

A Bearward's Diary, 1608

Introduction and Summary

The actor Edward Alleyn developed a successful business partnership with his father-in-law, builder of the Rose playhouse, Philip Henslowe, at the end of the sixteenth century. One direction for their commercial playing interests included securing the royal office of “Master of the Royal Game of Bears, Bulls, and Mastiff-Dogs.” They already subleased the Beargarden on Bankside, but repeatedly failed to achieve a reversion to this office (despite considerable expense and exertion). They eventually purchased the office by paying a hefty price of £450 to the new but uninterested incumbent in 1604, Sir William Seward. Among the papers at Dulwich College (Alleyn's home turf and the college that he founded) is a collection of documentary materials (MSS2) pertaining to Alleyn and Henslowe's role as Masters of the Game.

One document in this list, Article 010, is of utmost relevance both for our project and for wider understanding of social life and travel in early modern England. It is a “diary” or account or memorandum book of a travelling bearward from 1608, as he moves around on a south-west-and-Cotswolds tour (from London to Reading to Salisbury to Cirencester and back). Remarkably, this document has scarcely been discussed by scholarship other than a paragraph, leaning on a couple of line extracts, by J. P. Collier in 1853 (*Henslowe and Alleyn: Being the Diary of Philip Henslowe...* Vol. 2, pp. 84-85) and a passing mention by W. W. Greg in 1908 in 1908 (*Henslowe's Diary* vol. 2, pp. 39-40), plus the odd nod to its existence here and there. The document is digitally available on the Henslowe-Alleyn Digisation Project.

The author of the memorandum book is unknown. I have tried to connect the book's compiler with the BOB primary database by looking at nearby locations visited in 1608 around the months in question by any named or patron-named bearward but have so far come up blank. It is possible that when a payment to the “King's Bearward” or “Queen's Bearward” was recorded in towns across our period that it indicates a “deputy” like this bearward. Indeed, the person in question was an itinerant bearward, of the form often complained about by state orders and by local justices; however, here he is licensed and regulated by the Masters of the Game. The document therefore gives us both potential insight into the activities that lie behind the common accounting entry “the King's Bearward” (or similar), as well as a glimpse into what life might have been like for those “un-patronised” and possibly unlicensed bearwards—like many across these years.

Alleyn and Henslowe complained of “diverse vagrants and persons of loose and idle life that usually wandreth through the countries with bears and bulls without any licence and for ought we know serving no man, spoiling and killing dogs for that game” the same year as this memorandum book was compiled (MSS2 Article 009). Part of their office involved the power to licence these travelling bearwards (or otherwise punish them and confiscate their bears and dogs) and demand dues for tours. The bearward behind this document therefore models Alleyn and Henslowe's desired practice: a bearward licenced by them, accountable (literally) to them, and possibly paying them for the privilege to tour. It is not clear whether this bearward should be considered a “deputy” (the term used across formal documents and patents relating to sub-offices from the Master of the Game) and perhaps paid by fee or whether they were “freelance”—petitioning Alleyn and Henslowe for permission to bearward. Indeed, the final account entry by another hand (a summary audit) suggests that the bearward paid 5 shillings, which was “delivered him to go” (ie for permission to tour), while it intimates that a proportion

(if not all) of the profits were paid to Henslowe and Alleyn. Repeat names in the accounting entries suggest a small “team” of people accompanying the bearward, particularly Ned the butcher and Bryant. Ned’s presence throughout the tour indicates that butchers not only overlapped with the game (as I suggested in my comments on Cheshire) but were more fundamentally required by it. Is it unusual or commonplace to have a butcher “on board” with bear tours? Perhaps this has to do with resources and the nature of the bears in question. I think it likely that the bearward was taking royal bears on the road, rather than securing permission for his own bears (though this may well be the case): he comes from London with his first stop at Kensington and returns headed towards the capital again. This is a London-outward and -authorised tour.

Not only does this memorandum book tell us a great deal about the life of an itinerant bearward, with indications of what expenses were entailed, how and where to lodge, what money was earned by baiting courses, and so forth, but it also tells us about early modern travel practices. The routes taken point us to routes for bear-traffic over roadways or highways, which follow some of the key road systems of early modern England, such as part of the Great Western Road and the London-Aberystwith road. The journey is potentially plottable on John Ogilby’s 1675 list of principal roads (*Britannia*). Another “route” for the south east is included in some rough costings listed regarding a Kent tour: Dartford – Gravesend – Rochester – Maidstone – Sittingbourne – Faversham – Canterbury – Dover – Folkstone – Ashford – Rye (MSS2 Article 008).

The towns in which memorandum book’s bearward performed also suggest varying levels of entertainment income, with some more lucrative than others. Gloucester scarcely appears in the REED records when it comes to bears, but here the bearward is earning significant amounts—the most on this tour. The diary therefore provides further evidence for my earlier notes about “under the radar” bearbaiting, which for whatever reason might not appear in official town/city audits or paperwork but was clearly happening widely and with regularity. The chance survival of this bearward’s notebook therefore speaks to days’ worth of commercial play in several places not otherwise detectable in the local records. It begs the question, how much more widespread was baiting across these years than REED surveys or otherwise might suggest?

Lastly, the document itself is fascinating even beyond its places and figures. The anonymous bearward is clearly literate and numerate, but of a (considerably) less polished standard than those with a post-grammar school, or even a grammar school, education. The writing is highly irregular and difficult to read and the spelling extraordinarily idiosyncratic (even by early modern standards). As such, this is a working or practical level of literacy and numeracy, clearly of relevance to the job. Where might the bearward have acquired this literacy? Although we can’t say what other occupations they may have held, it perhaps suggests that even as a travelling bearward one depended on literary practices and on a network of literary exchange—in particular, here, with Alleyn as the licenser/authoriser of the tour. Early modern drama and animal sports have more in common via the written word than might be imagined.

The memorandum book records details of expenses and income in each different place (to varying degrees of specificity) and was clearly then submitted, perhaps ultimately to Alleyn himself to “audit” and approve. Others have in turn used other spare pages of the book for quite separate calculations (regarding copyhold rent for other years due to Thomas Towne), while the very end pages of the document reveal both the bearward and then Alleyn totalling up

figures for the tour. I cannot quite make the finances add up in these final tables, but the final total indicates a profit of £3: is this the money paid back as reward to the bearward, or the costs “skimmed” by Henslowe and Alleyn? Either way, the document becomes absorbed into and reused as part of Alleyn’s wider business practice, while in the immediate handover the bearward’s reasonably meticulous accounting is transferred over to Alleyn. This form of diarising adds another angle to our analysis of bearwarding, indicating a form of early modern “self-writing” (in the manner understood by Adam Smyth in *Autobiography in Early Modern England* [CUP 2010]) that accompanies the wide-reaching tours or travels of the many figures we’ve encountered and will encounter on Box Office Bears. If we read between the lines, we might also read in the document an oblique biography of the bears themselves (paid “for the harm which the bears they did”).

Here, I have modernised and tabulated the memorandum book. Originally, the bearward interchanges several days’ of income followed by retrospective outgoings. I have put them in a chronological order to re-create the journey as closely as possible. There are also several errors or cruxes: for instance, at one point, the bearward seems to get the dates wrong, and I have followed the days of the week as the most likely source of accuracy (being most immediate). Similarly, the journey route seems baffling at the very end, as they return to Maidenhead but then report a couple of days in Burford, substantially north-west of the capital to which they were seemingly returning. These are elements we can think about further, in light of some of the other themes and angles listed in this brief introduction.

Callan Davies, 2021

Date	Location	Income/ Expenses	Detail
13 August Saturday	Kensington	2 shillings 2 pence	“received as we went”
		5 shillings	“John Borne had when he went into the country”
		6 pence	“for coming over the water”
	Hounslow	2 shillings 4 pence	“for our dinners”
14 August Sunday	Colnbrook	24 shillings 8 pence	“received”
	Colnbrook	1 shillings 6 pence	“bread for the bears”
		9 shillings 2 pence	“our charges for meat”
		2 shillings	“for bears’ bread”
		2 shillings	“for the yard and lodging”
		8 pence	“for beer”
15 August Monday	Maidenhead	10 shillings	“received”
		2 shillings	“for our dinners”
		1 shillings 5 pence	“bread for the bears”
		2 shillings 4 pence	“for evening supper”
16 August Tuesday	Henley-on-Thames	2 shillings 2 pence	“for our dinners”
		1 shillings	“lent to Ned the butcher”
		2 shillings 4 pence	“lent to Briante to buy a pair of shoes”
		3 shillings	“for our supper”
		8 pence	“for our dinner”
		3 pence	“for Ned the butcher”
		4 pence	“for beer”
		2 shillings	“for beer for the bears”
17 August Wednesday	Henley-on-Thames	5 shillings	“received”
18 August Thursday	Henley-on-Thames	10 shillings	“received”
		6 shillings 1 pence	“for Hardes” [cloth] Weds and Thurs
		8 pence	“for the drummer”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“Room for the bears and for lodging”
19 August Friday	Henley-on-Thames	10 shillings	“received”
19 August Friday	Reading	6 shillings 1 pence	“bears’ bread and dinner and supper”

20 August Saturday	Reading	15 shillings 8 pence	“received at the door”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“supper”
21 August Sunday	Basingstoke	11 shillings 1 pence	“received”
	Basingstoke	1 shilling 2 pence	“for courses”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“for yard”
		2 shillings 2 pence	“for lodging and for the harm which the bears they did”
		2 shillings	“laid out for bread for the bears”
		2 shillings 4 pence	“for supper”
22 August Monday	Basingstoke		“the weke [?] there”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		3 shillings	“for bears’ bread there”
		2 shillings	“for supper”
		2 shillings 3 pence	“for lodging room for the bears”
		2 shillings	“for Ned that he sent his wife”
		4 pence	“foro the drummer”
23 August Tuesday	Kingsclere	1 shilling 3 pence	“for dinner”
23 August Tuesday	Newbury		“lay still”
		2 shillings	“for supper”
24 August Wednesday	Newbury	£1 3 shillings 1 pence	“received”
24 August Wednesday	Newbury	9 pence	“in courses”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		2 shillings 8 pence	“for supper”
25 August Thursday	Newbury	£1 6 pence	“received”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for courses and all”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		1 shilling 4 pence	“for supper at night”
		2 shillings	“at night for bread foro the bear”
26 August Friday	Newbury	2 shillings	“for lodging and for the yard where we did bait”
		1 shilling	“for dinner”
		8 pence	“lent to Bryant”
26 August Friday	Hungerford		“we be still”
26 August Friday	Hungerford	2 shillings 6 pence	“our supper” [night]
		2 shillings	“the bears’ bread”

27 August Saturday	Hungerford	6 shillings 11 pence	“received”
		1 shilling 8 pence	“dinner”
		2 shillings	“at night for bread for the bears”
		6 pence	“for lodging and stay”
		2 pence	“for the bears’ supper”
28 August Sunday	Between Hungerford and Salisbury	2 shillings 6 pence	Received
		6 pence	“for dinner by the way”
28 August Sunday	Salisbury	2 shillings 6 pence	“at night for supper”
		8 pence	“att night for ? for the bears”
		2 pence	“when John Bonn came into the town”
29 August Monday	Salisbury	17 shillings 1 pence	Received
		1 shillings 2 pence	“for oil for the blind bear”
		2 pence	“John browne gave Bryant two pots of beer”
		1 shilling 10 pence	“for dinner”
		2 pence	“for Bread and butter”
		2 pence	[illegible, smudged]
		1 shilling 6 pence	“bread for the bears”
		1 shilling 4 pence	“for supper”
30 August Tuesday	Salisbury	£1 2 shillings 8 pence	“Received”
		3 shillings	“lent to Ned”
		1 shilling	“lent to Bryant”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		1 pence	“for fire”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears”
		2 shillings	“for supper”
		5 pence	“for [?]”
31 August Wednesday	Salisbury	8 shillings	Received
		1 shilling 10 pence	“for courses and all”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		1 shilling 8 pence	“for supper that daye”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears” [night]

		2 pence	“for fire”
		6 pence	“lent to Bryant”
		1 shilling	“lent to Ned”
		6 pence	“for lodging”
1 September Thursday	Newbury	5 shillings	Received
1 September Thursday	Marlborough	2 shillings 2 pence	“bread for the bears”
		2 shillings 10 pence	“for supper”
2 September Friday	Marlborough	2 shillings 7 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears that night”
		2 shillings 10 pence	“for supper” [night]
3 September Saturday	Marlborough	12 shillings 10 pence	“received”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for dinner”
			“for supper”
		2 shillings	“for the bread the bears”
		2 shillings 7 pence	“for supper”
4 September Sunday	Cricklade	8 shillings 4 pence	“received”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for bread for the bears” [night]
		8 pence	“for lodging at Cricklett and for harm which the bears did”
5 September Monday	Cirencester	9 shillings 2 pence	“received”
		5 shillings 6 pence	“for man’s meats”
		8 pence	“lent to Bryant”
		2 pence	“for mending the chains”
		2 shillings	“lent out to Ned the butcher”
6 September Tuesday	Cirencester	7 shillings 6 pence	“receive”
		1 shilling 5 pence	“for dinner”
7 September Wednesday	Cirencester	8 shillings 1 pence	“received”
		1 shilling 5 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“bread for the bears”
		3 shillings	“supper and for logging”
8 September Thursday	Gloucester	10 shillings 8 pence	“received”
	Birdlip	2 shillings 6 pence	“for dinner”
	Gloucester	2 shillings 6 pence	“for supper”
	Gloucester	2 shillings 2 pence	“for bread for the bears” [night]
		6 pence	“lent to Bryant the 8 day of September”

		8 pence	“lent to Bryant the same day”
[10] September Saturday ¹	Gloucester	£1 2 pence	“received”
		1 shillings ? pence	“for dinner”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for bread for the bears”
		3 shillings 4 pence	“for supper”
		1 shilling 8 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“for the bears’ bread”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for the yard where we did bate”
		8 pence	“to the drummer for his drum”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for supper”
		3 pence	“for the fire”
		6 pence	“lodging”
[11] September Sunday	Tewkesbury	2 shillings 6 pence	“for supper”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears” [night]
[12] September Monday	Tewkesbury	8 shillings	Received
		1 shilling	“for dinner”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for supper”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for the bears’ bread”
13 September Tuesday	Sir John Tracey’s	7 shillings 3 pence	“for baiting before him”
		9 pence	“for our dinner”
	Stow on the Wold	3 shillings	“for our supper and for lodging of us an for the bears”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears there”
14 September Wednesday	Burford	1 shilling 9 pence	“for our drummers”
		2 shillings	“for a pair of shoes for me”
	Newbrith [Most likely Newbridge]	2 shillings	“for supper”
		8 pence	“for stay for the bears and for Room”
		4 pence	“for lodging”

¹ Dates are confusingly one day behind in the entries from the 9th of September to the 20th, with this date being incorrectly described here (7v) as “saterday the 9 daye of september,” when it is the 10th (the previous entry is correctly recorded as “Thursday ... the 8 daye of september”). It is later (in expense list) correctly described as Saturday 10th (10v). Here, I follow the day of the week as the most accurate indicator, as it provides the most immediate sense of timing for the bearward (perhaps he was working back after several days without noting, or as he goes along knowing the day but not the date with accuracy).

15 September Thursday	Abingdon	3 shillings 4 pence	“for dinner”
		3 shillings	“for supper”
16 September Friday	Abingdon	12 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for supper”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears”
		[14 shillings] ²	“received”
		[blotted out]	“received”
17 September Saturday ³	Abingdon	6 shillings 10 pence	“received”
		2 shillings 8 pence	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears”
		1 shilling 5 pence	“for supper”
18 September Sunday	Blewbury	5 shillings	“received”
		2 shillings	“for dinner”
		2 shillings	“for supper”
		2 shillings	“for bread for the bears” [night]
19 September Monday	Wallingford	2 shillings	“for dinner”
20 September Tuesday	Maidenhead	6 shillings 1 pence	“received”
		1 shilling 6 pence	“for supper” [night]
		1 shilling 3 pence	“for bears’ bread”
		10 pence	“for lodging and stay”
		1 shilling 2 pence	“to Bryant”
		1 shilling	“lent to Ned”
21 September Wednesday	Burford* [Erased and written in, possibly in error as it does not fit with the route]	5 shillings 2 pence	“received”
	Braford [Probably same as above entry, most likely Brentford]	2 shillings	“for dinner”
		3 shillings	“for supper”
		2 shillings 6 pence	“for bread for the bears”
23 September Friday		1 shillings	“lent to Bryant”

Bearward’s Total (from 19r; 20v):

£ s d

² Total “received” here is undated at the end of 7v, where it noted only as “On the fry day” (following 8-13 of September). This falls in the pages with date mix-ups. The previous entry states “Abingdon,” with receipt crossed out, making the date of 16th September plausible—a day otherwise with missing “received” totals from this list.

³ As above with wider range, so the range of 16 to 20th September has dates incorrectly described, as here with “16 day of September... on Saturday.” Saturday is the 17th. As above, here, I follow the day of the week as the most accurate indicator, as it provides the most immediate sense of timing for the bearward (perhaps he was working back after several days without noting, or as he goes along knowing the day but not the date with accuracy).

The first week's charges came to:	3	8	4
The second week's charges came to:	2	3	3
The third week's charges came to:	2	10	2
The fourth week's charges came to:	3	7	9
[Total: £11 9s 6d]			

Received	6	19	10
Paid out of that:	4	17	0
[Total after subtraction: £2 2s 10d]			

In Stoke at Newbury on Friday 26 Aug.:	2	0	0
At Gloucester the 9 Sep.:	12	10	0
Laid out of that	9	10	5
[Total after subtraction: £5 0s 5d]			

[Totals after subtraction: £12 3s 3d] [not sure what I put this here to represent?]

Different hand's Total (from 21r)

Received in the whole	16	9	9
“delivered him to go”	0	5	0
Total:	16	14	9
Laid out	13	14	9