

DAVID MILLS

‘REVIVING THE CHESTER PLAYS’: A POSTSCRIPT

David Mills

Since my article in *METH* 13 (1991), 39-51, I have had the opportunity to consult the Minute Books of the Chester Archaeological Society and to look again at the text of the plays performed in 1906 at the Music Hall in Chester. These prompt me to offer the following supplementary comments and a correction.

Nugent Monck's letter proposing to stage the cycle was discussed at a meeting of the Council of the Society on 27 July 1906. Dr Bridge proposed a motion, seconded by Mr H.B. Dutton:

That the Council is of the opinion that a revival of the Chester Mystery Plays would be exceedingly valuable from an historical, antiquarian, and educational point of view, and desires to co-operate with the English Drama Society in the production of the said plays. The Council hereby constitutes itself a Committee for the purpose, with power to add to its number.

The resolution indicates an immediate commitment by the Society, in advance of any discussion with Monck and any proposal for a public meeting. The meeting was a later proposal by Mr Dutton at the next meeting of the Council.

Nugent Monck met the Council of the Society at a special meeting on 13 August 1906. He explained:

that a cast of 40 players would be required and the Society could arrange for 25 plays, either in 12 performances during 6 days, or 6 performances during three days, there being no difference in the cost of production. It was considered desirable that the plays should be performed at Whitsuntide, as being the time when they were originally produced, and Whit Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday were proposed as suitable days.

It would seem that the proposal to perform the plays at Whitsun arose from within the Society and not from Monck himself. It was at that meeting that the Music Hall was suggested as a suitable venue for the performance; a report in the *Cheshire Observer* of 18 August 1906 says that Monck 'expressed a decided opinion against open-air performance',

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perhaps suggesting that such a possibility had been raised. The record of the meeting also states that:

it was also suggested that lectures, leading up to the plays, might be given during the coming session

which suggests that the kind of lecture given by Gollancz was envisaged from the start. The Society had a very clear and determined strategy for promoting the event.

In my article I erroneously stated (page 46) that 'the Expositor's account of the devilishly-contrived Temple of Peace' was omitted in Monck's text. It is retained.

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