵ Davis/*ME*, p. 236.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 225: see the picture, p. 223, of the first Garter King-of-Arms (from MS Ashmole 764) – he holds a *baton* and is crowned. The medieval mind saw nothing incongruous in taking this symbolism to its logical practical conclusion: c.f. the boy bishops.

⁷⁷ Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 39.

⁷⁸ Chappell/*PMOT*, p. 28, refers to Capenny as King of the Heraldry of Scotland in 1290: my first reference to this title is in E101/369/16, f. 26 (25 Ed I). For a probable holder of the title in 25 Ed I, however, see n. 69, above.

existed long before that title came into being in Edward III's reign,⁷⁹ and if so, William de Morle, "Roy de North", was no doubt another holder of the same office.

Under Edward III (and perhaps earlier, for the number and location of herald "kingdoms" seems to have been fixed quite early) a corresponding "kingdom" existed south of the Trent.⁸⁰ King Grey, [33] who was at the marriage of Joan of Acre in 1290, was "Rex Haraldorum in partibus Francie": I take this to mean that his authority was over the English possessions in France, and that he should therefore not be confused with the French Kings-of-Arms.⁸¹

It is possible, therefore, that at the beginning of our period there were at least four English Kings-of-Arms, having authority over Scotland, northern England, southern England and English possessions in France, respectively.⁸² The herald-king's duty within [34] his own "kingdom" was to regulate the bearing of arms, making sure that no-one bore arms unless they were entitled to do so, and settling disputes between men claiming the same arms. His work required him to be something of a genealogist. The way in which a King discharged these duties was

The Trent was usually taken to divide England into two halves: the Tweed was the Scottish border. Peter's "kingdom" would have been exactly that area over which the Beverley minstrel fraternity later claimed jurisdiction: see above, p. 22.

⁷⁹ Davis/ME, p. 225.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* It is doubtful if the title of "Surroy" ever actually existed.

⁸¹ For King Grey, see Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 36, n. 4. The accounts for Joan of Acre's marriage to the Earl of Gloucester are discussed in Chappell/*PMOT*, pp. 28 f: Chappell tentatively identified King Grey with King Robert and Poveret, minstrel of the Marshal of Champagne, with the Roy de Champagne of the 1306 Pentecost list (E101/369/6: 34 Ed I). The first of these identifications is certainly wrong, and the second should be treated with reserve.

The position of herald- and minstrel-kings was probably exactly the same on the Continent as in England, and several foreign Kings are mentioned in the Wardrobe Books. They, too, are referred to by an area of authority, and only secondarily as "minstrel of the king of ...". The fact that Kings travelled a great deal, often in company with liveried minstrels, was the cause of Gerald Hayes' misleading definition of the Kings as "leaders of professional companies of minstrels" (Hayes/KM, p. 31).

The use of a royal title seems to have been French originally: c.f. "Prince" for the *Feste du Pui*, p. 13, above. Davis/ME, p. 225, refers to several Kingships in the French royal household of the Middle Ages, no precise date being given. These include the *Roy de Ribauldes* (a combined Chief of Police and magistrate within the Court) and the *Roy de Merciers* (who inspected the wares, weights and measures of tradesmen attending the Court). Duncan/*Minstrelsy*, p. 74, n. 1, mentions the *Rex Juglatorum*, *Roy des Violins* and *Roy des Ménestriers*: the latter, it seems, was the head of a fraternity of *jongleurs* and *jongleuses* who were incorporated in 1321.

⁸² In this case, we should perhaps expect to find another King with authority in Wales. In the late fifteenth century, March King-of-Arms was responsible for Wales, Cornwall, and the West of England: Wagner/*Heralds*, p. 108. As March was one of the Kings at the Pentecost feast of 1306 (see n. 70, above), the "kingdom" including Wales may easily have been in existence at that time.

by undertaking a series of "visitations" in different parts of his territory, during which he could investigate heraldic matters in each locality.⁸³

We are now in a better position to examine the Kings of Minstrels. We have seen that as herald-kings they each had a "kingdom", and it does seem that their authority as minstrel-kings was over the same area.⁸⁴ We must now ask, therefore, what were the [35] duties of a King-of-Arms in his capacity as a *minstrel-king*: indeed, it might be more relevant to ask what *could* be the duties of a minstrel-king who, as a King of the Herald, was constantly travelling through his "kingdom" conducting heraldic visitations.

There is a marked similarity between heraldic visitations and what I have previously called a "travelling inquisition" of minstrelsy – so marked, in fact, that it is but a short logical step to the conclusion that a King-of-Arms, in his dual capacity as herald-king and minstrel-king, would probably conduct the regulation of both armorial bearings and minstrelsy. The "travelling inquisition" of Henry VI's minstrels was concerned primarily with preventing minstrels from defrauding the general public by two methods – the performance of minstrelsy by amateurs pretending to be professional minstrels, and the wearing of the royal livery by non-royal musicians. These were also acts of fraud against honest minstrels, and the latter particularly affected the royal minstrels. For a minstrel's livery was more than a mark of his status: it gave a potential audience an indication of his professional competence, and [36] was therefore likely to set the scale of his re-

⁸³ For heraldic visitations, see Wagner/*Heralds*, Chapters I, X and XI, *passim*.

⁸⁴ This is implicit in the ways in which Wardrobe clerks referred to King Robert, for instance: although he is described as "trumpator regis" he is never referred to as "rex ministrallorum regis" or "rex haraldorum regis". As a trumpeter, he was a member of the royal household only: as a King-of-Arms, his authority extended to all heralds and minstrels, not just the royal ones. A warrant concerning Myttok, King of the Minstrels of Brabant, is another case in point (translated in Rickert/*Chaucer*, p. 232, from a document of 42 Ed III): the expenses paid to Myttok and his companions – 20/- each – puts them well out of the class of independent minstrels who merely *lived* in Brabant. They were probably minstrels of the Duke of Brabant, but the description implies that Myttok had authority over all minstrels in the Duchy.

It must be said that although payments and rewards to minstrel-kings were generous, they were high enough only to place the Kings at the top of the hierarchy of liveried minstrels. The first five Kings on the 1306 Pentecost list, for example (E101/369/6, 34 Ed I), each received 5 marks (i.e. £3/6/8d), which is the highest payment: but the sixth, King Druet, received only 40/- (i.e. £2), which puts him equal with Norfolk, who was probably not a King. On this subject, Hayes/*KM*, p. 31, was unfortunate to mistranslate an item from the accounts of the executors of Queen Eleanor, 1291, thus giving the impression that a gold cup worth 39/- was a special gift to a minstrel-king. In point of fact the recipient was not a King at all, but a minstrel *of* the King of Champagne: Botfield/*Manners*, p. 110, reads: "Item, pro uno cypho empto, cum pede, de auro, et dato per executores Reginae cuidam menestrallo Regis Campanie, qui venit cum nunciis Francie, 39/-". Nor was the gift itself anything out of the ordinary: the list of items for the queen's visit to France in 30 Ed I includes "Item lx Fermaux dor por donier as menestrous, messagiers et autre gentz" (E101/361/27).

ward.⁸⁵ Hence, a minstrel wearing a livery to which he was not entitled could obtain a great deal of money by false pretences.⁸⁶

It was therefore necessary to supervise the wearing of livery and to settle disputes between minstrels.⁸⁷ The evidence for this supervision is purely circumstantial, but it does point towards the regulation of minstrelsy by the Kings of Minstrels.

One more important question must be dealt with. The description of the Tutbury minstrel-king of 1380 as "nostre bien ame le roy des ministrax deinz nostre honour de Tuttebury"⁸⁸ not only [37] states the geographical area of his jurisdiction (as we should expect),⁸⁹ but implies at the same time that he was a retainer of John of Gaunt. Is it possible, then, that magnates other than the king sometimes employed a King of the Minstrels to supervise minstrelsy on their own lands? If so, did the area of this King's jurisdiction overlap with that of a King appointed from Court, or was it separate?

There is not, as yet, enough evidence to attempt an answer to the second question. Very slight evidence does exist, however, to support an affirmative answer to the first. On 28 October, 1322, the king granted to his minstrel William de Morle, called *Roi du North*, certain houses in Pontefract which had previously belonged to John le Botiler, known as *Roi Bruant*.⁹⁰

John le Botiler is described as "late a rebel", and the houses had come into the king's possession by forfeiture. Pontefract was on Lancaster territory, but in fact

⁸⁵ Examination of the accounts in Dawson/*Kent*, for example, shows a scale of payments which is graduated more or less regularly (depending on the town) according to the livery of the minstrel concerned. The Canterbury accounts for 1477-8 are a good example, and quite typical:

To minstrels of the king 6/8d. For wine for them 8d.

To minstrels of the queen 5/-. For wine 8d.

To minstrels of the Duke of Gloucester 5/-d. For wine 4d.

To minstrels of the Duchess of York 3/4d. For wine 4d.

(*Op. cit.*, p. 4: this is my calendar.)

On the 5 February, 1490, the city of York decided to give no more annual gifts to any minstrels but the king's: Raine/*York*, ii, p. 55.

⁸⁶ It would be very difficult now to track down a case of such a fraud. John Momford, supposedly a king's minstrel, who appears in the Durham accounts for 1380-1, may be one. See Appendix B, below, under that date.

⁸⁷ The question of a minstrel's professional status must often have been difficult to determine, for instance. An independent minstrel could hardly claim to be a professional unless he had served a seven-year apprenticeship: yet many villages must have relied for their music on men who also plied other trades. Disputes over a minstrel's right to perform were no doubt common.

⁸⁸ See above, n. 11.

⁸⁹ C.f. n. 84, above.

⁹⁰ *CPR Edward II*, vol. 4 (1321-1324), p. 210. Also see above, n. 70.

Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, had been executed seven months before⁹¹ and had forfeited his estates. No doubt King Bruant had sided with the Earl of Lancaster against the king. This does not, of course, prove that King Bruant was a Lancaster retainer, but it makes it a strong probability.

[37a] This last discussion gives rise less to hard facts than to interesting conjecture, and it would be pointless to pursue the subject further for the time being. More evidence is needed before our knowledge of the Kings of Minstrels can increase, but the evidence would, I think, come to light if further research were to commence with a thorough search of the Wardrobe Books of Edward I's reign.

⁹¹ On 22 March, 1322. His brother Henry was styled Earl of Lancaster from 26 October, 1326, and was formally restored to the earldom on 3 February, 1327.