

WAKEFIELD WAITS

Sources:

- History of Wakefield, J Walker (1934)
- Walks in Yorkshire - Wakefield and its Neighbourhood" by W S Banks (1871)
- The History and Topography of the Parish of Wakefield and its Environs, John Hewitt (1862). These are a series of short pamphlets.
- The Constables and Town Officials of Wakefield before the Town Council of 1848, John Goodchild, Wakefield Historical Society Journal, vol. 13 (2004)

16th Century Court Records of the Borough of Wakefield

Waits are mentioned in the Wakefield Court Rolls back to the time of the late 12th century borough charter, but their duties were as watchmen and keepers of the three town bars.

Original records of the Borough Court came to light in the 1980s, covering the years 1533, 1556, 1559 and 1579. Apart from 1533, the list of Borough officers includes the Waits, and their duties are detailed in 1556 .

1556, Item a payne is sett that the waytes of the towne goe everye mornynge as well frydaies and sondaies as other dayes in payne of every tyme not doynge xij d.

In 1586 there a lease was taken out by William Sykes, mynstrell, of Wakefield and his wife. Would there be any minstrels other than waits?

Early 17th Century Records from Elsewhere (from REED)

1604-5, 13 May	Item ... unto the waittes of waikfeald	ij s.	Carlisle
1608-9, 30 Mar	Item ... upon the waits of wakeffelde	ij s. vj d.	Carlisle
1610-1, 26 Mar	Item the xxvj th day to the waits of wackfeilde at mr maior commande	iiij s. iiiij d.	Carlisle
1612-3, 2 Sep	The waites of Wakefield	ij s. vj d.	Naworth
1612-13, 11 Mar	Item given to the waites of weakfeld	xlviij d.	Gawthorpe
1617-8, Lady Day	geaven to the wates of Wakfeld	xviij d.	Carlisle
1618-9, 1 Oct	Item to ye wates of wakeffelde	ij s.	Carlisle
1624-5, 24 Aug	Item to the waytes of wakefeild	i s.	Carlisle

It is likely that they also went to Nottingham but that REED volume is currently not in the Brotherton.

17th Century Wakefield Churchwardens' Accounts:

1670 Memorandum yt ye Waites of this towne of Wakefeild began their watch upon ye 17th day of October in ye yeare of Lord God 1670; their names are as followeth:

Wm. Shaw
Thomas Shaw
Thomas Watson
fratres in uno

1688 To the Towne Waittes

2 " 6

1689 pd. The waites for playing ye 5 of November 2 “ 0

West Riding Quarter Sessions

1724 October, Petition of "one of Wakefield Waits" re harassment by attorney.

18th Century Wakefield Constable's Accounts

1745	October: Waits	7 “ 6
1746	March 15: Waits shoes	13 6
	October: Waits	7 “ 6
	November: Waites' clothes (three suits)	17 “ 17 “ 4
	Waits hats	9 “ 0
	Waits stockings	12 “ 0
1749	Waits clothes	1 “ 5 “ 0
	Shoes	15 “ 0
1755	One Wait's badge was repaired	
	November: Waites and Ino. Leake (deputy)	10 “ 0
	John Leake shoes	5 “ 6
	Waits and Leake's hats	12 “ 0
	Waits and beadle's stockings	16 “ 0
1756	March: 19 yds. fine green cloth @ 8s. a yard	12 “ 8
	Waits close making and Leakes	2 “ 2 “ 0
1757	October 22: By 3 silver badges for Waits	7 “ 6
	By a silver badge for John Leek	2 “ 6
	cloth and shalloon for waits' clothes	9 “ 12 “ 11½
	ten dozen coat buttons at 9d.	7 “ 6
	18¼ yds dimity [a stout cotton cloth] at 12d., tape 8d.	18 “ 11
	2½ yards canvas and 4 yards buckram	6 “ 6
	4 yards fustian at 12d and four suits making at 11s 2d	2 “ 8 “ 0
	4 hats	1 “ 12 “ 0
	3 pairs stockings 4s and three pairs shoes at 5s	1 “ 7 “ 0
	4½ yards green ribbon at 6d	2 “ 3
1761	Paid Waits	5 “ 0
1766,	May 5: Ordered that the expense of livery for waits and beadle not to exceed £16 for future years.	
1773	January 1: Mr. Wm. Parker pink ribbons for Constable Waits	3.” 0

Wakefield Vestry Accounts

1813 May 22: Resolved – no more money or clothing be allowed to the Waits

Similar records of the waits continue in the Constable's annual accounts up to 1806.

From the above accounts we can calculate the cost of equipping an 18th century Wakefield Wait. Note that it is unusual to find records of provision of any item other than a livery coat and badge, so until the early nineteenth century the Waits of Wakefield were very fortunate.

Calculated cost of outfitting a Wakefield Wait:

Livery	£2 “ 8 “ 6
Hat	3 “ 0
Stockings	4 “ 0
Shoes	4 “ 6
Badge	2 “ 6
Total	£3 “ 2 “ 6

Other Local Records

John Houlden was a Wakefield musician, musical instrument dealer and town wait in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1789 he and two other musicians, William Beaumont and John Wood, were attacked according to the records of the Quarter Sessions. Houlden's business continued into the 19th century and he died on 4 December 1812. Elizabeth his wife died on 1 August 1791 aged 47.

In 1801, a pew in the Parish Church was reserved for the Waits.

1813, May 27: A Vestry meeting resolved that no more money or clothing be allowed to the Waits, three in number,, but the three Waits are mentioned as late as 1826, when a town's meeting resolved to discontinue clothing them, so as to save £35 per year

1823, Richard Mann, musician and Wait, died aged 36 according to an obituary in the local paper. He had also worked as a quadrille master in Harrogate.

1824, it was ordered that no more money or clothing be allowed to the Waits.

1871, Three waits' badges were in the possession of Wakefield Corporation, including the damaged one dated 1688. They are of silver, and about five inches by four in size, with loops [top and bottom] to fasten them by.



If the Wakefield Waits survived until 1826, were any of these local musicians of that era members?

1822 Directory

Music Professors and Dealers

Percival Phillips, Westgate

J F Smith, Southgate

1829 Directory

Music Sellers

Percival Phillips, Wood Street

John Frederick Smith, Southgate

Professors and Teachers

Percival Phillips, Wood Street

John Frederick Smith, Southgate

John White, Hardy Croft

1832 Directory

Music Professors and Dealers

Percival Phillips, Westgate

John Frederick Smith, Southgate

taught piano and violin

organist

1837 Directory

Music Professors and Dealers

Percival Phillips, Westgate

John Frederick Smith, Southgate

taught piano and violin

organist

Music Teachers

John White, Hardy Croft

n.b. The Borough of Wakefield, established by charter from Earl Warrenne in the 1190s and given a second charter in 1307, defaulted on its duties and was abolished in 1580-1. Its duties were taken back by the Manor of Wakefield, and a Constable was elected annually by the property-owners of the town. In 1771 an Act of Parliament transferred some powers from the Manor to a Board of [Improvement]

Commissioners. These were superseded by a new Corporation, established under the provisions of the 1835 Municipal Corporations Act, in 1848. The report to Parliament for the 1848 borough charter no longer listed waits on the establishment.

Named Wakefield Waits

William Sykes?	1586
William Shaw	1670
Thomas Shaw	1670
Thomas Watson	1670
John Houlden	1789
William Beaumont	1789
John Wood	1789
Richard Mann	1823