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**Collection Enhancement Report No. 13 for the V&A, Theatre and Performance
Department (October 2012)**

The Boar's Head

NB: Earlier, the ShaLT Collection Enhancement Reports have used the printed collections at the National Art Library (particularly the unique Dyce Collection) to highlight printed texts in terms of issues such as authorship and genre. However, bearing in mind that the key outreach goal of the AHRC funding for the project was to further public awareness about the actual theatre sites (The Theatre, Blackfriars, and so on) it seems highly appropriate for a series of reports to focus on the actual theatre spaces. Thus, this report highlights the Boar's Head. Indeed, it is envisaged that the T&P Department at the V&A might be able to host a small exhibition of Dyce material in terms of the actual Shakespearean London Playhouses. With this in mind, this report picks-out printed work at the V&A that links to the Boar's Head. This topic should prove interesting to visitors to a potential exhibition because often the title page is the only evidence we have for the performance of a play at a certain location.

The Boar's Head was originally an inn and was converted into a playhouse. Plays were performed here from 1598 until 1605 at Boar's Head Yard, north side of Whitechapel High Street, Aldgate. As a property converted from an inn to a playhouse, the Boar's Head should be seen as an outdoor theatre rather than as a city inn such as the Bell or the Bel Savage, and so it should not be classified along with the four inns. Although it seems to have been considerably smaller than the other outdoor venues such as the Curtain or the Fortune, the fact that it staged plays for nearly two decades is revealing about its popularity. Furthermore, the playhouse must have fared reasonably well from the start, as we know that in 1599 (its second year of business) the basic venue was upgraded and enlarged for extra fee-paying spectators.

Likewise, some of the major playing companies were often based here. Queen Anna's Men played at the Boar's Head in the first years of the seventeenth century before moving to the Red Bull in 1605, a move which may have marked the end of playing at the Boar's Head.

Various legal disputes make the ownership of the playhouse at any one time extremely difficult to identify, but numerous men were involved in its setting up and running, including Oliver Woodliffe, Robert Browne, Richard Samuel, and Francis Langley (who had earlier run the Swan south of the river).

The Boar's Head and the V&A Collection

The image below (courtesy of the V&A Museum) is taken from the collection's titlepage for the anonymous *No-Body and Some-Body*, a play that may have been performed at the Boar's Head.

NO-BODY, AND SOME-BODY.

With the true Chronicle Historie of Elydure,
*who was fortunately three severall times
crowned King of England.*

*The true Coppy thereof, as it hath beene acted by the
Queens Maesties Seruants.*



Printed for Iohn Trundle and are to be sold at his shop in
Barbican, at the signe of No-body.