

Part 6. 1460 - 1500:- The demands of the composers - choral polyphony, the florid style and the treble voice.

6.1. The composers and the choirs.

Prior to c.1460, liturgical choirs had always been constituted partly according to the special requirements imposed by the construction of the liturgies, and partly according to certain totally extra-musical criteria, such as those which in former years had demanded the maximisation of the number of priests. The choirs so far discussed were so modelled as to meet the requirements of the plainsong and the ceremonial of the Latin liturgy; the detectable variations were produced by the direction in which lay the principal emphasis of each particular institution, as to whether this was the performance of the totality of the divine office, or just of soul-masses. In the former, which alone are of concern here, the construction of the liturgy had never allowed founders any choice but to repeat the long-established formula of a choir of men and boys. Within this, the men had to be so constituted as to supply two distinct teams to staff the top and middle rows of the choir; such were the requirements of the liturgy that usually the men outnumbered the boys by a considerable degree.

The generation of English composers which was at work in the years 1425-60 created a substantial repertoire of polyphonic music - and naturally they worked entirely within the resources offered to them by choirs such as these, of which they all were practising members. This, of course, imposed certain constraints - for really these choirs were constructed essentially to sing plainsong, a type of music entirely different from that which the composers were composing. Unavoidably, the true nature of their obligatory performing medium had a strongly pervasive influence on their style of composition. They were practising an art which had itself originally developed from plainsong; they were writing for performance by a choir constructed for the singing of plainsong; inevitably they continued to compose within certain restrictions imposed on them by the manner of plainsong performance. In particular, plainsong required a team of voices of no very great overall compass:- few melodies exceeded the compass of a tenth, and none a twelfth; nor did it require the participation of boys' voices. Similarly, it would seem that until c.1455 at the very earliest, composers of polyphonic music did not write for a compass exceeding the 15-17 notes realisable by men's voices alone; they wrote for no voice lower than the baritone range most suitable for performing plainsong, and they did not employ boys' voices at all.

At first this seemed to provide composers with all the resources they needed - and of course the existence of these constraints did not prevent much technical experiment and development from being made. Rather, there was still scope for considerable technical innovation - for instance, in the exploration of different methods of incorporating plainsong. By c.1460, however, the expansion of composers' musical imagination and enterprise was beginning to cause them to push against the constraints within which they had formerly been content to operate. Composers who worked in the large household chapel choirs had for 40-50 years been exploiting only a fraction of the potential resources offered to them by the enlarged professional choirs created by the Establishment's reaction to the Lollard threat. This now ceased to be enough.

The major musical innovations of the period 1460-1500 involved the composers' learning to use all, rather than just part, of the performance resources potentially available to them. This permitted them to achieve a broadening of the total compass of composed music from two octaves to three, and the expansion of its basic texture from three voices to five. The easiest move into an unexplored field of performance enterprise involved the exploitation of the hitherto unused bass voice; this enabled the addition of a bottom line beneath the existing standard three-voice texture, descending to G or F, and expanding the total compass of composed music to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ octaves. Hereby composers were securing just about the utmost that men's voices alone could supply.

Also, at some point within a few years either side of 1460, they first began to resort to another major innovation; this involved extending the vocal compass to a full three octaves, by using boys' voices rising to g" in composed polyphony for the first time. Both departures fell on fertile ground, and within a generation they had been fully absorbed into composition technique. Thus was the SATB combination of voices established as the basic timbre of vocal music - a concept that has lasted for hundreds of years, and one so firmly based on physiological as well as aesthetic and musical grounds that not even the equally wilful innovators of the 20th century have yet proved able to supersede it with any contrivance of their own.

These two innovations were exploited in conjunction with a third, which consolidated and bound them together - that of composing polyphony for chorus. On a small scale this practice had originated at least as early as the 1430's, though it seems that not until the 1450's was choral polyphony composed involving more than about six individual singers.¹

1. See above, pp. 5080-1.

Thereafter, this practice expanded as the vocal texture and compass of composed music expanded; and by c.1500 a substantial corpus of music was in existence, requiring for its performance full five-part chorus including boys' voices. Within a generation of its introduction, the capacity to perform music of this nature had probably come to be expected of any major choir.

6.2. The expansion of the vocal texture and compass of polyphonic music.

6.2.1. The texture and performing pitch of 15th century music.

6.2.1.A. The two-octave compass of three-voice music, pre-1460.

The idea that boys' voices and bass voices were not used in composed polyphonic music before the third quarter of the 15th century is one that has been expressed in only general terms before¹, and it requires demonstration. This idea is not based primarily upon analysis of the actual written pitch of the notes of the top and bottom lines of music; as written, these do in fact frequently range into the upper register of the boy's treble and the lower register of the man's bass voices. Rather, it is based on consideration of the overall compass of each whole piece of music, and upon an understanding of the concept actually conveyed to the medieval singer by the written pitch of the notes he was singing.

The following tables demonstrate clearly that there was an overall compass, of 15 notes (2 octaves), to which medieval composers normally restricted themselves, and which they only rarely exceeded. The manuscripts and editions quoted are an entirely random selection,

1. e.g. MMB, p.311:- "It is clear that the range of polyphony until the second half of the 15th century corresponded to that of the tenor and counter-tenor voices of today." Of the music of the Old Hall Manuscript, Dr. Margaret Bent has written:- "...there is no evidence that written pitches were tied even to approximate standards of sounding pitch. The noted pitch was apparently determined by convenience of solmisation. Similarly use of the high clefs does not necessarily imply performance by trebles at this date.":- M. Bent, "Sources of the Old Hall Music" 94 Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1967/8), p.24 fn.13.

comprising all those which happen - in a variety of circumstances - to have come to my attention.¹

Table 4:- Overall compasses of music composed, or occurring in manuscripts compiled c.1350 - 1420.

APPROX. DATE	MANUSCRIPT or EDITION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PIECES	INCIDENCE OF OVERALL COMPASSES									
			10 or fewer	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18 or more	
1350	PRO LR 2 261	1					1					
1350	GLRO D 678	1					1					
1350	GLRO D 149/T1165	2				1	0	1				
1375	SRO DD/WHb 3182	3						2	1			
1375	BM Add MS 40725	2				1	1					
1375	OBL Bodley 384	4					1	0	1	2		
1375	WocRO 705/349 BA 5117/1 (xiv)	1			1							
1400	BM Sloane 1210	12			1	3	3	4	1			
1380-1415	Old Hall MS (first layer) ²	112		2	10	40	34	18	6	2		
1410-20	Old Hall MS (additions) ²	29				14	10	5				
1420	Cambridge, Trinity College 0.3.58 ³	13		1	2	6	3	1				
TOTALS		180	-	3	14	65	54	31	9	4	-	

1. These figures include incomplete pieces of which sufficient remains to give a clear picture of overall compass.

2. ed. M. Bent and A. Hughes, The Old Hall Manuscript, vols. 1 and 2.

3. ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, pp.2-11.

Table 5:- Overall compasses of music composed, or occurring
in manuscripts compiled c.1420 - 1460.

APPROX. DATE	MANUSCRIPT or EDITION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PIECES	INCIDENCE OF OVERALL COMPASSES								
			10 or fewer	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18 or more
1440	BM Egerton 3307 (carols) ¹	33		1	1	11	10	9	1		
1440	BM Egerton 3307 (liturgical settings) ²	18			1	2	3	10	2		
1450	OBL Selden B26 (carols) ³	31	1	0	3	13	9	5			
1450	OBL Selden B26 (liturgical settings) ⁴	16			1	3	9	3			
1420-60	John Dunstable (et al.) ⁵	60				6	18	27	8	1	
1440-60	John Plummer ⁶	4						2	2		
1460	OBL Add. MS. C87	4					3	0	1		
1460	WorRO 5705 4 BA 54	1								1	
TOTALS		167	1	1	6	35	52	56	14	2	-

These tables show clearly enough that no music earlier than c.1460 appears to have exceeded a total compass of 17 notes at the extreme; and indeed they show that any ^{piece} which reached 17 or even 16 was a rarity. Normally, it seems, 15 notes was regarded as the practical upper limit; and since over 90% of the analysed pieces kept within it, it will be taken in the following passages as the working extent of the limitation of compass within which composers were then content to operate.

1. ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, pp.32-62, 114.
2. ed. G. McPeck, Egerton 3307, nos.1-18. The details given of the range of each piece on pp.106-7 contain mistakes, and need to be checked before use.
3. ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, pp.11-31, 112-3.
4. ed. A. Hughes, Fifteenth Century Liturgical Music, pp.1-31,133-4.
5. ed. M.F. Bukofzer, John Dunstable:- Complete Works. The defective no.34 is excluded here.
6. ed. B. Trowell, John Plummer:- Four Motets.

Having established that composers normally worked within a two-octave compass, it remains to decide, as exactly as possible, precisely which two octaves they were. Here the manuscripts themselves are of little help - for the music itself could be written out in any one of a bewildering variety of two-octave ranges. If, for instance, analysis be made of the 27 pieces with a 15-note compass which occur in the printed edition of Dunstable, it will be seen that any one of six different 2-octave ranges is possible:- A - a' (2 instances), B - b' (3), c - c" (13), d - d" (1), e - e" (5) and f - f" (3 instances). In the first layer of the Old Hall MS, of the 18 pieces with a 2-octave compass, the position was simpler but still far from uniform:- 1 instance of A - a', 1 instance of B - b', 16 instances of c - c". In fact, in the editions and manuscripts of music dating from c.1350 to 1460 which have been examined, the extreme difference between the lowest note ever written, A, and the highest, f", is 20 notes.

If the written pitches were taken as representing modern performance pitch, therefore, a bizarre situation would result. It would appear that although there were available some voices able to sing down to A, and others able to sing up to f", yet they were never actually used together. Voices singing down to A were never teamed with voices rising higher than a'; voices descending to B never sang with voices rising above b'; while voices singing up to f" were teamed only with those singing no lower than f. Such a situation is absurd. There seems to be no alternative to drawing the conclusion that in fact the written notation of medieval music was simply not intended to convey to the performer an idea of the actual pitch of each piece. That is, the clef in medieval notation simply did not have the same meaning as it has in modern notation; it is in fact the attempt to transcribe it as if it did, that leads to this absurd situation. Quite simply, it is clear that the great bulk of English medieval vocal music was composed within a standard 2-octave compass. It seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that, whatever the apparent written pitch, it was in fact all intended to be sung within pretty well the same two-octave range, by the same kind of vocal forces, and with the same kind of overall vocal timbre.¹

1. This conclusion is further directly suggested by the fact that a number of pieces of music survive in concordances notated at totally different pitches, often a fourth or a fifth apart. Examples are the carol *Ecce quod natura*, which occurs in OBL Ashmole 1393, and again, a fourth higher, in BM Egerton 3307 and OBL Selden B26 (ed. G. McPeck, *Egerton 3307*, p.108; J. Stevens, *Medieval Carols*, nos. 37, 43, 63); and a *Deo gracias* in OBL MS Lat. lit. b 5 fo. 22v. which appears a fifth lower in BM Add. MS I7001 fo. 175v., and again (set to Amen) in BM Nero E viii, fo. 55v. In the *Missa Ferialis* in BM Egerton 3307 (ff. 17r-18v) the Kyrie is written out at a pitch a fourth below that of the other movements. It seems most unlikely that it was meant to be sung that way; and upward transposition by a fourth brings all voices in the Kyrie into exact alignment with those of the remaining movements. Examples such as these indicate clearly that the written pitch in medieval notation can not necessarily become the performing pitch in modern transcription.

The corollary to this conclusion is that in order to reconstruct the actual performing pitch of medieval vocal music, its apparent written pitch has to be manhandled, up or down, until it achieves uniformity with some pre-agreed standard range. The six apparently different two-octave ranges used in the manuscripts are an illusion produced by modern misconceptions of the function of the medieval clef¹; to reconstruct the actual performing pitch, therefore, it is legitimate to "transpose" the music until it all lies roughly within the same two-octave range. However, it still remains to establish, in terms of modern pitch, which exactly was the two-octave range in which the music was originally sung.²

It would, of course, be wholly inappropriate to look for any exact two-octave range within which the performance of all this music should fall; pitch would vary slightly from place to place, and from occasion to occasion. Nor is it appropriate to seek to formulate certain constant rules of transposition based on the clef configurations adopted by the original scribes.³ Such an approach pre-supposes that medieval musicians were aware of one standard untransposed pitch, and a number of other pitches standing in various fixed degrees of transposition from it. This, however, is not a valid presumption, since it was not until the 18th century that technological advance (the tuning-fork) rendered even

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1. This matter is explored further in Appendix A10 below, pp.A045-7. Put simply, the medieval c-clef did not tell the singer where to sing a note at 261.6 c.p.s.; it told him where to put his semi-tones. The medieval clef performed the function not of the modern clef, but of the modern key-signature.
 2. The "transposition" of old music for modern performance has been considered by A. Mendel, "Pitch in the Sixteenth and early Seventeenth Centuries", 34 Musical Quarterly (1948), pp.28,199,336,575, and by D. Wulstan, "The problem of pitch in sixteenth century English vocal music", 93 Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1966/7), p.97, as part of general considerations of the relationship between the written pitch and the performing pitch of pre-classical music. They are of only limited relevance to the present study however. Neither deals particularly with 15th century music. Mendel drew his evidence mostly from continental sources, which need not necessarily be typical of English sources as well; while I have to confess to an inability to follow the lines of reasoning employed in Mr. Wulstan's article.
 3. This appears to be the approach adopted by Mr. Wulstan in the article quoted above.

conceivable the very idea of an absolute standard of musical pitch.¹ In fact, it appears that traditions of performance were sufficiently stereotyped and sufficiently well understood at the time for it never to have been necessary for the scribe to write in any specific directions for performance at all. In deciding in which two-octave range the music was sung, therefore, the manuscripts themselves give very little help.

All that is left, therefore, is to approach the problem by examining the resources of the performing medium itself, and to proceed thence by a process of elimination. This method requires a single postulate to be accepted at the outset:- that 15th century composers wrote for voices at roughly the same pitches and with roughly the same ranges as are cultivated today. The validity of such a postulate cannot be proved; but it seems not unreasonable. The ponderous speed at which physiological evolution is known to proceed seems to preclude any possibility that the human larynx of A.D.1475 can have had a shape significantly different from that of A.D.1975; and there is no evidence to suggest that 15th century singers indulged in any special training to produce and cultivate freak effects.

Modern composition for liturgical choir generally employs a compass not exceeding 23 notes, from bass F to treble g". The 15-note compass of medieval music must fall somewhere within that range. A case can be made out against the highest two-octave compasses, those rising to e" or above; for at this pitch, the top part could only be sung by boys, and the weight of evidence is against the use of boys' voices in composed music. Firstly, in the early days of polyphonic composition, when its basic premises were first evolving, among those items of liturgical chant most commonly set in polyphony were the incipits and verses of responsorial chants - the Gradual and Alleluia of the Mass, and the Responsories of the Office. The customaries directed such sections of chant as these to be

1. In fact, if an analogy may be attempted, the medieval composer's choice of clef configuration no more gives an exact indication of the pitch at which he wished his music to be sung, than the modern composer's choice of basic note-value indicates the speed at which he wants his music to be performed. The choice of line for the c-clef was then no more associated with performance at a single particular pitch, than the choice of value for the crotchet is now associated with performance at a single particular speed.

sung by a soloist, or a small group of singers¹. The small group was always of equal, never of mixed, voices; and since men's voices and boys' voices were not used together in the original plainsong version of the chant, it is not likely that it would occur to a composer to write a polyphonic setting for a mixed group.

This is not the only argument against believing that a tradition or practice of using boys' voices could ever have formed. Until c.1350, the principal and most active centres for the composition and performance of polyphony were the greater Benedictine monasteries²; and it could not have occurred to monk-composers to write for anything but men's voices, since in monasteries there simply were no boys available and eligible to sing in the monks' choirs, and had not been since the practice of child oblation died out in the twelfth century.³ That is, during the early centuries of its development, the principal exponents of polyphony could not have contemplated using boys' voices, but only men's. Significantly, the compass of the music sung by their men's voices before c.1350 was already two octaves, the compass which was still standard in 1450. That is, no difference had been made to the compass of composed music by the creation of secular choirs including boys 1350-1450; the availability of boys did not lead immediately to their involvement in the singing of polyphony.

Thirdly, if the two-octave compass in use had employed boys' voices rising to e" or above, it would have meant that no men's voices were used descending lower than e - a thoroughly artificial and improbable situation.

On the other hand, the idea that polyphonic music was sung exclusively by men's voices is wholly acceptable. The most commonly used texture for polyphony was that of three voices; and the references to polyphony in the customaries of Norwich Cathedral Priory (c.1260) and Westminster Abbey (c.1270), the directions for the chantry at Epworth (1350), the injunction to Durham Cathedral Priory in c.1390 and the qualification of a vicar-choral of Lichfield in 1432⁴ all indicate that it was considered quite practical to expect three-part music to be sung entirely by adult voices.

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1. See M.F. Bukofzer, "The Beginnings of Choral Polyphony" in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music, pp.176-7; MMB p.156.
 2. MMB, p.113; and see above, pp. 2064-5.
 3. D. Knowles, The Monastic Order in England, pp.418-22; The Religious Orders in England, vol.2, p.230.
 4. MMB. pp.113-4; and above pp. 2051, 4072, and 5076 fn. 4.

why not bases,
assuming no
key change?

This still leaves quite a broad range of two-octave compasses eligible for selection; it is, however, possible to narrow them down. The key to the next stage of the argument lies in the fact that something akin to the modern counter-tenor voice was apparently well-known in the middle ages.¹ So it is known that the counter-tenor voice existed; it is plain that it was not at all suited to singing plainsong; the only kind of vocal music cultivated other than plainsong was polyphony; so it appears to follow that when the counter-tenor voice was used, it was used in (and exclusively in) polyphonic music. Whichever two-octave compass was used for polyphony, therefore, it must have incorporated the resources of the counter-tenor voice. The range rising to d" would have stretched its capacities somewhat; but those rising to c" and b' would have suited it well.

desist this
follow?

On the other hand, since the compass of this voice alone was commonly some 10 or 11 notes, its use at the top of any two-octave compass beginning lower than Bb would have involved the counter-tenor in singing down to f or below, and that is too low to sing comfortably. Further, these lowest two-octave compasses, descending to A or lower, would have required genuine bass voices, capable of singing well below the lowest notes ever called for by the performance of plainsong. Such a voice would not normally have been available in a liturgical choir, and without independent evidence of its existence there (such as is available for the counter-tenor), its presence should not be presumed.

It is the two-octave compasses close to c-c" which seem to satisfy best all the available criteria, therefore. Indeed, c-c" itself is particularly satisfactory. It does not require the use of boys' voices; it does employ the counter-tenor; it does not take the lowest voices below the range of plainsong. It does produce vocal tessituras which seem entirely practical for voices to attempt:- in "English descant", an alto ranging from a to c", a tenor from f to g', and a baritone from c to e'; and in chanson style, an alto ranging from a to c", and a tenor - baritone ranging from c to f'.

The methods of reasoning employed preclude the making of a categorical claim that any of this can be proved for certain. All that can be said is

1. Examples are quoted in J. Hough, "The historical significance of the counter-tenor", 64 Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1937/8), pp.1-5.

that the nature of the music itself suggests that we look for a single two-octave compass within which to perform all vocal music dating from before c.1460; and that, of those which present themselves, the range c - c" is the one for which the most satisfactory and plausible case can be made out. This, doubtless, is being over-precise; c-c", give or take a semitone or so either way, probably represents the situation more accurately. For the few compositions which exceed 15 notes, the range B -d" is most appropriate. Pieces with a range of less than 15 notes would have been sung at some pitch within the overall range c-c" at which all the individual voices were comfortably in their own range.

6.2.1.B. The three-octave compass of five-voice music, post - 1460.

The expansion of the overall compass of vocal music which took place during the last 40 years of the 15th century can very clearly be demonstrated by analysis of just a few major manuscripts containing music of that period, notably Cambridge, Magdalene College, MS Pepys 1236, and the Eton Choirbook.

After careful study of all the evidence concerning the date and provenance of Pepys 1236, Dr. S.R. Charles concluded that it was compiled during the 1460's, and originated in Kent at " a school in which boys were taught music under monastic auspices".¹ Identification of two of the hitherto unknown composers represented in this manuscript permits this conclusion to be still further refined. William Corbrond was Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Canterbury Cathedral from 1470/1 until 1473/4²; he was succeeded during 1473/4 by John Nesbett, who retained the post until 1488.³ This makes it very likely that the institution for which the manuscript was compiled was the Almonry Chapel

1. S.R. Charles, "The provenance and date of Pepys MS 1236", 16 Musica Disciplina (1962), pp.69-70.

2. CDC A/cs Sacrist 51-56.

3. CDC A/cs Sacrist 55-58 with 68; Misc. A/cs, vol.7, ff.6r., 36v.; MS Scrapbook B, no.49; MS Scrapbook C, no.95.

at Christ Church Cathedral, Canterbury¹, and that it was compiled during the 1470's rather than the 1460's.

It is not known for which institution the contents of the Eton Choirbook were originally compiled; it is certain, however, that by the time the manuscript had reached the stage of illumination, it had come into the hands of the chapel choir at Eton College. This had happened by 1504 at the latest, the date of the death of provost Henry

**Table 6 :- OVERALL COMPASSES OF MUSIC COMPOSED
OR OCCURRING IN MANUSCRIPTS COMPILED c1460-1500**

APPROX. DATE	MANUSCRIPT or EDITION	TOTAL NUMBER OF PIECES	INCIDENCE OF OVERALL COMPASSES													24 or more		
			10 or fewer	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		23	
1465	OBL Lincoln College (e) lat. 124	2						1					1					
1470	BM Add MS 54324/KRO PRC 49/20	4					2					1				1		
1475	BM Add MS 5665 (first layer)	49			3	6	7	19	7	7								
1475	Pepys 1236 ²⁷	107	14	9	2	16	14	17	22	9	2	1	0	1				
1470-1500	BM Add MS 5665 (liturgical pieces in second layer)	28	1	2	2	3	2	4	3	6	1	2	0	1	0	1		
1475-1500	The Eton Choirbook	92					12	6	0	1	2	2	1	17	40	11		
	TOTALS	282	15	11	7	25	37	47	32	23	6	6	1	20	40	12	-	-

1. Dr. Charles' conclusions that the manuscript originated at "a school in which boys were taught music under monastic auspices" was very much a lucky hit, since the evidence she had adduced did in fact point far more convincingly towards a secular college. However, within the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral lay its Almonry, with its grammar school including the eight boys of the Lady Chapel choir; these, with the six priests of the chantry established in the Almonry Chapel, and two clerks of the chapel, constituted a small secular organisation within the priory, bound to observe divine service on festivals according to Salisbury Use. See BM Galba E iv ff.87r.-89v.; CDC Reg. A., ff.316v.-319r.; CDC Chart.Ant. B 384 (printed in ed. J.B. Sheppard, Litterae Cantuarienses, vol.3, pp.68-70.)
2. MMB, p.307 ff., and references there quoted.
3. ed. S.R. Charles, The Music of the Manuscript Pepys 1236, Corpus Musicae Mensurabilis (1969). The monophonic pieces have not been included.
4. ed. F.L.L. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, 10-12 Musica Britannica (1956-61). Analysis of the compasses of its contents is drawn from the index of the MS itself (EPF, MS 178); Wylkynson's Salve Regina, omitted from the MS index, has been included here.

It is plain enough from this table that while composition for men's voices alone continued to flourish and thrive, yet the practical constraint of two octaves as the overall limit of compass for composed music had by c.1500 been replaced by one of three octaves (22 notes). This was sometimes extended to 23 notes, thereby reaching just about the extreme working limit of which men's and boys' voices together are capable without special training.

6.2.2. The introduction of treble and bass voices into composed polyphony.

6.2.2.A. Identification of the two new voices.

Examination of the manuscripts shows that this was not the only development of these 40 years. At the same time, the normal texture of the more ambitious varieties of vocal music was expanded from three voices to five, and it is important that the two new voices be identified. The expansion of the overall vocal compass by one octave, and the addition of two new voices to the vocal texture, were, of course, closely related. The identity of the new voices can best be detected by comparing the music of John Dunstable and certain of his contemporaries, composed c.1420-1455, with the music of the Eton Choirbook c.1475-1500. Examination of the contents of the complete edition of Dunstable shows that of the 60 works, 54 are for three voices. In these, the two lowest parts (whether the piece is in isorhythmic or 'chanson' style) are invariably in tenor-contratenor relationship; almost without exception the two parts are in the same clef, and even when they are not, the compass of one of the parts is such that it could have been placed in the same clef as the other without the use of leger lines.¹ Almost without exception, the clef of the top part is pitched a fifth above that of the other two - or, if not, could have been so written without involving the use of leger lines.² In fact, of the 54 3-voice pieces, no less than 50 either actually employ a clef configuration of C1-C3-C3, (133 for convenience), 244 or 355 - or have vocal ranges which would allow them to be written in such clefs without the use of leger lines.

1. e.g. no.9 (tenor in C4 instead of C5), 17 (tenor in C3 not C4), 19 (contratenor in C4, not C5) and 27 (tenor in C5, not F4). In fact only 37 and 62 seem to defy adjustment in this way. It is possible that many of these adjustments were in fact made in the MSS, without the fact being recorded in the Critical Commentary.
2. e.g. nos. 6, 20, 19, 22 (C2 for C1), 16 (C2 for C3), 13 (tenor and contratenor in C4, not C5); only nos. 35 and 60 cannot be adjusted in this way.

Now of these 50 3-voice pieces, exactly half (25) employ the 244 configuration; all of these use either all or part of the compass c-c" (23 instances)¹, or the compass B-b' (2 instances). 7 employ the 355 configuration; all have low compasses, A-g', A-a', B-a' or A-b'. Eighteen use the configuration 133; all have high compasses, d-d", e-d", f-d", f-e", e-e", f-f" or g-e". There is a remarkable uniformity about these results; the clef systems used by medieval scribes are not so chaotic as they look. It is possible to detect three basic clef configurations in use in the music of this period:- low clefs 355, medium clefs 244 and high clefs 133. If the music in the Dunstable edition is typical, then 244 was in commonest use; by sheer good luck it is the configuration associated with the compass c-c", so it happens to place the music very close to performing pitch judged by modern concepts. Music written in the high clefs 133 invariably turns out to be pitched above the c-c" compass; to hear it at performing pitch, it must be mentally transposed down by whatever degree is necessary to cause the music to fall agreeably to the voices within an overall compass of c-c". Music written in the low clefs invariably turns out to be pitched below the c-c" compass, and must similarly be "transposed" upwards.² All this music, therefore, was to be sung by voices corresponding in range to the modern alto and tenor.

Alignment of these findings against those to be drawn from the Eton Choirbook demonstrates the precise nature of the achievement accomplished by composers and choirs between c.1460 and 1500. Of the 54 pieces in the Eton Choirbook sufficiently complete for this kind of analysis, 29 are in 5 parts for mixed men's and boys' voices.³

In all but five of these, the three middle parts have a very familiar look. The third and fourth voices are in identical clefs and have virtually identical compasses; they are in fact in tenor-contratenor relationship, and frequently were actually labelled tenor and contratenor.⁴

1. The compasses of these pieces may be c-c", c-d", d-b' or c-b'. In BM Add.MS. 5665 there is one 3-part piece, written in 224, compass d-a', which is actually described as pro hominibus - Packe's Missa de Gaudete in Domino
2. All the 4-voice pieces fit into this pattern quite adequately. / (fo.84v.) Nos.11 and 12 can be written in 1133 and no.32 in 1333; they fall into the 133 category, with one added part. No.28 can be written in 2244, and no.30 in 2444, i.e. 244 with one added part.
3. There are two 5-part pieces for men's voices only:- nos.21 and 35.
4. Of the five exceptions, one is no.10, one of the earliest pieces in the MS; here it is the fourth and fifth parts which are in tenor-contratenor relationship (see MMB, p.308). In no.33 there is no contra-tenor, since the 5 parts are 2 trebles, mean, tenor and bass. The three genuine exceptions are nos.13,23 and 24; in these the tenor is in a clef lower than the contratenor, and is definitely pitched a tone or a minor third beneath it. In nos.12 and 47 the tenor and contratenor could both have been written in the same clef (C3 in no.12, C4 in no.47) without the use of leger lines.

With only three further exceptions, the part above them, labelled medius is pitched a fifth above¹; between the lowest note of the tenor and contratenor, and the highest note of the medius, the range is exactly and invariably two octaves. Out of the 27 applicable pieces, therefore, no less than 21 agree in having their three middle parts lying in the same ranges, called by the same voice-names, and covering exactly the same two-octave compasses, as the three-part music of the previous generation. The clef configurations agree as well; of these 21 pieces, the clefs of the three middle parts are all either 244 (15 instances) or 133 (6 instances).²

The exact nature of the innovations introduced by the composers active between 1460 and 1500 now stands clear. They inherited the standard compass and texture of the music of Dunstable's generation, and retained it unchanged as a core round which they developed their own style. Above it, they added a new line above the medius; below it they added a further new line, below the tenor and contratenor. By these devices, they increased the vocal texture to 5 voices and the overall compass to three octaves. It only remains to ascertain the exact nature of the two new voices.

As has been seen, when a three-part piece has a total compass of the two octaves c-c" and the clef configuration 244, then its written pitch is just about its correct performing pitch also, falling happily enough to voices of alto and tenor range. There seems to be no reason for imagining that the intended performing pitch of music in this configuration altered at all when the two new outer voices began to be added to it; that is, each five-voice composition of which the three middle parts have the configuration 244, stands on paper at just about its correct performing pitch also. The new top line was invariably pitched a fifth above the medius, stood in the G2 clef, and had a compass of up to 11 notes, d'-g"; the new bottom line was invariably pitched a fifth below tenor and contratenor, stood in the F4 clef, and had a compass of up to 11 notes F-b. The top line is an eminently singable treble line for boys; the bottom line is a perfectly viable part for the man's bass voice.

1. The exceptions are nos. 28, 29, and 46; in these the medius contains isolated low notes, and lies in a clef only a third above tenor and contratenor. In nos. 17, 34 and 47 the medius would have been more conveniently pitched a fifth above tenor and contratenor, on C2 rather than C3.
2. 244:- nos. 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25, 26, 30, 31, 32, 34, 44, 47; 133:- nos. 12, 20, 27, 43, 45, 52.

Those pieces which have their three middle parts in the high clefs 133 will be found to have correspondingly high treble and bass parts - the treble indeed, with a G1 clef and rising to b" or even c"', being much too high to sing. "Transposition " down, until the compass of the three middle parts is the two octaves c-c", brings such pieces into exact alignment with pieces at roughly correct performing pitch.¹ (Where a five-part piece with a total compass of around 22 notes has three middle parts in the clef configuration 244, then as has been seen, it already stands on paper very close to correct performing pitch). Pieces for more than five voices can be heard at correct performing pitch by establishing the clef configuration of the three crucial voices:- the highest part for broken voice, usually labelled triplex

1. The low clefs (355), never particularly common in Dunstable's time (and usually associated with a key-signature of two flats, which appears to have dropped out of use in the music of c.1470 - 1540), are very rare indeed in music of the Eton Choirbook period. However, Fayrfax's Mass O bone Iesu (middle 3 clefs C4-C5-F4) certainly requires upward transposition to make it singable (E.B. Warren, "The Masses of Robert Fayrfax" 12 Musica Disciplina (1958) p.162); also no.23 in the Eton Choirbook, (middle 3 clefs 345) appears to require upward transposition by one tone. In music in English MSS showing strong continental influence (e.g. BM Royal 11 e xi, dated 1516) the narrower 20-note compass cultivated on the Continent was employed, requiring upward transposition by about a minor third; during the second half of the 16th century English choirs largely abandoned the broad 22 - note compass of the Eton Choirbook period in favour of this narrower Continental compass, and the need for upward transposition becomes very common indeed.

or medius¹, and the tenor and contratenor². Where this is 244 the piece stands at performing pitch³; where it is 133, downward transposition is required until these three parts cover the two-octave compass c-c"⁴.

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1. A voice-part labelled triplex was not necessarily intended to be sung by a boy's treble voice. In its original meaning, triplex had denoted simply the top line of a three-voice composition; triplex means "three-fold" and the triplex was the part composed to create three-fold harmony. The word was still being used in this sense as late as the two layers of BM Add. MS. 5665 (the Ritson MS). In the three-part carol 'Man be joyful' (fo.11v., copied c.1475) a full set of names for the voice-parts appears in the original hand:- Triples, Medius, Tenor. Among the liturgical pieces in the later layer, copied c.1500, the term Triples was still frequently used in this original sense, simply to designate the top part - no matter what its pitch - of three-part compositions; it is used thus in a piece actually specified as pro hominibus:- Thomas Packe's Missa de gaudete in domino, fo.84v.(cf.fo.107v). As a development of its original meaning, however, it began to be used to designate a part to be sung by any voice of fairly high pitch:- e.g. it denotes the highest of the five parts of Thomas Packe's Lumen ad revelationem; Nunc dimittis (ibid., fo.62v.); while the two highest parts, in the same range, of the three-part Nesciens mater (ibid., fo.123v.) are labelled Triples and Triples secundus. It was when used in this ~~extended~~ restricted sense that triples came to be applied to a part sung by a boy's voice. In the Eton Choirbook it was used merely to denote a voice of fairly high pitch. In e.g. no.9, it applies to a line certainly to be sung by boys; elsewhere, in e.g. nos.1, 2, 5, it denotes a line to be sung by altos.
 2. By "tenor and contratenor" I refer to a pair of parts for broken voices lying in the same range and clef. They may not be so labelled in the manuscript; in Eton Choirbook no.3, for instance, the actual tenor and contratenor are labelled medius and tenor in the Eton manuscript, but are labelled correctly in a concordance, Oxford, All Soul's College, MS 18:- see ed. F. Ll. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol. 1, p. 142.
 3. e.g. nos.1, 4, 5, 9, 51.
 4. e.g. no.3.

6.2.2.B. The chronology of the change.

It would be useful to pinpoint exactly the time when the new bass and treble voices first began to be used. The earliest instance yet traced of a composition requiring a bass voice is a three-part setting of Kyrie eleison in a fragment of a manuscript which looks as if it was written not much later than c.1465.¹ Its total compass is 19 notes. The lowest voice is actually marked Bassus; it uses the F4 clef, and the one line of music which survives has a written range of G-c'. The clefs of the other two parts, C1 and C3, and the range of the top line, c'-d", suggest transposition down by a tone to bring it neatly into alto-tenor-bass range.² Thus transposed, its vocal ranges exactly match those occurring in other items, e.g. John Tuder's Gloria laus et honor in Pepys 1236, compiled during the 1470's.³

The bass voice, therefore, was almost certainly in use by the 1460's. However, it is far more important to establish the moment at which boys' voices first began to be used in composed polyphony. The introduction of the bass voice could be accomplished fairly simply; it required only that men's voices of deeper range be found for incorporation into the existing teams of men's voices which had long been responsible for performing polyphonic music. The introduction of boys' voices, however, would involve considerable upheavals in several departments of the choir, and added up to a major departure; it is particularly important, therefore, that a date be set on the emergence of this innovation.

Surviving music shows no sign of the composers' breaking out of the two-octave compass constraint prior to c.1460; and when music using a compass of up to 18 or 19 notes does begin to appear, it seems most practical to regard it (unless it can be proved otherwise) as music utilising the much more readily available bass voice, than the far more

1. OBL MS Lincoln College (e) Lat.124, fo.222v.
2. Five of the carols in BM Add. MS. 5665, copied c.1475, written in the high clefs and with an overall compass of 17 notes, appear to require transposition down, taking the lowest voice down to A, well in the bass range:- nos.77, 104,115, 116 and 119 in ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols. (Some of the clefs have to be recovered from the MS, since those of the inner parts are not recorded in the edition).
3. ed. S.R. Charles, The Music of the Pepys Manuscript 1236 no.101; it uses the clefs C2-C4-F4. A number of pieces in this MS have the clef configuration 134, and a compass of 16 or 17 notes, usually c-d", or c-e". The middle part has a range usually of f-a', comfortable for neither an alto (too low) nor a tenor (too high). Downward transposition by a third brings all these pieces neatly into alto-tenor-bass range:- see ibid., nos.20,40, 46, 53, 94, 116.

problematic treble. Not until music utilising a compass of more or less three full octaves appears, can there be certainty that the boy's voice had begun to be used.

The earliest occurrences of three-octave compass yet traced occur in manuscripts compiled during the 1470's. One, BM Add.MS.54324, contains an incomplete setting of the Marian antiphon Gaude flore virginali.¹ It is in five parts, of which the two lowest are marked Tenor (in C4) and Bassus (F4); its total compass is 21 notes. The bass descends to F, while the topmost part (in C1) has a range c' - e"; the bass cannot possibly be transposed any lower, so the top part must be for a boy's treble.

Another example in a manuscript of similar date is one of the anonymous settings of Salve festa dies in Pepys 1236.² It is in four parts and has an overall compass of 21 notes; it is written out in the high clefs, and its top part, in the G1 clef with a range a' - b" could be sung only by a boy treble even when transposed down a fourth.

These two items had both been composed by the 1470's when the manuscripts in which they survive were written. There are certain suggestions, however, that the pioneers of composed music involving the treble voice may have been at work some 20 years earlier than that. The index to the Eton Choirbook lists a setting of Gaude flore virginali, for five voices and having a compass of 21 notes, attributed to Dunstable³. A compass of 21 notes is only one note less than three octaves, and such a piece must have used boys' voices; but Dunstable is commonly believed to have died in 1453. The music itself has been lost from the body of the manuscript, so it is not now possible to check the information given in the index.

However, the fragment that contains the anonymous Gaude Flore virginali already discussed also contains two parts of a four-part setting of Descendi in ortu meo attributed to Dunstable; the remaining two parts survive elsewhere, in a fragment of manuscript of c.1500.⁴

1. M. and I. Bent, "Dufay, Dunstable, Plummer - a new source", 22 Journal of the American Musicological Society (1969) pp.394, 415-24.
2. ed. S.R. Charles, The Music of the Pepys Manuscript 1236 no.65. This piece looks as if its treble could be a voice added later to a pre-existing three-part composition.
3. EPF, MS 178 (The Eton Choirbook), index at beginning of volume.
4. BM Add. MS.54324 fo.3r., and KRO PRC 49/20; see M. and I. Bent, "Dufay, Dunstable, Plummer:- a new source",²²Journal of the American Musicological Society (1969), p.394.

at the
manuscript

The piece as a whole has a total compass of 18 notes. As it stands, its highest voice, in the G2 clef, has a range e' - f", and would require a boy's voice.¹ However, if the attribution to Dunstable is correct, then it would be appropriate - in view of its early date - to consider it as a piece written out in high clefs, and originally intended to be sung by alto-tenor-bass-bass a fourth below its apparent written pitch. Whichever solution be preferred, then - if the attribution to Dunstable be correct - the piece is clear evidence for use of either the boy's voice, or the bass voice, as early as c.1450 - in at least one quarter which might well be expected to have been relatively advanced for its time.

The material is pretty tenuous, therefore, before the first unequivocal evidence appears in manuscripts of 1470's origin. Perhaps, it will not be unfair to suggest c.1460 as a reasonable date for the first experimental employment of the boy's treble voice in composed polyphony, keeping options open to push it back a further ten years if further evidence turns up.

6.2.3. The adoption of full choral polyphony by the choirs.

In England, the practice of composing polyphony for full mixed voices caught on quickly, and within a generation its performance was widespread. Such a composer as William Horwood, Instructor of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral, was writing fluently for these new forces by the time of his death in 1484, as witness his settings of Salve Regina, Gaude flore virginali, Magnificat and Gaude virgo mater christi in the Eton Choirbook.² This manuscript itself demonstrates that the new style had been thoroughly assimilated in many quarters by c.1500. Of its 92 pieces, 68 used a compass of 21-23 notes; they were written by no less than 21 different composers, working at 11 different institutions that we know of.

1. Use of the G2 clef by no means necessarily indicates that the line was intended to be sung by boys' voices. Occurrences have in fact been traced well back into the 14th century:- see e.g. SRO DD/WHb 3182 fo.lv., (c.1375) where the G2 clef simply indicates use of a very high clef configuration.

2. ed. F.L.L. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, nos.10,29,44, 52.

The degree to which this music was actually being cultivated and performed at the various institutions by c.1500 can best be gauged from the appropriate archives - in particular, inventories and entries on accounts of chapel expenses.¹ Two institutions in particular yield illuminating information - Magdalen College, Oxford and Holy Trinity College, Tattershall.

From its inauguration in c.1480, the Magdalen College choir laboured under a number of vicissitudes, including a rapid turnover of clerks, and the lack of provision for a specialist Instructor of the Choristers.² Nevertheless, its musical and performance standards appear to have been high. A polyphonic repertoire was quickly built up and a stock of books of such music acquired; and a steady stream of payments was made for the copying of new music for the choir to learn and perform.

That the choir was capable of singing just about any music that was being composed at this time is shown by Richard Davy's setting of the text o domine celi terreque creator; in the Eton Choirbook a note is appended to this piece claiming that Davy wrote it in a single day at (and presumably for) Magdalen College Oxford³, where he was Instructor of the Choristers in 1490-91.⁴ It is written for soloists and five-part chorus (TrATTB, to be sung one tone higher than written) and is as demanding as any music in this manuscript on the technique of the singers. By 1495/6 the choir had for its use a whole volume of polyphonic masses and antiphons composed by Davy.⁵

As explained previously, it is not to be expected that the chapel's stock of books of polyphony would necessarily appear on inventories of chapel goods; they formed no part of the plainsong service books which the college was obliged to provide for divine worship, and there was therefore no need for them to be entered on the sacrist's inventories.⁶

1. An excellent overall survey appears in MMB, pp.156-201.

2. See below, pp. 6075-9, 6093-4.

3. hanc antiphonam composuit Ricardus Davy uno die collegio magdalene Oxoniis:- ed. F.Ll. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.2, pp.62-72, 181.

4. See below, pp. 6077-8

5. Bursars' A/c. 1495/6, OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.41v.:- Solut' christofero Coke stacionario pro ligatura unius libri de canticis s[icilicet] missis et antiphonis domini Ricardi davy xij d.

6. See above, pp. 5049-50.

Indeed, on an inventory¹ drawn up in its original form c.1480², there is no reference to any books of polyphony; and later inventories of 1486 and 1495 remark only that the books of polyphonic music were in the custody of the Instructor of the Choristers.³

This is proof enough, however, that a collection of such books was being made; and some idea of their contents can be derived from the payments (often substantial) made to the Instructor of the Choristers and to other clerks for buying new books, or for copying new works into existing books, and to bookbinders and others for their repair and maintenance. In 1483/4 Mr. John Claveryng, the Instructor of the Choristers, was paid 6s. 8d. for a book of polyphony for the Choristers singing Lady Mass on festivals; the same year a further 30s. was laid out, partly on parchment for the making of several books of polyphonic music, and partly to Claveryng for the work involved in copying them out⁴. Some new books of polyphony for the choristers were acquired during 1490/91⁵,

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1. Owing to the manner in which the college archives have lately been kept, neither I nor the archivist was able to find these Inventories at the time of my visit; however, they were known to exist, since extracts from them were published by J.R. Bloxam, A Register of... Magdalen College...Oxford, vol.2, p.198 ff. I am grateful, therefore, to Mr. John Mills, of Merton College, Oxford, who came across them in the course of his own work on the Magdalen archives, and was able to draw my attention to them before their return to the oblivion from which they had temporarily been rescued.
 2. OMC, bundle without reference, labelled "Sacrist's Inventories". There are two inventories dated 1486; erasures and corrections on one show that in its present form it is an up-dating of an earlier inventory, which originally had been drawn up before 1481, the date of a list of additional material on the back.
 3. ibid. Some 170-180 plainsong service books were listed, 'preter libros de cantu divisio qui sunt in custodia informatoris chorustarum'. In fact he kept these books in a locked chest by the great organ on the pulpitum. Bursar's A/c 1483/4, OMC Liber Computi 1481/88, ff.68r.68v.:— Et solut' pro Cista que stat iuxta Organa xiiij d....Et pro ligamentis fferreis j Ciste pro cera et Clave ad eandem ad cerandum Librum punctuatum[sic] in ecclesia xxiiij d.; quarterly drafts of Bursar's A/c 1483/4, OMC Bursary Book 1477-86, fo.15v.:— In primis pro cista cum ligamentis ferreis sera et clave in qua reponuntur libri punctati iijs jd.
 4. Bursar's A/c 1483/4, OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, ff.68r. 72r.:— Et in solucione pro pergameno deliberato informatori Chorustarum pro diversis libris de sett song fiendis et in partem solucionis pro labore suo xxxs. ...Et solut' Magistro Claverynge pro uno libro punctato pro Chorustis ad Cantandum diebus festivalibus missam beate marie virginis ex precepto domini presidentis vjs viijd.
 5. Bursar's A/c 1490/1, OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.7v.:— Solut' domino Bernarde [chaplain and joint organist] pro novis libris de cantu fracto pro choristis ex mandato vicepresidentis iijs iiijd.

and the substantial sum of 36s. 8d. was paid for two books of polyphony in 1502/3.¹ In 1481/2 23s. 4d. was paid to John Claveryng for noting a book of music of some kind; the next year he received 40s. for further work of this nature, and the finished volume was bound and covered for a further 5s.² 12d. was paid in 1495/6 for binding a book of masses and antiphons by Richard Davy.³ Among individual compositions copied into the choir books were settings of the Passion in 1483/4⁴, and an antiphon and the Asperges me in 1485/6⁵. In fact, between 1480 and 1500 there is hardly a single surviving account which does not record the acquisition of some new book or piece of music for the chapel choir. As far as the evidence shows, these were mostly settings of the ordinary of the mass or of votive antiphons. Further evidence of the high priority which the college placed on the chapel music was its large outlay of £28 over two years, 1486-88, for a new organ.⁶

Tattershall College was another institution where the choir was clearly expected to master many new items of polyphonic music every year as part of its routine accomplishments. Something of its activity during the 1490's can be learnt from the survival of a few receivers' and precentors' accounts. For instance, in 1492/3 certain compositions were copied out by Robert Lounde, one of the clerks, for the use of the choristers in learning descant; he also received 3s. 6d. for copying out various antiphons and other items.⁷ In 1495/6, under the heading Expense Choristarum, Lounde received 11d. for copying out a piece called 'the Cry of Caleys', apparently a four part canon, and 10d. for an item called fflos fflorum.⁸ A further 5s. 8d. was paid to him for other copying work, of music for both the choir and elsewhere (presumably meaning the Lady Chapel).⁹

1. Bursars' A/c 1502/3, OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.126v.:— solut' Johanni Shevan pro duobus libris de cantu fracto xxxvjs viijd.
2. Bursars' A/c 1481/2, OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, fo.10r.:— Et Johanni Claveryng pro notacione unius libri xxiijs iiiij d. Bursars' A/c 1482/3, ibid., fo.27r.:— Item Domino Johanni Claveryng xv^o die Junii in partem solucionis pro libro ab eo fiendo de cantu pro choro xls...Et solut' Johanni Bray pro ligatura et coopertura unius libri cantus vs.
3. See above. p. 6021 and n.5.
4. Bursars' A/c 1483/4, OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, fo.68r.:— Et solut' Johanni Milton pro puntuacione passionis xijd.
5. Bursars' A/c 1485/6, ibid., fo.102v.:— solut' pro canticis notatis videlicet una antiphona et asperges me xd.
6. in two equal instalments, each of £14.:— ibid., ff.118v.144r. The organ builder was William Wootton. See also MMB, p.167
7. DLD U1475 Q16/1:— Et in denariis solutis...Roberto Lounde pro notacione diversorum cantuum ordinatorum pro choristis addiscentibus discant ix d... Et in denariis solutis Roberto lounde uni Clericorum Collegii pro notacione diversorum Cantuum et antiphonarum hoc anno iijs vjd.
8. DLD U1475 Q16/2:— Et solut' Roberto lounde pro notacione Cantus currentis iiiij parcium vocati the Cry of Caleys xjd. et alterius cantus vulgariter nuncupati fflos fflorum xd.
9. Precentor's A/c, attached to DLD U1475 Q16/2:— Et in denariis solutis ad manus Roberti Lounde Clerici Collegii pro notacione diversorum cantuum tam pro choro quam alibi vs viijd.

Particularly informative are the two precentor's accounts for 1496/7 and 1498/9 which record in almost complete detail the new music copied out for the use of the choir in just those two years.¹ The list is impressive, covering as it does a broad variety of liturgical categories; the relevant portions of both accounts are transcribed in full in Appendix C5 below², but their contents are analysed here by category to demonstrate the width of musical enterprise possible at just one institution:-

Table 7:- Accretions to the Tattershall repertoire, 1496/7 and 1498/9.

<u>Mass:-</u>	a Mass <u>Gaudent in celis</u>	All Saints
<u>Mass proper:-</u>	Robert Lyn, <u>Alleluia Confitemini Domino</u>	High Mass, Easter Eve.
<u>Office items:-</u>	3 lessons at <u>Tenebrae</u> a single lesson at <u>Tenebrae</u> <u>versus prophete</u> ³ <u>Laudate pueri</u> , 4vv <u>Sedit angelus</u> <u>Christus resurgens</u> <u>Audivi vocem</u> , 4vv <u>Rex benedicte</u>	(Lessons at evening Matins (on Maundy Thursday, (Good Friday and Holy (Saturday. procession, Palm Sunday. ((procession, Easter Sunday. (All Saints, matins.
<u>Votive antiphons:-</u>	<u>Salve Regina</u> 6 vv Mr. Bawlewyn, <u>Gaude</u> , 7vv ⁴ <u>Domine celi et terre</u> , 5vv ⁵ <u>Salve Regina</u> , 7vv <u>Alma parens</u> another eight or so, unidentified.	(((Marian antiphons. ((
<u>Secular:-</u>	Song in 3 parts, called 'Maydens of London'.	
<u>Unidentified:-</u>	4 compositions known as <u>Seculorum</u> , by Richard Higonis, Turgins (Edmund Turges?), Burtons (Avery Burton?), and Richard Davy, 5vv.	

1. Precentor's A/cs., attached to DLD U1475 Q16/3, Q16/4.

2. See below, p. A059.

3. probably Hierusalem respice:- trope to ritual antiphon En rex venit at Procession on Palm Sunday.

4. The Eton Choirbook originally contained two 4-part settings of Magnificat attributed to Baldwyn:- EPF, MS 178 Index; and see MMB, p.455

5. The Eton Choirbook contains a five-part setting of O domine celi terreque creator by Richard Davy; no.23 in ed. F.Ll.Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.2, p.62.

This is a varied and impressive list for a mere two years, and gives a clear insight into the degree of musical enterprise found to be practical at an apparently well-ordered and managed institution, endowed with resources of personnel which were adequate, though far from extravagant. The list conforms to the view that at this period polyphonic music was being composed to add distinction to a relatively narrow band of the work of liturgical choirs:- (1) votive antiphons, especially the daily Marian antiphon; (2) votive masses, especially Lady Mass (not, however, represented on the Tattershall list); (3) High Mass on certain great festivals; (4) the greater Office Hours on certain important festivals - Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Sunday; All Saints; and Christmas. It was almost exclusively for services on occasions within these categories that polyphonic music was composed until well into the 16th century.¹ Polyphony, therefore, was by 1500 performed on both an occasional, festal basis, and on a regular, daily, basis. It began to involve nearly all members of the choir in its performance, and demanded a high degree of technical skill. It is necessary now to examine the consequences of these developments for the institutions to which the performance of this music was committed.

1. If patronal festivals be included, then almost without exception all the polyphonic music listed in the 1522 Inventory of Magdalen College Oxford, and the 1529 Inventory of King's College Cambridge, falls into one or other of these four categories:- MMB, pp.431-3.

6.3. The effects on the choirs of musical developments,
1460-1500.

For the choirs, the consequences of the development of three-octave polyphony for full chorus of boys and men were of very considerable, and immediate, moment. Now for the first time, the composition of liturgical choirs had to take into account factors other than the requirements of just the music and ceremonial of the plainsong liturgy. Not only did the polyphony composed in the last third of the 15th century call into use two hitherto unused types of voice; it also placed ever-increasing demands on the training and the technique of the singers. Composers cultivated great exuberance and diversity of rhythm and floridity of melody and counterpoint; when writing on the grander scale, they normally wrote in five parts, and occasionally in six, seven, eight or even more. If the standard interpretation of the incidence of red text be correct, then the practice of contrasting passages for full chorus with others for varied groups of solo voices was so cultivated and developed as to create deft and sonorous effects of kaleidoscopic variety, combining at once both delicacy and vigour¹ - and creating, for every participant, considerable technical problems of articulation, balance, blend, intonation, breathing, unanimity of attack, and focus of tone.

Meanwhile, the composition of music such as this seems to have caused the development, by c.1500, of the practice of involving all competent elements in the choir in the singing of choral polyphony, rather than just the special body of polyphony clerks. To accommodate these forces, the choirbooks containing the music became larger and larger, so that the whole choir could gather round a lectern and read from the one manuscript all at the same time. The Caius Choirbook is the largest surviving manuscript of this type, measuring 38" x 28 $\frac{1}{4}$ " when open. The Eton Choirbook is only slightly smaller, and could certainly have accommodated the whole chapel choir of c.1500, including even the chaplains if competent, since it consisted only of 4-5 chaplains, 6 clerks and 6 choristers.² By 1500 therefore, the liturgical choir - at the most favoured institutions - had developed into a self-contained body of trained singers, cultivating an art-form (albeit still very much purely an applied art) which made large technical demands on all its executants.

1. For more particular observations on the evolution and characteristics of the florid style, see F.L.Harrison in MMB, pp.318-9 and "English Polyphony 1470-1540" in 3NOHM, pp.303-4.
2. EPF Audit Roll 30 (1499/1500), Stipendia Capellanorum et Clericorum and Custus Obituum. Though the choir increased in size during the years 1500-20, it never recovered its statutory proportions after the crisis of 1465-6.

So in certain respects, polyphonic music, as it had by this time developed, was now making demands which choirs constituted primarily to perform just the ceremonial and plainsong of the liturgy could no longer supply. There were three principal areas in which this shortfall was particularly noticeable. Firstly, the involvement of boys' voices in composed polyphony added a totally new dimension to the role of the choristers in divine worship. This certainly transformed the work of their Instructor, and also had long-term effects on the whole conception of the role of choristers in the worship of the Church. On the boys themselves there were imposed new skills and duties on top of the traditional ones, differing radically in kind from anything they had previously been called upon to do; and in certain circumstances these new demands required an increase in their numbers, where their existing strength was not sufficient to sustain the treble part in the choral sections of polyphonic compositions. Further, the demands this made on the man responsible for teaching them their work involved such a transformation in the nature of his work, also, that the job now demanded the employment no longer of a general pedagogue, or even of a competent singer, but of a musician specialising in this particular work.

Secondly, the appearance of music requiring both boys' and men's voices together caused many hitherto perfectly self-sufficient choirs to begin to seem incomplete. On the one hand, there were the monastery Lady Chapel choirs, consisting of only boys' voices with no men. On the other, there existed certain fairly large colleges which had been founded in the days when choristers had been considered a dispensable item if necessary - these choirs had men's voices, but no boys, or only a token number. Both types of choir now had a gap, which would have to be filled if they were to keep abreast of the requirements of modern music; boys' choirs required the addition of men's voices, and men's choirs the addition of boys.

Thirdly, it appears by 1500 to have become the practice of those institutions which had the necessary resources, to observe a general rule of performing composed polyphony chorally. This required that as many members as possible of the choral staff now be familiar with mensural notation, and be competent to take part in the singing of this music. This was a novel departure, since previously its performance had been left to just a specified subgroup of specialists, for whom the ability to sing composed polyphony was a distinct qualification which the others lacked. Existing choirs were not geared to take account of the situation

where most, or even all, of their members were of this standard, since choirs constructed essentially to sing just plainsong did not need it; the introduction of this innovation might call for some modifications to the senior departments of the choirs as well.

6.3.1. New foundations, 1460 - 1500.

At all previous periods, the most direct way of discovering exactly how, at any given moment, contemporaries thought a liturgical choir ought best to be constructed for the performance of its duties was to subject to examination the statutes of institutions first founded and established then. For this period, however, information is too sparse for this to be possible; in great contrast to the pace of foundation during the 80 years immediately previous, only one major new establishment was created during the whole 1460-1500 period. There is no reason to think that there was actually a diminution of religious zeal at this time; there are many more mundane explanations for this phenomenon.

By 1460 most of the more durable aristocratic families already had at least one proprietary monastery, hospital, college or school to their names, and therefore needed to found no new ones. Similarly, there were very few dioceses where the bishop was not already patron of at least one collegiate establishment founded by a predecessor. Nevertheless, the richer bishops remained prominent as founders even at this period. One of their number, William Waynflete, bishop of Winchester (1447- 1466) was responsible for the one major foundation of the period, Magdalen College Oxford.¹ Of the others, Robert Stillington, bishop of Bath and Wells (1455- 1481) and Thomas Rotherham, archbishop of York (1480- 1499) each founded a small college in Yorkshire, at Acaster (c.1470) and Rotherham (1483) respectively; principally, these were endowments for schoolmasters. In 1496, John Alcock, bishop of Ely, founded Jesus College, Cambridge, originally as a small chantry college having no connection with the University, but maintaining a small grammar school for boys.²

1. See below, pp. 6030-1.

2. D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, English Medieval Religious Houses, pp. 413, 417, 419, 435-6; Acaster was for a provost and three chaplains-schoolmasters, Rotherham for a provost, three chaplains-schoolmasters and 6 choristers. Extracts from the statutes of Rotherham College appear in ed. A.F. Leach, Educational Charters and Documents, pp. 422-32; for Jesus College Cambridge see N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages, pp. 210, 298 and refs. there cited.

Just as significant, perhaps, was the fact that much of this period was a time of endemic civil disorder. The effects of the "Wars of the Roses" should not be exaggerated; a quick calculation shows that out of the 32 years that elapsed between the battles of St. Albans (1455) and East Stoke (1487), the actual campaigning of rival armies actually occupied less than 32 weeks. Still, even though military conflict and political feud only occasionally interrupted long spells of fragile peace, they were sufficient to send to premature graves many heads of new aristocratic families before they could give effect to any plans they might have had to found colleges. For instance, the plans of Richard, duke of Gloucester, to create colleges at Barnard Castle (Durham) and Middleham (Yorkshire) had not matured when he was killed in battle in 1485¹. Sir John Fastolf's well-known feud with the Pastons prevented his bringing to fruition his plans to create a collegiate church at Caistor in Norfolk. If, for instance, Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, or John Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, ever contemplated founding colleges as so many of their social equals had done in previous generations, yet they were cut down before any schemes could achieve realisation.

As potent a reason as any, however, for the dearth of new foundations at this period was the fact that the rapid expansion in the minimum resources required to perform contemporary church music created much necessary work in bringing old-established institutions up-to-date, rather than in founding new ones. John Alcock, successively bishop of Worcester (1476-86) and Ely (1486-1500), reorganised the Lady Chapel choirs at both his cathedral priories. Of the kings of the period, Edward 4 (1461-83) totally refounded and reconstituted St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and re-endowed Fotheringhay College; Henry 7 (1485-1509) built an impressive new Lady Chapel at Westminster Abbey, and provided for the completion of King's College Chapel, Cambridge. The major effects on the choirs of the musical trends of the time, therefore, are most clearly to be seen less in the constitutions of new foundations, than in the alterations which the accommodation of these trends were seen to require in the old ones.

¹. ed. W. Atthill, "Documents relating to....the Collegiate Church of Middleham", pp.1-16; M.E.Cornford in VCH Durham, vol.2, p.129.

⁹ 46 Camden Society (1847)

6.3.1.A. Collegiate Churches.

A clear example of the choral forces considered appropriate in c.1480 for the chapel choir of a prominent academic college is provided by the statutes of the one major foundation of the period, Magdalen College, Oxford. This institution had its origins in the University Hall founded by Wayneflete in 1448, and known as Magdalen Hall¹; on his appointment as Chancellor of England in 1456, he began the enlargement and remodelling of this foundation into Magdalen College, all the paper formalities for which were complete by 1458². Owing to the collapse of Wayneflete's fortunes in 1460, the building of the college could not be undertaken until his restoration to favour after 1471. Thereafter rapid progress was made, and the college buildings, including the chapel, were ready for formal occupation by 1480³; the college was fully established and in complete working order by 1482. With the realisation of Wayneflete's aims, statutes for the college were compiled during the late 1470's and promulgated in 1480 or a little thereafter.⁴

The college was planned on lines clearly derived from the examples set by New College and King's College Cambridge. Its principal personnel were the president and 70 demyes, scholars and fellows⁵; and like its models, it had a chapel staff entirely distinct from these. In numbers the chapel staff matched that of New College exactly; in reflecting the developments of the intervening 90 years, however, the composition of its adult staff was totally revised. In 1390 an efficient liturgical choir needed as many priests as could be afforded and as few chapel clerks as could be got by with. In 1480 an efficient liturgical choir needed as many lay professional singers as could be afforded, and as few priests as could be got by with. In formulating the chapel choir, Wayneflete took advantage of the fact that a fair proportion of the fellows of the college would be in priest's orders, and that therefore the bulk of its chantry obligations to benefactors etc. could be discharged by its senior members.⁶ For the chapel staff, therefore,

1. Her Majesty's Commissioners:- Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, vol.2,p.v.

2. H.A. Wilson, Magdalen College Oxford, pp.5-14.

3. ibid., pp.16-28.

4. ibid., pp.33-34.

5. Statute 1:- ed. Her Majesty's Commissioners, "Statutes of Magdalen College Oxford" in Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, vol.2,p.6.

6. see Statutes 40,51:- ibid., pp.67, 81-2; and the arrangements made for the daily morrow mass, and for daily prayers and annual obits for Fastolf, Ingledeu, Preston, Borough, Lovell and others, recorded on the Libri Compti - all were observed by fellows or scholars.

four chaplains in priest's orders were considered sufficient; the target of thirteen was made up of eight lay-clerks¹, and by an expert Instructor of the Choristers, who was to be hired and added to the staff if none of the chaplains or clerks was competent to undertake those duties². As at all the other academic colleges, the choristers were to number 16.³

A similar emphasis on the provision of an adequate number of clerks and choristers to meet the demands of the music of this period is seen in the chapel staff decreed for the college which Richard, duke of Gloucester (later Richard 3) proposed to found at Barnard Castle in County Durham in 1478. This was to consist of a dean, 12 chaplains, 10 clerks and 6 choristers (and a verger); unfortunately the project never materialised.⁴

One other choral institution is known to have been brought successfully into being at this period; however, it cannot contribute much to our knowledge of the choirs of the time, since few precise details of its constitution have yet been discovered. In this case, it appears that a fully-staffed choral side was added to a pre-existing college which formerly had had none at all. The college of St. Mary de Campis, Norwich, is an extremely obscure institution, but in its time it was certainly the city's most important secular religious establishment. Its chapter consisted of a dean and 10 canons, and in the early 15th century these were apparently a highly distinguished body of churchmen; however, there appears to be no record at all of any of the canons being obliged to supply vicars-choral, and it is very probable that musically the college was pretty dead.⁵ Until 1459 wills of members of the college, and of citizens of Norwich connected with it, record bequests to no choral staff at all - only to the dean and canons; certain priests of chantries established in the collegiate church, and a single clericus, probably the verger or sacrist.⁶

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1. Statutes 1, 5:- ibid., pp.6,23. Only the usual imprecise qualifications for the chaplains and clerks were laid down:- they were to be "of good repute and honest demeanour, sufficiently instructed in reading and in the chant".
 2. Statute 5:- ibid., p.24
 3. Statute 1:- ibid., p.6.
 4. M.E. Cornford in VCH Durham, vol.2, pp.129-30. Richard's other projected college, at Middleham (Yorkshire) had been planned one year earlier on a much more modest scale, for a dean, six chaplains, four clerks and six choristers:- W. Atthill, "Documents relating to the foundation of the Collegiate Church of Middleham", 46 Camden Society (1847), p.3.
 5. F. Blomefield, An essay towards a topographical history of the county of Norfolk, vol.4, p.168ff.; D. Knowles, The religious orders in England, vol.2,
 6. e.g. the will of John Rikyngdale, (madel429), bishop of Chichester /p.222. and formerly dean of St. Mary de Campis:- ed. E.F. Jacob, The Register of Henry Chichele, vol.2., p.415.

It would appear that it was during the deanery of Simon Thornham, dean of the college 1459 - 1462, that the essential steps were taken in the creation of a choral establishment for the collegiate church, then approaching the completion of a total rebuilding.¹ It is known that this choral force consisted of clerks, choristers and a specialist Instructor of the Choristers, and that it appears to have had a continuous history until the Dissolution of the college in 1542; but no archival material emanating directly from the administration of the college is known to survive, and at present, very little is known of the precise constitution of this choir.² Its inauguration can, however, be dated with some accuracy, for the clerks and choristers had already been instituted by the time Dean Thornham's lawyer, William Martyn, made his will on 21 September 1459; he made bequests to each clericus adultus and to each puer present at his burial in the collegiate church.³ By his will made on 23 September 1479, Edmund Bokenham, gentleman, bequeathed 13s. 4d. to 'the maister of the Childer' and the 'other Clerkes and queresters servantes of the same place'; a separate 3s. 4d. was bequeathed to 'the clerk of the place', probably indicating the verger or sacrist, long established and not part of the choir. Bokenham also left income to the college to be spent by the 'Maister of the Childer' on buying firewood for the choristers during winter.⁴ Possibly to be included among the clerks of the choir were Qwyntyn, deacon, and John Hamelyn, subdeacon, mentioned as legatees in a will dated September 1479⁵. In 1508 bequests were made 'to Thomas Wilcham xijd. Item to John Cooke clerke xijd. and to every other manne querester ther xij d.and to every chylde of the sayd place iiij d.'⁶. In May 1531 the then Dean of the

1. G.E. Hawes, "Recent excavations at the College of St. Mary in the Fields, Norwich", 15 Norfolk Archeology (1902-4), p.300.
2. Blomefield had apparently seen accounts of the college, but none of these is now known to survive:- F.Blomefield, An essay towards a topographical history..., vol.4, p.156.
3. NNRO, Test[amentorum] Reg[istrum] Brosyard, fo.169v.
4. NNRO, Test. Reg. A. Caston fo.36r. The 'clerk of the place' was Robert Burgeys, mentioned as legatee in wills made in September 1479 and February 1508 (NNRO Test. Reg. A. Caston fo.40r., Spyltymber fo.61v.); he made his own will in June 1517 (Gyls fo.16v.).
5. NNRO Test.Reg. A. Caston fo.40r.
6. NNRO Test. Reg. Spyltymber, fo.61v. The clerks and choristers were also mentioned in a will made in May 1512 (Johnson, fo.138v.) A John Cuk was the composer of a four-part mass recently discovered in a fragmentary manuscript of about this date:- H. Baillie and P. Oboussier, "The York Masses", 35 Music & Letters (1954), p.19.

College, Nicholas Carre, made provision for bequests to 'yche seculer in the qwere v s. and to eche quirester xij d.'; and he asked to be buried 'in the bodie of the church of the seid Chapell of the feld before the crucifix and where as the children doith sing the antyphone after our Lady masse'¹.

The post of Instructor of the Choristers was apparently coeval with the creation of the choir itself. The earliest known Instructor, William ffakk, had been appointed at least as early as January 1461, when he was mentioned as a legatee in the will of John Wygenhale, one of the canons.² During the course of the elaborate civic celebrations for the visit of Queen Elizabeth (Woodvill) in 1469, "ffakke and his boys" and an organ-player were involved in the reception of the Queen into the city, singing curiose from a stage erected at the gates of the Dominican friary.³ More strictly in the line of duty, ffak also copied out books of polyphonic music for the use of the college choir; when making his will in 1485, he bequeathed to the college all the expenses due to him for his outlay on such items ever since the deanery of Simon Thornham, due to him but never reimbursed⁴. In 1483 ffak was designated executor of the will of one of the chantry chaplains of the college, as William ffak, 'sengylman'(sic, for 'syngyngman?')⁵; but in October 1485, he was described as 'formerly of the college of St. Mary in the Fields'⁶. Nothing more is heard of him, and none of his successors as Instructor of the Choristers has yet been identified.

1. NNRO Test. Reg. Attmere, fo.18lv.

2. NNRO Test. Reg. Betyns, fo.9v.

3. Archives of the City and Corporation of Norwich, Chamberlains' A/cs 1470-90, fo.11r. (NNRO Corporation Archives, Press E, shelf a):-
Et in conduccione organorum cum custibus portacionis usque portas de Westwyk xijd. ... Et in riguardo dato cuidam ffakke cum pueris suis cantantibus curiose super tiatrum ad portas fratrum predicatorum ij s. Et dato cuidam ibidem ludenti ad organa viij d. Et dat' pluribus clericis curiose cantantibus ad tiatrum ad portas de Westwyk inter se xx d. See also H. Harrod, "Queen Elizabeth Woodville's visit to Norwich, 1469", 5 Norwich and Norfolk Archeological Society (1856) pp.38-9.

4. 'Item j beqweth to þe hygh awter ...all my costs of my pryksong bokys sythen Mr. Simon Thornham was dean of þe forseid College':- Will of William ffakk, made 24 October 1485, proved 24 January 1499, NNRO Test.Reg. Multon, fo.110r.

5. Will of John Shotesham, NNRO Test. Reg. A. Caston fo.176v.

6. His will was made in the name of William ffakk, 'nuper de Collegio beate Marie de campis in Norwico':- NNRO Test.Reg. Multon,fo.110r. He had been a legatee of wills made May 1470 and September 1479:- NNRO Test. Reg. Jekkys fo.215v., A. Caston fo.40r.

The evidence is extremely meagre, therefore, but it seems to add up to a conclusion that in or about 1459 there was added to a college which previously had been musically pretty dead, all the essential component parts of a professional liturgical choir - clerks, choristers and an Instructor of the Choristers. There is no record of the appointment of any men in priest's orders as part of this choir; evidently in c.1460 the existing sacerdotal staff of an unmusical college could continue to function unaltered as priests and celebrants, while the clerks and choristers took care of the music of the liturgy - particularly as composed polyphony was among the styles which they cultivated. Unfortunately, no light can yet be shed on the precise number of clerks and choristers maintained at the college for the last 80 years of its existence. It remains significant, however, that c.1459 some unknown benefactor considered it worthwhile to create a working choral force at a college whose distinction may well have seemed to deserve one; and that as early as c.1459 this choir was seen to need a viable body of singing-boys, and - from the very beginning - a specialised Instructor to teach them their work.

6.3.1.B. Monastic Lady Chapel choirs.

One new monastery Lady Chapel choir is known to have been founded at this time; this was at Burton Abbey, and was endowed by abbot William Bronston (abbot 1455-73), who was a considerable benefactor to the abbey. He instituted a weekly Jesus Mass, and acquired for the abbey the rents necessary to endow it and ensure its permanence. He was buried in the Lady Chapel of the abbey church, and endowed a chantry and obit there; he also acquired further rents, and granted them to the Lady Chapel for the maintenance of singers there. Details are given in what appears to be an epitaph composed for him - but the hexameters are so lame, and the manuscript so damaged, that it almost totally defies translation. It seems to indicate that at his own expense, abbot William, "augmenting the praises of Holy Mary", acquired rents yielding ten marks a year in order to enrich the performance of Lady Mass; for two singing men he provided three marks each (40s), and for four boys one mark each.¹ The singing men clearly were only part-time

1. Monasticon, vol.3, p.50.

singers, as was usual in Lady Chapel choirs; 40s. p.a. was the maximum salary paid to the clerks of the Lady Chapel choir at Worcester Cathedral.¹ It would be interesting to know more about this choir; it is the earliest example yet traced of a Lady Chapel choir founded from the outset for both men and boys. There is a temptation to associate this new departure with the growth of polyphonic music calling for both men's and boys' voices; but no categorical conclusion can be reached on the tenuous information so far available.

6.3.2. The modernisation of old-established choral institutions.

This newly-created species of music, choral polyphony for mixed voices, required for its performance a minimum of resources much more extensive than the old composed polyphony which could be rendered by just a handful of solo singers. Once again, therefore, the old-established institutions found themselves in a situation where fresh developments in the music of the church were making demands which could only be met by changes in their choral structure. Indeed, in the general dearth of newly-founded institutions at this period, the major effects on the choirs of these new musical departures are observable most clearly in the modifications which they were seen to require in the constitutions of the old-established choirs.

6.3.2.A. Totally recast choral forces:- collegiate churches.

A small-scale example of the total reforging of the choral forces supplied at a collegiate church at this period is provided by the college of the Holy Trinity, Pleshey, Essex. This had been founded in 1395 by Thomas, duke of Gloucester, as a chantry college of a warden and seven priests, with just token numbers of ministri inferiores - two clerks and two choristers.² Clearly, the principal emphasis of such an institution was the recitation of chantry masses; but at some point prior to the 1520's this emphasis was superseded by one which placed a higher value on the due performance of the totality of the Opus Dei, and by 1527 it was a matter for pride that "divine service is right wele and honourably kept withinoure Collegiate church of plecy"³. In keeping with this change of values, the choral force had undergone a thorough recasting. A Hall Book for one term of the year 1530 shows that by then the college still retained its master and seven priests, together with

1. See above, pp. 4081-2.

2. See above, p. 4010.

3. PRO DL 12 44/2.

an expanded choral force of five clerks and six choristers.¹ Hereby merely token numbers of clerks and choristers had been transformed into a small but effective choir; and the boys at least were sufficiently competent for the Master of the college to feel obliged to secure from the King a grant of immunity protecting the choristers from being requisitioned for other choirs.²

However, the most striking example of the refoundation of the choir of a collegiate church, to provide it with the resources now necessary to perform modern church music, was that effected between 1475 and 1482 by Edward 4 at St. George's Chapel, Windsor. As has been seen, St. George's seems to have managed to keep itself fully abreast of developments in liturgical music during the 15th century, adapting its clerkships to accommodate expert lay clerks, raising their salaries to levels appropriate to career singing-men, cultivating polyphonic music, creating the post of organist, and appointing a clerk as Instructor of the Choristers.³ This much the college could contrive to do within its original constitution of 13 priest-vicars, 4 clerks and 6 choristers.

The developments which began in the 1450's or 1460's, however, must have drawn attention to the fact that there was a limit to which an essentially medieval choir could be adapted to meet the changing demands of religious music; and that by c.1470, that limit was beginning to be reached. Four clerks, six choristers, and as many of the priest-vicars as were competent simply could not supply any rendering of music composed as choral polyphony that was satisfactory for an important and prominent religious institution, of royal foundation and under royal patronage. In fact, over the 125 years that had elapsed since the foundation of the college and the fitting out of its chapel, St. George's had been altogether left far behind by the scale on which the finest of more recent collegiate foundations were being conceived, in terms both of the grandeur of their chapel buildings, and of the

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1. PRO DL 28 33/11, no.113. The college staff was completed by a cook (Robert Newman) and a laundress (Mother Strache).
 2. PRO DL 12 44/2, (dated 25 August 1527), transcribed in full as Appendix C6 below, p. A060. By analogy with developments at Rushworth College 1485-1501 (see below, p. 6043) it is possible that the enlarged number of choristers maintained at Pleshey was inaugurated c.1498, in connection with the foundation of an endowed school in the town, possibly associated with the college:- N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages, p.313, and PRO DL 38 4, m.2r.
 3. See above, pp. 4045-6, 5048, 5049, 5067, 5091-12, 5097-9.

number of their staff. By 1460 the rise of Eton College, 'richly endowed, bustling with up to 200 personnel,^{and} dominated by the almost completed choir of the immense chapel building which was projected, must have been providing an especially painful contrast, standing as it did a bare half mile from Windsor Castle, and fully visible from its north aspect. Beside this, the college of St. George - with its mere 30-odd permanent staff, housed in a diminutive quadrangle and some elderly apartments, worshipping in a tiny chapel 70' x 28' and well over 200 years old, its income barely one-third of that enjoyed by its neighbour - must have looked pretty shoddy, hardly befitting the chapel of the headquarters of the noblest order of chivalry in the land, the president of which was the King himself.

Edward 4 certainly considered this situation to be an affront to his dignity, and at the beginning of his reign succeeded in suppressing Eton College altogether, and in annexing its revenue to St. George's. Eventually he relented, and by 1469, Eton's future existence was once again assured - though on so greatly reduced an income that it had ceased to be a rival.¹ By 1473, Edward 4 had decided to replace the old St. George's Chapel with a magnificent new building, and himself to re-endow the College to enable it to maintain its new dignity. The work of clearing the site for the new chapel began in May or June 1475; actual building began in March 1477. The old chapel had been just a choir and a porch, and that was all; the new chapel was to be built on the large scale, to an impressive and unusual design incorporating both an enclosed choir and an expansive nave. It was to be embellished throughout with the finest workmanship available in stone, wood and iron². And even before the great building began to rise, thought must have been taken to ensure that the worship of God, for which it was being created, would be conducted within it in a manner which befitted its sumptuous and luxurious setting. The King could hardly fail to appreciate the desirability of equipping the new St. George's - of

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1. H. Maxwell-Lyte, A History of Eton College, pp.61-7. Maxwell-Lyte considered that Eton struggled through this period without a break; the College's own archives make it plain, however, that it was suppressed in September 1465, and not revived until December 1466. See below, pp. A042-3.
 2. The building of the new St. George's Chapel 1475-1508 is chronicled in W. St.J. Hope, Windsor Castle, pp.375-84.

which he wished himself to be considered the founder, and in which his body was eventually to rest - with a choral establishment to match its architectural splendour.

One preliminary move essential to the augmentation of the choir was the securing of the necessary finance. Between 1475 and 1477 the King added seven manors and a church to the endowment, worth some £280 p.a.¹; this was money immediately available, though at first it was apparently to help pay for the building of the new chapel. Also, in February 1475, Edward annexed and appropriated to the College the Hospital of St. Anthony, Threadneedle Street, London.² This appropriation was to come into effect only at the next vacancy in the Wardenship of the Hospital; it was expected that this source would yield some £200-£300 p.a. as soon as the necessary vacancy³ could be contrived, and it was to be spent on augmenting the choir.

With the necessary finance being thus taken care of, thought could be taken for the precise manner in which the choir should be enlarged, and salaries so improved as to be attractive to the very best talent available. An initial draft scheme had been worked out as early as 20 June 1475, and was incorporated into the terms of a will made that day by Edward 4; it provided for the augmentation of the choir by 10 priest-vicars, 6 lay-clerks and 4 choristers.⁴ Late in the following year, this scheme, slightly amended by the addition of 7 choristers rather than 4, was costed out at St. George's itself. Onto a summary of the college's income and outgoings for the year ending Michaelmas 1476, another hand has sketched out the expense involved in this projected scheme of augmentation. It was proposed to increase the salaries of the 13 existing priest-vicars by £2 to £10 p.a. each; and those of the 4 existing clerks by £2.13. 4d. to £8. p.a. each. To the existing foundation were to be added 16 men:- 10 priest-vicars at £13.16. 8d. p.a. each and 6 'gentilmen Clerkes' at £10 p.a. each; and 7 choristers, at the existing choristers' salary of £3. 6. 8d. p.a. each. The choir thus projected would consist of a very highly-paid body of 23 priest-vicars, 10 lay clerks and 13 choristers:- 33 men and 13 boys. In the absence of anyone in deacon's orders, there was also to be a

1. These items, and their revenue, are listed on WndDC xi B 26

2. CPR 1467-77, p.484.

3. WndDC xi B 26.

4. ed. S. Bentley, Excerpta Historica, p.375.

priest to read the gospel at Mass, paid £6.13. 4d. p.a. This whole elaborate scheme would have cost over £280 p.a. in salaries alone.¹

In terms of overall numbers, this scheme was, in fact, eventually put into effect. For a start, it was plain that the number of men's voices was going to be increased substantially; and in order to preserve musical balance, the number of boys' voices would have to be raised as well. This, of course was an entirely new consideration. Under previous circumstances, the ratio of boys' voices to men's had not mattered at all, since the only type of music which they had ever sung together was choral monophonic plainsong, in which it would not have mattered if the boys had been barely audible. However, modern conditions demanded that the St. George's choir be so reconstructed as to permit the regular singing of choral polyphony involving boys' voices; it was essential, therefore, that a satisfactory balance be created. The proposal to increase the boys from 6 to 13 was sound, therefore, and was eventually carried out.

So too was the increase in men's voices from 17 to over 30. However, what the original scheme omitted to take into account was the fact that under modern conditions, what really was needed was not more priests, but more lay-clerks. Contemporary music required of its performers true professional virtuosity, which was most likely to be found among the class of professional lay singers, and not among men in priest's orders. This fact was eventually recognised by the manner in which the augmentation was actually carried out.

Two distinct stages appear to have been decided upon, the first to be financed mainly out of the income expected to arrive from the appropriation of St. Anthony's Hospital. There still survives a document, undated but detailing arrangements apparently made in 1477, concerning the expenditure of this income; it was to be devoted to increasing the salaries of the existing staff, and to the recruitment of the first instalment of extra personnel, consisting of all seven choristers, 7 lay-clerks - and no priests. These were to be 'persones wele chosen in good maners voyse and kunnyng ...able in voyce and kunnyng to rede and syng in the said place'.² As a first stage in the augmentation of the choir, this was certainly a more realistic appreciation of the

1. WndDC xv 3 11; cf. Treasurer's A/c 1475/6, xv 34 53. On the former document this whole entry is now very faded; it concludes with two further entries, covering six lines which are too faint to read without U/V light.

2. WndDC xi B 26.

manner in which it could best be effected, and it was on these lines that expansion began.

In fact, expansion had begun early in 1476, with the appointment of 2 extra choristers and 3 extra clerks¹; after a hiatus, it resumed in September 1477 and by the summer of 1479 the first stage of the scheme was almost realised. The gospeller and the 7 extra clerks were all appointed, and 5 of the 7 extra choristers; and the augmented salaries of all the existing staff had started to be paid on 1st January 1479.² Then the whole project was set back by an unforeseeable hazard; that July the whole area was stricken by plague. The college was evacuated, but not soon enough; by the time the contagion relaxed in September, four vicars, one clerk and four choristers were dead, and services were being attended by a much depleted choir of only 8 vicars, 9 clerks and 5 choristers.³ With vigorous recruiting however, numbers soon began to be made up.⁴ By Michaelmas 1482, the anticipated revenue from St. Anthony's Hospital was rolling in, and the college's income was exceeding £1,000 p.a.; and the achievement of the augmented choir on up-to-date lines had been completed.

By Michaelmas 1482, the number of choristers stood at 13; the men's voices totalled 32. Eventually, it had been decided that the main increase should take place among the lay-clerks; there were now 15 of these, and 17 priest-vicars.⁵ Apparently 15 lay-clerks was considered sufficient for the choir of such a foundation; the extra funds still available were ploughed into a small increase of the sacerdotal staff of the chapel as well, enabling four extra vicars-choral

1. Treasurer's A/c 1475/6:- WndDC xv 34 53; Attendance Register v B 2, pp.91-94.
2. WndDC v B 2, p.111 ff.; xv 34 54-55.
3. WndDC v B 2, p.133 (July 1479); xv 34 55, 57. This visitation of plague appears not to be mentioned directly on any Windsor document, but it was referred to on the Eton College Audit Roll for the following year:- EPF Audit Roll 18 (1479/80): Custus forinseci ..et viij s. iiij d. dat' domino Johanni Lyndesey et domino Penyngton pro laboribus eorum quos sustinuerunt tempore pestis ultimo anno.. . Walter Lambe was a clerk of the St. George's choir at this time, and it is not at all improbable that this was the occasion of his setting the text Stella celi extirpavit (a plea for deliverance from plague) in the Eton Choirbook (ed.F.Ll.Harrison,
4. Treasurer's A/c 1479/80:- WndDC xv 34 58. / no.37)
5. Treasurer's A/c 1482/3:- WndDC xv 34 59. The number of vicars is given in the Custus obituum section, when up to 17 were present on occasions; and 17 names were recorded on the vicars' payment roll for January 1483:- WndDC xi B 25.

to be recruited. This, however, proved to be slightly over-ambitious, and after October 1492 the full complement of vicars was reduced to 16.¹ As part of the reconstitution of the choir, there was restored that special provision for the due and proper celebration of High Mass which had been written into the original statutes, but which the evolution of the choir had caused to lapse. A separate priest was appointed to the chapel staff to read the gospel at High Mass; his annual salary was £6.13. 4d.² Also, of the 15 lay clerks, two were paid only £6.13. 4d. p.a. instead of the £10 received by the other clerks; on one account their salaries were described as being pro lectura epistole³. These then were 'epistolers'; it is probable, therefore, that they should not be reckoned in with the fully professional singing clerks. There had been salary increases across the board. Vicars' salaries were raised from £8 to £10 p.a.; the lay-clerks were also paid £10 p.a.; choristers' salaries rose from £3. 6. 8d. to £4 p.a. The fee paid to the clerk or clerks acting as organist returned from 16s. 8d. to 20s. p.a.; that paid to the Instructor of the Choristers rose from £1. 6. 8d. to £3. 6. 8d. p.a.⁴

Thus Edward 4's complete refoundation of the college of St. George involved not only the rebuilding of its chapel, but also a major remodelling of its choir - increasing its numbers, improving their pay, streamlining the duties of its individual members and officers, and adapting its internal composition. The total choral staff was eventually settled at 16 vicars-choral; 1 gospeller; 13 lay-clerks (of whom one acted as organist, and another as Instructor of the Choristers); 2 epistolers; and 13 choristers. With this highly paid team of some 42-45 voices, so constituted as to be able to perform anything the composers could produce, St. George's was now equipped with a magnificent new chapel, an immense collection of relics, plate, vestments, images and equipment of all kinds⁵, and a large balanced choir; such provision could hardly fail to satisfy any king's need for a conspicuous display of the wealth, resources and creative talent at his disposal in the ordering of the daily and festal services of the principal religious foundation under his patronage.

1. Custus obituum on Treasurer's A/c 1492/3:- WndDC xv 34 66.

2. First appointed at Michaelmas 1477, and known (despite being in priest's orders) as 'the deacon', or as 'the gospeller'.

3. Treasurer's A/c 1496/7:- WndDC xv 34 70.

4. Most of these increases came into force on 1 January 1479, and all were in effect by Michaelmas 1482:- WndDC xv 34 55,59.

5. Inventory of 1501, printed by M.F. Bond, The Inventories of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, pp.148-166.

6.3.2.B. The promotion of choirs of mixed voices.

St. George's Chapel, Windsor, is a very clear, and uncommonly well documented, example of an old-established choir which underwent a major transformation at this time to enable it to keep abreast of the demands of all types of music then being composed. The same stimulus caused other choirs also to be radically altered in constitution to enable them to tackle the new music. None enjoyed the royal patronage which made possible the sheer size of the Windsor operation; there the King was seeking to create a choral institution which was the equal of any in the country. Other patrons could not contemplate the creation of major new choirs; their ambitions were more modest.

For the most part the beneficiaries of their work were choirs which as they stood, were in perfectly good working order, according to the old criteria, but which were constituted in such a way that the new musical trends were causing them to appear incomplete. Prior to c.1460 polyphonic music had been written for men's voices only; thereafter, it began to be composed for mixed choirs of men and boys. To tackle this music, therefore, choirs which consisted of men's voices only had to be completed by the addition of a team of boys. At the same time, most monastery Lady Chapel choirs consisted only of boys, with just a single man, the Cantor. Prior to this period all such choirs must have been content to sing only plainsong and improvised descant - and no doubt, many continued to attempt no more than this until well beyond the end of the 15th century. However, all the best-equipped Lady Chapel choirs already enjoyed the services of a skilled musician as Cantor and Instructor, so the boys could certainly be taught to sing more demanding music; and by this time certain of the members of the monastery itself also seem to have been prepared to become similarly competent in mensural music. At the more ambitious Lady Chapel choirs, therefore, resources similarly became available to make possible the singing of the full three-octave polyphony.

(i) The addition of boys' voices to choirs of men.

Two instances are known in which benefactors added complete teams of singing boys to colleges which originally had not been provided with any at all. The collegiate church of Mettingham in Suffolk was founded in 1350 by Sir John Norwich, and had already been twice refounded by 1394

when its staff numbered a master and 12 chaplains.¹ The college was well-endowed, and polyphonic music had been cultivated there at least in the early 15th century.² By 1535 a team of 14 boys "educated and serving God there" had been added to the college³; when they had first been established there is not known, but they were mentioned in wills of 1506 and 1517⁴, so the late 15th century seems a plausible suggestion. In the early 19th century, copies of pieces of music from the college chapel were said still to be in existence⁵, and the college's accounts for 1514/5 are wrapped in a single leaf of paper containing the bass part of a single polyphonic votive antiphon in florid style.⁶ The accounts and registers of the college survive apparently virtually intact in the British Museum, and examination of them might reveal a flourishing choir at this obscure institution.

Possibly less successful was a similar scheme applied at the small college of Rushworth in Norfolk, founded in 1341 by Sir Edmund de Gonville for a master and four chaplains. In 1485 the endowment was enlarged by the munificence of Anne, Lady Wingfield, and between 1485 and 1501 she added to the foundation seven boys 'to be taught the service of God in the church' and to learn grammar at the grammar school which she also established there.⁷ This scheme for adding choristers to the performance of the chapel services does not seem to have been very productive - but this was less because the idea was unsound, than because of the generally slipshod manner in which the college was later run.⁸

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1. J.C. Cox in VCH Norfolk, vol.2, pp.457-8; VCH Suffolk, vol.2, pp.144-5.
 2. C.R. Manning, "Extracts from the Ancient Accounts of Mettingham College, Suffolk", 6 Archaeological Journal (1849), pp.64-5.
 3. VE vol.3, p.431. There had been a grammar school in Mettingham since 1455 at least, but it is not known if this was connected with the college:- BM Add. MS.33986, ff.110r., 117r., 124r.130v.etc.
 4. A. Suckling, The History and Antiquities of the county of Suffolk, vol.1. pp.177,181.
 5. ibid., p.177.
 6. B.M. Add. MS 33989, ff.128,142.
 7. J.C.Cox in VCH Norfolk, vol.2, p.459, and references there quoted.
 8. ed. A. Jessopp, Visitations in the Diocese of Norwich, pp.91-2, 156-7, 244-6, 304-6.

In circumstances similar to these two colleges were the two Lady Chapel choirs at St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, and Worcester Cathedral. At both these institutions the Lady Chapel choirs had been established during the 14th century; at Worcester Cathedral the total staff of the choir consisted just of three adult lay-clerks, and the dimensions of the Bristol choir were probably similar.¹ No matter how efficiently these choirs may have been operating in the mid-15th century, the developments of the last third of the century produced composed music which they simply did not have the resources to sing. Both institutions proved able to meet this challenge, by the addition to the existing men's voices of a team of boys.

In c.1374 the Lady Chapel choir at St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, had consisted of just a small group of clerks, possibly not exceeding three in number; thereafter nothing is known of its development until 1491/2, for which year there survives the earliest of four complete sets of the accounts of all the obedientiaries of the Abbey.² At Bristol Abbey there was no separate Warden of the Lady Chapel; instead, the Treasurer transferred to the Almoner a lump sum of £12 p.a., and the Cellarer 15 quarters of wheat (which was sold for some £4-£5); out of these receipts the Almoner met the expenses of maintaining the Lady Chapel choir.³

1. See above, chapter 4, pp. 4081-2, 4084.

2. The accounts for 1491/2 and 1511/2 have been printed:- ed. G. Beachcroft and A. Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls of St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, 9 Bristol Record Society (1938); the 1491/2 a/c is now in the archives of Bristol Cathedral, that for 1511/2 is now BAO MS 24110. The accounts for 1503/4 and 1506/7 are now GRO D 674a Z3, Z5; extracts from these appear in A. Sabin, "Compotus Rolls of St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol", 73 Transactions of Bristol and Gloucestershire Archeological Society (1954) pp.192-206. A.F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England, p.226, quoted from an account of 1493; the original appears to be lost, and Leach's extracts apparently come from transcriptions in J. Britton, Cathedral Antiquities (1833) - see VCH Gloucestershire, vol2, p.360.

3. ed. G. Beachcroft and A. Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls..., pp.184, 185, 196,197,266,267; GRO D 674a Z3, Z5. Almost certainly the boys resided in the Almonry, as Almonry boys, in the usual way; the lay-clerks may have done so also.

The constitution of the choir as it stood by the end of the 15th century seems to show that it was then composed of the small team of lay clerks of long establishment, to which had subsequently been added a team of singing-boys; one of the clerkships was turned over to a skilled Cantor as their Instructor. The full complement of boys stood at six, the number recorded in 1503/4 and 1506/7.¹ When the team of boys was added is not known, though it is possible that this process was still only under way in 1491/2. In that year three boys of the chapel were recorded on one part of the account, five on another, and it is possible that during that year the full number of six was still in process of being recruited; one new recruit was a boy from Windsor, escorted to Bristol at a cost of 20d.²

If there had been three lay-clerks in the original Lady Chapel choir, then they were retained complete while the boys were added. The most senior was known as "Cantor and Master of the Boys of the Lady Chapel"³; he received free board, and a salary of 40s. p.a. in 1491/2, 53s. 4d. p.a. by 1503/4 and 66s. 8d. p.a. by 1511/2.⁴ If these men may be identified with certain known namesakes, then they were not without distinction; they included William Muldar (1503), later chaplain of the Chapel Royal (1511-20)⁵; William Lentall (1506/7), later Instructor of the Choristers at Cardinal Wolsey's Ipswich College (1528)⁶; and Richard Bramston (1511/2), composer, vicar-choral of Wells 1507-9, 1515-54, and Instructor of the Choristers there 1507-8, ?1515-31.⁷

The second clerk was referred to as the succentor capelle. He received free board, and 40s. p.a. in 1491/2 and 1503/4, rising to 53s. 4d. p.a. by 1511/12.⁸ The third clerk, receiving free board and

1. GRO D 674a Z3,Z5. In 1511/12 there were only four boys (G. Beachcroft and A.Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls... pp.191,197; BAO MS 24110), despite the apparently successful expedition of Richard Bramston, then Master of the Lady Chapel choir, to kidnap a boy named Farr, "one of our best queresters" from Wells Cathedral in February 1510 - WlsDC Liber Ruber, part 2, fo.173v.
2. G. Beachcroft and A. Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls...pp.190, 192.
3. ibid., p.192:- Et in denariis solutis Willelmo Thorne Cantori capelle beate Marie et Magistro puerorum eiusdem Capelle xl s.
4. ibid., pp.192,193; GRO D 674a Z3.
5. GRO D 674a Z3; PRO LC 2/1 fo.170r., PRO SP 1 19 fo.267v. (as Sir John Muldre).
6. GRO D 674a Z5; H. Ellis, Original Letters...., first series vol.1, p.185.
7. G. Beachcroft and A. Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls...pp.191,193.; BAO MS 24110. WlsDC Liber Ruber, part 2, ff.140v., 147r., 150r., 165r., 173v.; Charters 749, 750. WlsVC, MSS B111,126,158. ed. F.W. Weaver, Somerset Medieval Wills 1531-58, p.153.
8. GRO D 674a Z3; G. Beachcroft and A. Sabin, Two Compotus Rolls...pp.192,193.

only 20s. or 26s. 8d. p.a. must have been considered as enjoying only part-time employment. Indeed, he was described as 'singer' (cantor) only on the account for 1511/2; elsewhere he was described as the Almoner's servant, which probably explains how he spent the rest of his time. Henry Blackburn, almoner's servant in 1503/4 had been promoted to succentor capelle by 1506/7; John Peryn, almoner's servant in 1491/2, can probably be identified with John [surname lost], a singer recruited from Windsor that year. These identifications permit the recognition of the serviens elemosinarii as regularly being a member of the Lady Chapel choir, and its third clerk.¹

This choir, therefore, consisted of three clerks (one of them being Instructor of the singing-boys), and six boys - and perhaps any canons of the abbey who might have been competent. The account rolls contain no specific account of their duties, and no Indenture of Appointment for any of the successive Masters of the choir has been found; no doubt these duties revolved round the daily celebration of Lady Mass, and perhaps the evening votive antiphon. New music was regularly added to the choir's repertoire. 3d. was spent on the purchase of paper for writing out music in 1491/2²; 2s. on copying various sequences (? for Lady Mass) and seculorum in 1503/4³, and 2s. 8d. for copying settings of the Mass and repairing books in 1506/7.⁴ At Christmas 1506 a tip of 3s. 4d. was given to the men and boys of the choir of Gaunt's Hospital, Bristol, for services unspecified.⁵

1. ibid., pp.190,191,192, 193, 196, 197; GRO D 674a Z3, Z5.

2. ibid., p.192.

3. Et pro notificacione diversarum sequentiarum et sec'lorum hoc anno ij s. :- GRO D 674a Z3.

4. Et pro notificacione diversarum missarum ibidem hoc anno unacum reparacione diversorum librorum hoc anno ij s. viij d. :- GRO D 674a Z5.

5. Et in regardis datis viris et pueris de Gauntz in festo Natalis domini hoc anno iij s. iiij d. :- ibid.

The Lady Chapel choir at Worcester Cathedral underwent a rather more complicated transformation, though the nett result was the same - a choir originally consisting of only a few men was turned into one of both men and boys, able to sing full 3-octave polyphony in up to four or five parts.

It has already been observed that the Worcester Cathedral Lady Chapel choir consisted basically of just a team of lay-clerks, three in number until 1430. Boys were available, and could be added to the gentlemen as need or fashion dictated; this sporadic use of boys' voices was, however, discontinued altogether after 1424¹. Until 1430, the composition of the choir continued to stand at three lay-clerks; thereafter a change in its constitution becomes apparent. In 1434/5 only 2 lay-clerks appear on the account of the Warden of the Chapel; in 1435/6 two again; and then briefly, in 1436/7, only one.² Whatever the reasons for this development, it appears that the places of the missing lay-clerks may have been taken by certain of the monks themselves; for in 1434/5 sums of money, sometimes of considerable size, began to be laid out on rewards paid to monks of the priory for singing at service in the chapel.³ At the same time tips and gratuities continued to be paid to visiting clerks for singing in the chapel⁴. Whatever the circumstances, therefore, it appears that from the 1430's onwards, certain of the monks were beginning to take both an interest and a part in the singing of the services in the nave Lady Chapel.

Between 1437 and c.1460, an unfortunate gap in information about

1. See above, pp. 4087-9.

2. WorDC C279, 279a, 280.

3. *ibid.*, e.g. C279:- In iantaculis factis confratribus cantantibus in Capella post natalem et post festum pasche ij s. j d. In expensis confratrum in festo oblacionis beate marie xj d. In donis datis diversis confratribus cantantibus in Capella hoc anno ix s. vj d.

4. e.g. WorDC C279 (1434/5):- In expensis factis circa dominum thomam Shyngler dominum Thomam boydon et Ricardum Synger de Malmesbury cantantes in Capella hoc anno ad diversas vices xxij d.; C279a (1435/6):- item in expensis factis circa dominum Thomam Combar et dominum Thomam Singeler et Johannem Dardes et Willelmum Soresby ad diversas vices ij s. iij d. William Soresby may perhaps be a mistake for John Soursby, Instructor of the Choristers at St. Mary, Warwick 1432-49 (ed. D.Styles, Ministers' Accounts of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick, pp.6, 22); John Dardes was polyphony-clerk of Eton College and Instructor of the Choristers there during the last three months of 1446:- EPF Audit Roll 2 (1446/7), Stipendia clericorum.

the Lady Chapel choir occurs¹; but thereafter, the sources turn out to be unusually rich. Between 1467 and 1476, the lay staff of the chapel continued to be maintained at just two permanent lay-clerks; indeed, after 1430, it is not known to have returned to three at any time. Payments to monks of the priory for singing at service in the chapel also continued to be made regularly; certain times of year were particularly mentioned, such as Easter week, and the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple.²

Further, the special aptitude of boys' voices for enriching the celebration of Lady Mass, as demonstrated by the Lady Chapel choirs of boys' voices at other monasteries, was again being recognised at Worcester by the 1460's. This was a relatively simple matter since, as has been observed, boys were readily available from the monastery's own Almonry School.³ A single singing-boy was maintained out of the Lady Chapel's own endowments during 1467/8 and 1469/70⁴. On the accounts for 1474/5 and 1475/6, the singing-boys were mentioned in the plural; however, the purchase of only four yards of cloth for their gowns indicates that in these years there were not more than two of them.⁵ Unfortunately, the accounts of this period reveal no information about the precise duties of these singing-boys in the chapel; however, there was only a token number of them, and in the absence of any skilled cantor of the type employed in more orthodox Lady Chapel choirs, it is unlikely that the boys tackled any music more demanding than just the plainsong of Lady Mass.

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1. The only reference to the clerks of the Lady Chapel yet found for this period is their receipt of 4s. paid to them as a gift by prior John Hertylbury in 1452/3:- WorDC C399: item Clericis Capelleiiiij s.
 2. WorDC C281-4; e.g. C284 (1475/6):- Et in expensis dicti computantis et fratrum suorum ac Clericorum Capelle in ebdomada Pasche et in festo oblacionis beate marie in templo hoc anno viij s. vij d.
 3. See above, pp. 4086, 4087-8.
 4. e.g. 1467/8 (WorDC C281):- In Panno Laneo empto pro vestura Clericorum dicte Capelle unacum vestura j pueri in dicta Capella cantantis xxvj s. viij d. In Camisiis Caligis Sotularibus tunicis et aliis necessariis emptis ad usum j pueri cantantis in dicta capella ultra vesturam supra xvj s. During 1469/70 William Clowze was succeeded as singing-boy of the chapel by Richard Carpynter; Carpynter had become one of the lay-clerks of the chapel by 1475/6:- WorDC C282, 284.
 5. WorDC C283, 284.

The replacement of one lay-clerk by certain of the monks does not seem to have adversely affected the music of the Lady Chapel at all. Certainly it was flourishing in the early 1460's. Out of the endowments of his office, the Cellarer discharged much of the priory's obligations to pay tips and rewards to any who performed small services in its favour, both among visitors and among the priory's own permanent lay staff of all kinds; and John Smethwyk, cellarer 1462-66, had his accountant record the payment of these tips in more than usual detail.¹ Among the recipients of these tips were the clerks of the Lady Chapel; and they, it is clear, were being kept quite busy at this time in procuring and performing new music at service in the chapel. In 1463/4 Simon Syngar of Gloucester was given 20d. either for writing or supplying a new piece of music; and 20d. was given to the Warden of the Lady Chapel to reward the singing of a setting in 'squarenote'.² The following year Edmund Syngar was given a total of 5s. 6d. for the composition of two new settings of the mass,³ and the next year, Edmund Hewes, probably the same man, was given 6s. 8d. for either composing or procuring a setting of some text in 'squarenote'.⁴ The next year on again, 1466/7, the Cellarer made a gift of 12d. to the clerks of the Lady Chapel, for unspecified activities.⁵

By this same period, it was already an established custom for the clerks [of the Lady Chapel] to sing the Marian antiphon Salve Regina before her image [in the chapel] each evening during Lent; for this they received payment of 3s. 4d. in 1464/5⁶. In 1475/6 the Lady Chapel singers procured a copy of a setting of Honor virtus as used by the household chapel of George, Duke of Clarence; it was to be sung at the

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1. Smethwyk's accounts are WorDC C95, 96, 492a and possibly C846.
 2. WorDC C492a:- item dat' Simoni Syngar de Gloucestr' causa novi cantici xxd. item in donis datis Magistro Capelle pro le Squarenote cantand' xx d. The heading of this account is damaged and the date cannot now be read. However, the body of the account records the celebration of William Wenlok's first mass during its year of currency, and this can be identified as 1463/4 by the occurrence of the same item on WorDC C337, the Pittancer's A/c for that year.
 3. WorDC C95:- item dat' Edmundo Syngar causa compositionis nove misse ad ij vices v s. vj d.
 4. WorDC C96:- item dat' Edmundo hewes pro eius labore in le squar'note habend' vj s. viij d.
 5. WorDC C97:- Item in donis datis Clericis Capelle beate marie xij d.
 6. Sacrist's A/c, WorDC C498:- Et in rewardis datis Clericis Cantantibus Salve coram sancta maria tempore xlⁱ hoc anno iij s. iiij d. For later references to this practice, see the discussion of the Indenture of John Hampton, 1486, below, pp. 6052-3.

reception of John Alcock, prior to his installation as bishop of Worcester that year.¹ The chief of the two lay-clerks, Richard Grene², was referred to as organista on the Custos Capelle accounts of 1475/6 - 1483/4; this may mean either 'organist', or 'singer of polyphonic music', or both - but in any event it is further evidence of musical capacity among the staff of the Lady Chapel choir.³

Evidently, therefore, during the dozen years or so between 1463 and 1476, the Lady Chapel choir - now apparently consisting of two lay clerks, one or two competent monks, and one or two singing boys - continued to thrive perfectly well despite its diminutive size, and its part-time nature,⁴ expanding its repertoire and presumably maintaining its competence. With only a handful of solo men's voices, that is, and lacking a full team of boys, it was in a perfectly healthy state. Worcester, however, was not immune from contemporary trends, and these trends must, by the 1470's, have been making this miniature choir look very old-fashioned. Competent it may have been, but music now was being composed which it could not tackle; should an interested patron come along, there was scope for adding to its resources both a permanent team of boys' voices, and the professional Instructor which such a team would need for its training. A sufficiently dedicated benefactor might indeed consider that a thriving choir deserved such modernisation, to enable it to retain its drive and initiative and keep abreast of all developments.

The patron who organised the modernisation of the choir was John Alcock, bishop of Worcester 1476-86. His first move in this direction was to finance the addition of a full team of singing-boys. In 1478 he gave £100 cash to the priory, to be added to the endowments of the Cellarer's office.⁵ Out of the income derived from this investment, the Cellarer was to pay 52s. 0d. p.a. to one of the monks for saying a chantry mass daily on behalf of the bishop; and a further 40s. 0d.

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1. Custos capelle A/c, WorDC C284:- Et sol' pro j Cantico vocato honor virtus habito in capella domini ducis Clarencie ad recipiendum episcopum erga installacionem suam ij s.
 2. Grene was a married layman, who, with his wife Joan, took a lease on a house within the monastery precinct in 1469:- Register of Thomas Musard, prior - WorDC A 6(i), fo.54v.
 3. WorDC C284-6:- Stipendia: et in stipendio Ricardi Grene Organiste xl s.
 4. The lay-clerks were still being paid salaries not exceeding 40s. p.a.
 5. Charter dated 17 December 1478:- WorDC A6(1), fo.81v. The transcription in I. Atkins, Early Occupants... pp.6-7 is materially accurate.

to the Warden of the Lady Chapel, to be added to the chapel's existing income¹. In return for this latter sum, the prior and convent agreed that each day thenceforth, following the conclusion of vespers in the monks' choir, the Warden of the Lady Chapel, with the clerks and boys of the chapel, would gather there to sing an appropriate votive antiphon to the Virgin - either the antiphon Stelle claritatis, or the responsory O Maria et Johannes with its verse and Gloria patri followed by prayers for the faithful departed and the psalm De profundis.

Bishop Alcock thus inaugurated a daily Marian votive antiphon in the Lady Chapel, and the Warden's accounts thenceforth duly record the receipt from the Cellarer of his 40s. p.a. Doubtless by prior arrangement, the Warden spent this sum on increasing the number of singing-boys. The total number of Almonry boys at this time is not known, but it seems unlikely to have been very different from the 14 who were maintained there in 1535.² Out of these, 6 served as Lady Chapel singing-boys in 1479/80, 4 in 1480/1, 5 in 1483/4 and a full team of 8 from 1486 onwards.³ These late-15th century singing-boys were evidently more closely involved with the work of the Lady Chapel choir than their predecessors of the early part of the century had been, and their greater work deserved greater recompense. The Warden of the Chapel appears to have relieved the Almoner completely of the cost of maintaining the singing-boys in clothing etc., and when the kitchen left-overs were insufficient to feed all the Almonry boys, the Warden of the Chapel met the bill for feeding those who were also his singing-boys.⁴

Alcock meanwhile was proceeding with his modernisation of the whole Lady Chapel establishment. He rebuilt the chapel itself, on its established site by the Red Door in the nave of the church⁵; and he continued his reorganisation of the choir. This depended on finance; the newly-established team of singing-boys needed a skilled Instructor, but none could be hired until there was enough money to pay him. Alcock therefore steadily bought bits of property in Worcester, and added them to the endowments of the Lady Chapel⁶; including the 40s. p.a. from the

1. Alcock's provisions came into effect immediately, and subsequent Cellarer's A/cs duly record the payment of these two sums by the Cellarer to their respective recipients:- WorDC C98, 100,488, 103,105.
2. VE, vol.3pp.226-7
3. WorDC C285, 285a, 286: A 6(1) fo.82r., A 6(2) fo.127v.
4. Custos Capelle A/cs 1467 onwards:- WorDC 281-291.
5. WorDC A 6(1), fo.82r.; A/c Cellarer 1495/6, WorDC C105.
6. e.g. Custos Capelle A/c 1480/1 (WorDC C285a) included a new item:- a receipt of 20s. de redditu unius tenementi et ij Shoparum in Wodestathestrete at le keyenstrete que dominus Episcopus nunc dedit ad officium Magistri Capelle; the Custos Capelle A/c.1483/4 (WorDC C286) includes another new item:- receipt of 15s. de redditu unius tenementi situati ad Corneram venelle ducentis versus le key ex dono dicti domini Episcopi.

Cellarer, Alcock thereby increased the Chapel's income by some £10 p.a. from £16. 5. 10½d. in 1475/6 to £26. 5. 6d. in 1489/90.¹

By 1484 sufficient cash was at last available. In June that year then then senior lay clerk, Richard Grene organista left the cathedral scene. He was the last of the part-time lay clerks of medieval origin and nature, whose maximum salary had been only £2 p.a., plus an annual livery of a gown. He was replaced by a fully-paid Cantor, John Hampton, described on an account of 1489/90 as 'organist and instructor of the boys of the Lady Chapel'.² Just before Alcock's translation to the see of Ely in 1486, Hampton's duties and rewards were written into his indenture of appointment, dated 30 July 1486.³

His annual salary added up to £8 p.a.⁴ His duties in return for this included some functions in choir with the monks; on major feasts, called at Worcester the "seven feasts"⁵, he was to be present with them at services in the monks' choir, and at the solemn processions. The great bulk of his work, however, concerned the Lady Chapel in the nave, and its choir. He was to attend at and supervise (observare) the Lady Mass celebrated there daily; at the mass of the Name of Jesus, celebrated every Friday; at the Marian antiphon Salve Regina sung every day during Lent; and at the Jesus antiphon sung every Friday during Lent.

Hampton was also responsible for teaching the eight boys of the chapel. He was to instruct the boys to sing both plainsong, and composed polyphony from the written page:- in plano cantu et fracto viz Pryked song.

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1. WorDC C284, 288. This is something of an over-simplification. Assized rents at this time were being calculated on an old and out-of-date rental - so out-of-date that on every account the redditus assisae sum on the Recepte had to be severely modified by a large, and growing, allocaciones et defectus on the Expense. Eventually, in 1499, a new rental was at last drawn up (now WorDC C852). Calculations taking this factor into account show that the actual increase in annual revenue over the period 1476-1489 was £11.7. 2½d., of which at least £8. 1. 8d. p.a. is known to have been supplied by various initiatives attributable to John Alcock.
 2. ...in stipendio Johannis Hampton organiste ac instructoris puerorum Capelle beate marie viij li.:— Custos Capelle A/c., WorDC C288.
 3. WorDC A 6(1), fo.82r.; transcription in I. Atkins, The early occupants..., pp.12-13.
 4. This was to consist of £3.13. 4d. p.a. cash from the Warden of the Lady Chapel, and a double corrody of bread and ale from the Cellarer. The Lady Chapel accounts purport to show that the Warden bought the corrody from Hampton for £4. 6. 8d. p.a.; probably, however, this was just an accounting device to cater for the receipt of cash, instead of kind, from the Cellarer in the first place.
 5. Actually, they numbered 13:- MMS, p.186 and fn.2.

Hampton's indenture also mentioned particularly that the boys were to gather in the Lady Chapel each evening on the completion of Vespers in the monks' choir, to sing there the daily Marian antiphon (Stelle claritatis or O Maria et Johannes) inaugurated by bishop Alcock in 1478; once a quarter they were also to sing Requiem Mass for the souls of the faithful departed.

These terms differed in no substantial manner from the duties expected of the Master of the Lady Chapel choir at monasteries where the choir had actually originated as one composed of just a Cantor and a team of boys. The major exception was, of course, that Hampton was required to teach his boys prick-song; the ability to read and sing from the mensural notation in which composed polyphony was written had never been expected of boys prior to this period, but contemporary composers were now demanding that this be undertaken.¹

Finding the money required to pay Hampton's salary, and to maintain the eight boys in keep and clothing, stretched the Lady Chapel's financial resources to their limit; for a time, the services of the second lay clerk had to be dispensed with in order to make ends meet. Consequently, from the Lady Chapel accounts, it would appear that the choir had now become totally orthodox and consisted of just the Cantor and his team of boys. However, payments to monks of the priory for singing at services in the nave Lady Chapel continued to be made as before²; and what is known of the repertoire of the Lady Chapel choir at this time and later, makes it seem that there must have been among the monks at least three who were competent to sing composed polyphonic music, and did so with the Cantor and the boys to make up a full five-part choir. The identity of none of these monks is revealed by the archives for this particular period; but in the following generation, the monk William Wolverley³ could well have been one of them. He, for instance, was well enough acquainted with polyphonic music to copy out eight five-part settings of Magnificat in 1532, at the expense of the prior,

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1. Both the 1430 and 1448 indentures of John Stele as Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Durham Cathedral Priory required him to teach 'Pryktenote' - but his pupils included adult monks of the priory (illi monachi Dunelmenses) as well as the boys of the Lady Chapel choir, so there is no need to infer from this that the Durham boys were expected to be able to read from mensural notation so early. See above, pp. 4096-7.
 2. WorDC Custos Capelle A/cs, C290,291. Other obedientiaries occasionally made similar payments, e.g. the Almoner 1498/9, WorDC C209:- Et in dono dato ffratribus pro missa beate Marie xij d.
 3. Monk of the priory, appearing on two lists of its inmates of 1525 and 1531 respectively:- WorDC A xii, ff.125r., 135v.

William More¹; and at the Dissolution of the priory in 1540, he became one of the Minor Canons of the New Foundation Cathedral.²

Such a group - even allowing only one voice on each of the four lines for men's voices - would thus have been able to sing the five-part setting of Salve Regina composed by John Hampton, the Master of the Lady Chapel choir, and preserved in the Eton Choirbook.³ It employs the full three-octave range for boys and men, and its polyphony is no less complex and florid than that of any other comparable setting in this manuscript. In 1495, King Henry 7 had 20 shillings paid to "hampton of Wourcester" for making of balades"⁴, so Hampton was a versatile composer. In 1500/1 the Warden of the Lady Chapel spent 20d. on the purchase of paper for copying out settings of music⁵; while in 1505/6 and 1507/8 Hampton and his boys were paid 3s. 4d. for singing carols on Epiphany Eve.⁶

The choir thus appears to have been enterprising and active. Almost certainly this miniature choir in its miniature chapel was capable of tackling any music for up to five parts being composed at this time; and its capacity would have been further increased by the re-appointment, some time between 1504-1514, of the second lay clerk⁷. The choir maintained its momentum right up until the eve of the dissolution. At Michaelmas 1521 Hampton was succeeded as Organplayer et Syngyngman by Daniel Boyce⁸; he immediately began to expand the repertoire with new music in up to five parts, and by 1535 the chapel's collection of composed polyphonic music, as recorded in an inventory made that year, had become very substantial.⁹

1. WorDC A xi, ff.134v.135v.; printed as ed. E.S.Fegan, The Journal of prior William More, pp.347,350.

2. WorDC A cciii, fo.9r.

3. No.22 in ed. F.L. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.2., p.54.

4. PRO E 101 414/6 fo.9r.

5. WorDC C290.

6. WorDC C427-8:- Et computat in regardo dato Johanni hampton in vigillia Epiphanie cantanti pallonod' cum pueris Capelle iij s. iiij d. The translation of pallonod' by "carol" is suggested by the entry in a vocabulary of c.1430:- ed. A.L. Mayhew, Promptorium Parvulorum, pp.71,107:- Carole, songe: Palinodium, - ii, n.

7. Custos Capelle A/c 1514/5, WorDC A xii fo.41r.:- Item solut' Thome Hull cantori conducto hoc anno xx s. Et eidem pro toga xiiij s. iiij d. All surviving Custos Capelle A/cs thereafter record the employment of the second lay-clerk.

8. Custos Capelle A/cs 1520/1, 1521/2:- WorDC A xvii, pp.56, 125. Indenture of appointment in WorDC A(6) 2, fo.127v.; printed in I. Atkins, Early occupants...., pp.16-17.

9. Boyce's additions to the repertoire, and the text of the Inventory of 1535, are given below in Appendix C7, p. A061.

In essence, therefore, bishop Alcock's reorganisation of the Lady Chapel choir between 1478 and 1484 took an institution which was already thriving well enough by its own lights, and - by adding to it the team of boys and a skilled Instructor made necessary by contemporary musical developments - enabled it to keep in the mainstream of musical enterprise.

(ii) The addition of men's voices to choirs of boys.

As has been seen, musical developments now required that wherever possible, choirs have available both men and boys to sing full three-octave composed polyphony. Choirs consisting of men's voices only needed to be augmented by a team of boys, as at Worcester and St. Augustine's Bristol, and Rushworth and Mettingham. Conversely, choirs consisting of boys' voices only needed to be augmented by men. The only choirs in this latter category were the monastic Lady Chapel choirs established since 1400, consisting of just the Cantor and his boys. There were two ways in which the necessary men's voices could be found. A rich institution could afford to hire skilled singing-men from the laity outside the monastery precinct; otherwise, as at Worcester, men's voices could be supplied by certain of the monks themselves.

It seems possible that the deepening awareness of the contribution which music could make to the "beauty of holiness", together with the progressive simplification of mensural notation, was - by the late 15th century - enabling certain of the more enterprising monasteries to restore and establish a practice and tradition of the performance of polyphonic music by the monks themselves. In a reasonably large institution, the initiative and enterprise of one or two determined monks could probably find enough talent to achieve this; and the expertise created thereby could, of course, be placed at the disposal of the Lady Chapel choir (where there was one), to create a polyphonic ensemble of boys, Cantor and a few monks.

One instance of this was the Augustinian abbey of St. Mary de Pratis, Leicester. One William Charite entered this abbey in 1439, and remained active there at least until 1502¹; he was precentor c.1492, when an

1. A.H. Thompson, The Abbey of St. Mary of the Meadows, Leicester, p.91.

extant Inventory of the books of the choir was drawn up.¹ Charite had been especially vigorous in the production of books for the choir; the inventory closes with a list of the items which he had either bought, or had had copied, or had copied out himself, and this covers over four pages of the modern transcript.² Charite, and to a lesser extent, another canon, T[homas] Preston, appear to have been responsible for sustaining a considerable repertoire of polyphonic music, which - since there is no evidence that this abbey maintained a Lady Chapel choir - was probably for use in the canons' own choir. Amongst the books kept in the canons' choir were three volumes of polyphony (Cantica Organica), one copied by Preston, one by Charite, and one at Charite's instance³; Charite also copied the music of two books for the organs⁴.

Similar enterprise could be found at larger monasteries also. In 1489 it was considered to be amongst the meritorious points of Edward Botiller, a monk of Westminster Abbey, that he had 'competent lernyng and understondyng, and can syng bothe playn song and prikked song...'⁵ At Westminster there certainly was a Lady Chapel choir, and Botiller, and others like him, would no doubt have been available for entablement to attend at Lady Mass on occasions when a polyphonic ensemble based on the existing Lady Chapel choir was required.

The same expedient appears to have been adopted at Canterbury Cathedral Priory also. John Stone recorded in his chronicle that on 12 June 1469 Geoffrey Neville, archbishop of York, his brother Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, George, Duke of Clarence, [Thomas Kemp] bishop of London, and [John Oxne] prior of Canterbury, met at Sandwich for the archbishop to bless Warwick's newly-built ship "The Trinity" lying in Sandwich harbour. After the ceremony on board the

1. partly reproduced on plate, ibid., between pp.208 and 209; transcription in ed. M.R. James and A.H. Thompson, "Catalogue of the Library of Leicester Abbey" 21 Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society (1940-1), pp.1-59.

2. ibid., pp.55-9.

3. ibid., pp.51,56, 57; pace MMB, p.192, the description of a book as "per fr. W. Charite" is shown by many examples to indicate that its contents were copied, not composed, by the man named.

4. ibid., p.57.

5. J.A. Robinson and M.R. James, The Manuscripts of Westminster Abbey, p.12.

ship, the archbishop celebrated High Mass, in qua missa fuerunt cantatores istius ecclesie, tres monachi cum omnibus pueris istius ecclesie.¹ Stone habitually employed English word order when writing Latin; that is, he thought in English, and then merely wrote down its Latin equivalent². Probably, therefore, the best translation of this passage is:- "at which mass, there were [present] the singers of this church - three monks, with all the boys of this church". That is, when the priory was called upon to provide a team of singers for a special mass, a ready-made body already existed - "three monks and all the boys", which, to Stone at least, seemed to constitute a body he could call "the singers of the church". The only liturgical occasions on which both the boys of the Lady Chapel choir and some of the monks could ever both be present were the services in the Lady Chapel itself. Probably, therefore, by 1469 anyway, the musical content of the Lady Chapel services was being committed - on days when polyphony was required - to the Cantor, 3 monks, and the eight boys. As at Worcester, such an ensemble made possible the singing of five-part polyphony, even though allowing only one voice per part for each of the four lower voices.

Certainly by c.1507 Lady Mass was regularly being performed with polyphony, for which the Master of the Lady Chapel choir, Nicholas Bremer, received a termly fee of 10s. from the prior.³ Other texts particularly associated with the Virgin Mary could also be sung there in polyphony:- among the chapter archives there survives a fragment of a florid polyphonic setting of Magnificat datable to c.1500, for possibly five voices, including boys⁴. Further, an inventory of items belonging to the Lady Chapel, dateable to the 1530's, lists volumes of polyphonic music in four, five and six parts⁵. At no time do the surviving archives of the cathedral indicate that any lay singers other than just the Master of the Lady Chapel choir were ever employed by the priory; so the extra men's voices must have been supplied by monks of the priory.

1. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury ...p.110.

2. The whole of this present passage, ibid. pp.109-10, is a particularly clear example of this habit.

3. CDC Domest. Econ.31, fo.2v.:- Et solut' Nicholao Bremer pro missa beate marie virginis celebrata nota fracta pro termino finiente festo Natalis domini ex gracia domini prioris x s.

4. MS without reference, on display in a glass case in the Cathedral itself. Thoughtfully, the treble part was written at the bottom of the leaf, where boys could most easily see it when the choirbook was resting on a lectern.

5. CDC Inventory 29, printed in ed. J. Wickham Legg and W.St.J.Hope, Inventories of Christ Church, Canterbury, p.164. The help of ultraviolet light has enabled the present writer to prepare an amended text, which appears below as Appendix C8, p.A062.

The employment of expert lay singers from outside the monastery was the other expedient which could be adopted to create a full polyphonic ensemble for these Lady Chapel choirs. So far, no instance of this has yet been found in sources dating from prior to c.1500; some monasteries may have resorted to this expedient before this date, but the only references yet found all date from the 1530's. In 1535 the Lady Chapel choir at Gloucester Abbey consisted of three laymen, five boys and the Instructor of the boys.¹ By the time of the dissolution of Durham Cathedral priory in 1539, certain 'deacons' had been added to the existing Cantor and boys of the Lady Chapel choir there.² John Leland reported that Richard Bere, abbot of Glastonbury between 1493 and 1524, "buildid the new lodgings for secular prestes and clerkes of our Lady"³. The secular priests were presumably the six priests of the chantry of Adam Sodbury, established in the Lady Chapel in 1333⁴, while the "clerkes of our Lady" seem most likely to have been singing-men of the Lady chapel. In 1532/3 these apparently totalled as many as ten, but this figure may perhaps include the priests as well. There was also a separate Instructor of the singing-boys; there were ten boys who were known as pueri capelle, but it seems that only six were selected for tuition in singing "pricke songe and descaunte", of whom two were also taught in playing the organ.⁵

So this examination of the changes undergone by existing liturgical choirs appears to show that the demands made by the composers of liturgical music during the last 40 years of the 15th century had the effect of imposing a particular degree of uniformity on all those choirs which sought to perform their music. The more adventurous music of the day

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1. Indenture of John Tucke, 1515, in ed. W.H. Hart, Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Gloucesterie, vol.3, pp290-1; VE, vol.2, p.418.
 2. ed. J.T. Fowler, The Rites of Durham, pp.34,43. On the Chantry Certificate of 1548 for Manchester College, the word 'deacons' was used to denote the lay-clerks of the college:- PRO DL 38 3, p.3; it was apparently in this sense that the word was also used by the compiler of "The Rites".
 3. quoted by D. Knowles, The Religious Orders in England, vol.3, p.23.
 4. ed. A.Watkin, The Glastonbury Chartulary, vol.3, pp.724-6.
 5. Indenture of James Renynger as Instructor, 1534:- PRO E 135 2/31. Account of Warden of Obit of Abbot Monyngton 1538/9, PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3118, no.17:- Item solut' magistro Renyger cum sociis suis iij s.... Item solut' x^{cem} pueris Capelle x d. Account of Warden of Obit of Abbot Monyngton 1532/3, PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3115:- Item solut' magistro ffynche cum x sociis Capelle iij s. ...item solut' x^{cim} pueris Capelle x d.

could no longer be tackled by just a few adult soloists; even the minimum resources required for its performance were quite extensive, and had to be supplied by any choir which sought to perform it. The minimum effective complement included a group of high voices - always boys' voices in a liturgical choir; a specialist musician to act as their Instructor; and a group of singing-men. The music was intended for choral performance, and two or three men's voices per part was desirable; it could if necessary be sung by choirs which could muster only one voice on each lower part, but was best performed by a full balanced chorus. By 1500, that is, the choir of human voices, as a medium for the performance of composed music, had arrived at a point of development over which the experience of a further 475 years has not been able to cast any improvement.

6.3.3. The search for a balanced chorus.

One major innovation in the performance of the composed music of this period was the inclusion of boys' voices. This novelty required not only the provision of a skilled instructor to teach them their parts, and the necessary vocal skills and techniques; it also demanded a total reconsideration of the validity of the existing criteria governing the provision of boys in liturgical choirs of all kinds.

6.3.3.A. Modifications to the provision of choristers.

The precise number of boys in a liturgical choir now became a critical matter for the first time; it was essential that a balance be struck with the men's voices available, in order to create an effective polyphonic ensemble. Prior to c.1460, the complement of boys considered adequate for any choral institution had been selected on largely non-musical grounds; numbers were adequate if they satisfied the demands of the traditional Consuetudinaries, and enabled the provision week by week of boys adequately coached in the ceremonial, plainsong and reading of the liturgy allocated to the choristers to perform. However, a team of boys which had been quite adequate for such purposes as these, could well prove to be too few in number to maintain a choral part in an elaborate polyphonic composition.

Now it was noticeable that when, during the period 1390-1420, entirely extra-musical motives had caused the occurrence in certain quarters of a conspicuous (but short-lived) rush to increase the number of choristers, not a single one of the old-established choirs is known to have followed suit and done likewise. There was no need to; at that time the extra boys were being called upon simply to enrich the performance of the ceremonial of the liturgy, and to undertake singing duties (such as the plainsong of the daily Lady Mass) which at the older institutions were already quite adequately performed by the men. However, the developments of the period 1460-1500 could not be so easily shrugged off; they presented choirs with challenges to the capacities of their boys which were entirely musical in character and would have to be met. This could involve increasing the number of boys if not already sufficient, as well as overhauling the provision made for their instruction.

Such increases in the number of boys were most commonly found to be necessary at the longest-established secular institutions, especially the cathedrals. The ancient statutes of Chichester Cathedral (1232) specified the provision of 10 choristers; in 1481 bishop Edward Storey increased this number to a total of 12. These singing-boys were then divided into two groups, as at Wells and York:- eight were simply choristers, while the four eldest were thuribularii as well.¹ The original eight choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral had been increased to ten by the early 16th century.² At Lichfield, the original number of choristers was eight, at which number they still stood in 1479.³ At some time between 1522 and 1530, Geoffrey Blythe, bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, and James Denton, dean of Lichfield, pooled resources to build a boarding house for the choristers, and to increase their number by four⁴. It was thus a total of twelve boys for which the Cathedral was making provision in 1535⁵. Of the secular cathedrals, only Hereford remained content with a very small complement of choristers; in 1535 there were still only the original five.⁶ Wells Cathedral did not apparently increase its complement of nine boys⁷; all the remaining secular cathedrals now had 10-14 choristers.

1. MMB, p.12

2. MMB, pp.13-14.

3. C.Pap.Reg. vol.13, part 1 (Papal Letters 1471-84), p.268.

4. W. Whitlock, "Additamenta ad historiam veterem Lichfeldensem" in ed. H. Wharton, Anglia Sacra, vol.1, p.455

5. VE, vol.3p.135.

6. The number of vicars had fallen from 26 or 28 to 20, of whom six held minor canonries on the model of St. George's Chapel, Windsor:- VE vol.3, pp.6,12-13.

7. See appendix A1 below, pp.A003-7.

The cathedrals had fairly large common funds, out of which could be found the money required to maintain extra choristers, even if no specific benefactor came forward. Other, less wealthy institutions, had to stretch their own resources as far as they could go, and make the most of small-scale benefactions, if they wished to increase their choristers. At St. Mary Newarke College, Leicester, a seventh chorister was added to the foundation c.1500; it was said that this was supported by the gift to the college of two houses and £80 cash by Canon Walter Barbour (died before 1501), at the instance of Margaret, Lady Hungerford, a patron of the college.¹ Similarly, the number of choristers of St. Stephen's Westminster had been increased from six to seven by the time of the dissolution of the college in 1548²; and the increase from 6 boys to 13 at St. George's Chapel Windsor has already been noted.³

Other types of choirs could also undergo an increase in their number of choristers. In 1402 the Lady Chapel choir at Winchester Cathedral priory had been inaugurated for a Cantor and only four boys⁴; by 1482 this number had been raised to eight, and by 1511 to 10⁵. The college of the Holy Trinity, Pleshey (Essex) had been founded in 1394 for a master and 8 chaplains, and purely token numbers of junior staff:- two clerks and two choristers⁶; by 1527 the number of choristers had been increased to six.⁷

Household chapel choirs generally were able to employ as many choristers as the activities of the chapel required; in the very few instances for which evidence is available, these numbers are seen to have been rising towards the end of the 15th century. The Chapel Royal in fact doubled its number. After the ostentatious brilliance of the chapel of Henry 5, it has been noted how the Regency Council of Henry 6 reduced the number of boys to 6 on his accession in 1422⁸. This number rose to 8 in 1440 or 1441⁹, had become 10 by 1449¹⁰, and 12 by

1. VDL* vol.3, pp.146,155,192,218; A.H.Thompson, The History of the Hospital and the New College... pp.211,218.
2. Chantry Certificate 1548:- PRO E 301 88. The dissolution inventory included 'vij new albes wt parreres (i.e. apparels) of grene satten fygyry for childern':- PRO E 117 11/49 fo.2r. There were also four pairs of organs, and 'iij gret pryk song bokes' - ibid., fo.3r.
3. See above, pp. 6038-41. 4. See above, pp. 4090-1.
5. WinDC, Priory Register I (1345-1496), fo.106v.; Register II, fo.44r.
6. Statute 1:- PRO DL 41 10/44, fo.lv. 7. PRO DL 12 44/2, no.2.
8. See above, p. 4032. 9. See above, p. 5026.
10. ed. W.Ullmann, Liber Regie Capelle, p.57; 10 also in 1456 (appointment of Henry Abyndon as Instructor:- PRO C 66 481, m.18 (CPR 1452-61, p.279)), in 1493 (appointment of William Newerk as Instructor:- PRO C 66 575, m.30 (?)), and in August 1500 (list of chapel members present at burial of Prince Edmund:- PRO LC 2/1 fo.4r.)

*VDL = ed. A.H.Thompson, Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln 1517-31.

1503.¹ Similar numbers were maintained in at least one other aristocratic household chapel:- in November 1490, there were 12 boys of the Chapel of the household of John Vere (1443-1513), 13th earl of Oxford.² In the one major new foundation of this period, Magdalen College, Oxford, the chapel was supplied with 16 choristers, the standard number for major academic colleges³. As explained before, so large a number probably was maintained as a relatively cheap way of enhancing the educational usefulness of the college⁴; when not engaged in chapel or in learning their music, the boys could attend the grammar school which Wayneflete attached to the college.⁵ However, by 1480, when an ability to render contemporary choral polyphonic music, in all its elaboration, was coming to be considered as part of the routine accomplishments expected of any competent choir, involving boys' voices as well as men's, there were good musical reasons for maximising the number of boys' voices as well.

The effect of contemporary musical developments on the use of the boy's voice thus had immediately noticeable effects on the composition of liturgical choirs. Not only were teams of boys added to choirs which previously had consisted of men's voices only; in choirs already of

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1. List of chapel members present at burial of Queen Elizabeth, 23 Feb. 1503:- PRO LC 2/1 fo.68v. The number was reduced to 10 in 1509 (PRO LC 2/1 fo.131r., LC 9/50 ff.159r., 209r.; confirmation of William Newerk as Instructor, PRO C 66 610 m.3 (26)), but had been restored to 12 by 1526 (appointment of William Crane as Instructor:- PRO C 82 574 no.28).
 2. ed. J.P. Collier, The Household Books of John, Duke of Norfolk, and Thomas, Earl of Surrey, p.511. The instructor of the choristers was John Mechelson (ibid., p.509), later vicar-choral and minor canon of St. George's Chapel, Windsor (1493-99:- WndDC xv 34 66,71) and possibly the composer Mychelson who contributed a setting of Magnificat, now lost, to the Eton Choirbook (EPF, MS 178 (The Eton Choirbook), Index). Collier's attribution of this section of his MS (pp.504-20 in this edition) to the household of Thomas Howard, earl of Surrey (rather than John Vere, earl of Oxford) is manifestly mistaken.
 3. Statute 1:- ed. H.M. Commissioners, "Statutes of Magdalen College", in Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, vol.2, p.6.
 4. See above, pp. 4052-3.
 5. R.S. Stanier, A History of Magdalen College School, Oxford, pp. 10-55. A fair proportion of choristers became demyses and later scholars of the college:- see J.R. Bloxam, A Register of the ...members of... Magdalen College...Oxford, vol.1, pp.1-17 passim.

mixed voices, the number of boys was adjusted with the evident intention of creating a balanced chorus for the performance of choral polyphony. Previously, the full chorus of men's and boys' voices had never sung together except in choral plainsong, where the observance of a balance between boys and men was not important. In choral polyphony, however, a balanced ensemble was essential; the optimum number of boys required depended on the number of men they had to sing with, and - where the necessary resources existed - the number of boys was adjusted accordingly.

There was clearly a minimum number of boys that was considered viable to sustain the treble line in composed polyphony. Even in the monastic Lady Chapel choirs, where it seems that the lower parts were sung by only one voice on each line, the number of boys was never less than five, and normally stood at six or eight. In fact, in any performance it would have been perfectly possible for only half a dozen well trained boys to sustain the top line in composed polyphony. However, such a number of boys might be too small to create a balanced ensemble when joined with the available men's voices; and in such cases the number of boys would have to be increased to a suitable level. Twelve or thirteen seems to have been considered to be the maximum operational number. It was selected for the new St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and for at least two household chapel choirs which were unlikely to lack for anything they needed; while cathedrals and colleges already supplied with that number (or more) remained satisfied with what they had.

Nevertheless, in these larger choirs, the complement of boys selected as suitable for their particular circumstances frequently remained far smaller than that of the men, often amounting to only half or less. This has often led to speculation about the nature of the balance of late medieval choirs, and about the manner in which the men were prevented from "overpowering" the boys. Present knowledge of the ^{origin and} nature of the use of boys' voices in the music of this period makes it possible to set this question in its proper context. Modern listeners are familiar with the choral music of the last 200 years or so, homophonic music in which they may expect to find a tune in the highest vocal line, requiring a relatively large number of executants to produce it loud and strong. This approach is inapplicable to earlier music, however; 15th-century composers and singers - and listeners - had no such concept of any special role attached to the treble part. After all, the treble voice was added to the web of composed polyphony only as a very late development; and even then it was just one more line - a thread of sound, not a melody - added to a pre-existing and already dense and sonorous texture. There was no one pre-eminent part in pre-classical polyphony; a relatively small number of boys was quite adequate to render the treble line. The only criterion for a satisfactory balance was that the treble be audible, not that it be dominant.

6.3.3.B. The demand for trained choristers.

One corollary to the involvement of boys' voices in composed polyphony was the emergence of cut-throat competition among the larger choral establishments to commandeer the services of boys with good voices already trained. In this respect, institutions enjoying royal patronage had one standing advantage, of which they were prepared to make full use. By ancient custom, the king enjoyed the right of 'purveyance' - the right to requisition for his own use and benefit the services of skilled craftsmen, for as long a time as he needed them. This right of purveyance could be applied by the King to poach other churches' trained choristers and singing-men for his own Chapel Royal. Henry 5 had so used it in 1420¹ and its practice was revived by Henry 6 in 1440.² It became such a nuisance to its victims that in 1453, Henry 6 granted to Thomas Lisieux, dean of St. Paul's and one of his King's Chaplains, letters patent granting to St. Paul's choir (for the term of Lisieux's life) immunity from the predatory visits of agents coming with the royal commission to take singing-boys and others for the Chapel Royal.³

However, during the last third of the century the practice spread; the need for skilled choristers was becoming general, and by the end of the century it was not only the Chapel Royal which enjoyed the right to seize choristers from elsewhere.⁴ Institutions which enjoyed royal patronage had discovered that they could purchase from the King commissions extending this privilege to them for their own use and advantage. Before 1483 the college of St. Mary Newarke, Leicester, had already secured a permanent commission to poach choristers; this was achieved at the instance of one of its patrons, William Lord Hastings, a friend of Edward 4.⁵ In 1497 the Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Westminster Abbey was granted a similar privilege by Henry 7⁶, no doubt in connection with his rebuilding of the Lady Chapel there.

1. See above, p. 4030.

2. See above, p. 5026.

3. PRO C 66 477 m.18 (CPR 1452-61, p.90)

4. On 16 September 1484 the King's commission was granted to John Melleneke, clerk of the Chapel Royal, to impress choristers for the Chapel Royal of Richard 3, from any institution except St. George's Chapel, Windsor:- BM Harley 433, fo.189r.

5. ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, vol.3, pp. 138, 159, 240.

6. E. Pine, "Westminster Abbey:- some early Masters of the Choristers", 94 Musical Times (1953), p.259.

During the last few years of his life, Henry 7 ploughed a great deal of money into the completion of the chapel of King's College, Cambridge¹; in 1506/7 the college secured from him a commission to poach choristers and singing-men, and lost no time in making use of it - at the expense of Fotheringhay College.² By 1527 the Chapel Royal, St. George's Chapel Windsor, St. Stephen's Chapel Westminster, and the household chapel choir of Thomas, Cardinal Wolsey, were merely the most important among many institutions enjoying this privilege.³ This practice, vexatious as it must have been to the victims, can only have improved performance standards at the beneficiary institutions - for none need have ever had more novice choristers than it could cater for. What the victim institutions thought of the practice is reflected in the considerable sums of money which they were prepared to pay, in order to secure from the King a grant of immunity from the effects of these predatory visitations⁴; what at least one boy thought of the whole process was eventually recorded, with mixed feelings, by Thomas Tusser in his verse autobiography.⁵

1. A. Austen Leigh, King's College, Cambridge, pp.24-6.

2. Bursars' A/c, 1506/7, CKC Mundum Book 9, fo.31v.:- ffeoda et regarda ... Item in regardis datis Clerico secretarii domini Regis pro scriptura de la Plakard v s. fo.24r.:- Custus equitanciumItem pro expensis Goderiche equitantis ffodringay pro magistro Russell Coterell et iiij Chorustis et redeuntis cum iiij^{or} equis et adducentis predictos chorustas ad seint Nedes [St. Neot's] ij s xj d. fo.31v.:- ffeoda et regarda item penultimo die iulii in regardis datis magistro Coterell et pueris eius xiiij s. iiij d.

3. PRO DL 12 44/2 no.2; ed. S. Bond, The Chapter Acts of the Dean and Canons of Windsor, p.8; SDC, A/c of Masters of the Fabric, 1536/7, fo.5r.

4. e.g. PRO DL 12 44/2 no.2; and see B.M. Egerton 2886, ff.299v, 303v.

5. T. Tusser, Five Hundreth Pointes of Good Husbandrie, pp.155-6.

6.4. The training of the choristers.

6.4.1. The provision of specialist Instructors.

The demands made by the music of this period could not be met simply by the provision of more choristers to create a balanced polyphonic choral ensemble. The provision made for instructing the choristers needed considerable overhaul also. It had now ceased to be adequate for any church to appoint as its Instructor of the Choristers merely one of its vicars-choral or chaplains whose capacities happened to extend as far as an ability to teach plainsong, improvised descant, the ceremony of the liturgy, and Latin grammar; nor was it enough even to appoint to the post one of its skilled professional singers. Rather the job now required a fully trained all-round church musician - a man whose talents were often employed not only in the demanding duty of teaching the choristers the boys' parts in composed polyphony, but also as organist, and composer of the music which the church services were deemed by its chapter to require. Such a man was as much a skilled craftsman as those who designed and carved the choirstalls, conceived and executed the great walls of stained glass, or created the vast stone vaults of naves and choirs; like them, he had to be specially sought out, and employed on a definite contractual basis. He commanded a high salary, and his duties in return for this were often recited at length and in detail in a specific contract of employment between himself and the chapter as his employer.

The earliest appointments of this new breed of Instructors can be traced to around 1460. Most were laymen, being specially skilled members of the professional lay clerk category of church musician; very few were in priest's orders. It was, consequently, not always easy to fit them into choirs according to their existing constitutions. Indeed, the older the institution, and the less easily adaptable to the accommodation of laymen at all (especially those founded before c.1395), the more difficult it might be to create a satisfactory slot for the Instructor to occupy. Nevertheless, cathedral and college chapters proved equal to the task; faced with the necessity of bringing their choral arrangements up to date to cope with modern developments in church music, they contrived to produce a number of devices - some of considerable ingenuity - to which they were prepared to resort to achieve their end.

6.4.1.A. The creation of new posts.

If the chapter was sufficiently decisive, and had enough funds, the solution could be very simple indeed; they could simply create a new post altogether. This device was especially suitable for institutions created so long previously that their statutes had never made any provision at all for the instruction of the choristers; this was not uncommon in foundations antedating the year 1400. New College, Oxford, was in this category. As has already been noted, the college statutes (which reached their final form in 1400) made no provision for any of its chapel staff to act as Instructor of the Choristers;¹ however, at least by 1442/3, 20s. p.a. was being set aside for payment to a clerk or chaplain for this service, plus 6s. 8d. p.a. for directing the singing of a votive antiphon to the Blessed Virgin.² Subsequently, a need began to be felt for the provision of a distinct Instructor; and New College was fortunate enough to possess sufficient resources to meet the need simply by creating a completely new post for a skilled Instructor of the Choristers. In 1461 the new post was inaugurated, and the separate Informator Choristarum appointed and added to the staff; thereby the number of clerks was increased to the standard four, and the chapel gained the services of a permanent specialist Instructor. His salary, on top of free board and lodging, was £5. 6. 8d. p.a. This expedient remained in force at least until 1535.³

Another old-established college which was able simply to add an Instructor to its existing statutory staff was the college of St. Mary Newarke, Leicester. The earliest instructor yet traced at this college was the composer Hugh Aston, first mentioned in 1525 in the course of the record of an episcopal visitation of the College.⁴ By 1532/3 his remuneration as Magister Chorestarum et custos Organorum included a house, rent-free, just outside the college precinct immediately opposite the main gate, and a handsome salary of £10 p.a.;

1. See above, pp. 4056-7.

2. See above, pp. 5033-4.

3. A.H.M. Jones, "Oxford:- New College" in VCH Oxfordshire, vol.3, p.157.

4. ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, vol.3, p.222:-
Magister Hugo Asseton, magister choristarum. How long Aston had already been at the college is not known. It was from Coventry that he paid a visit to Warwick in 1520/1 to advise the chapter of St. Mary, Warwick, about the installation of their new organ that year:-
Treasurer's A/c 1520/1, PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3729 - Et in expensis Hugonis Aston laborantis a Coventr' pro suo consilio habendo circa nostras Organis [sic] ij s. viij d.

by 1540 this had been increased to £12 p.a.¹ When the new post of Instructor was created and added to the statutory college staff is not known; it could well have occurred as early as before 1483, when William Lord Hastings was securing for the college the privilege of impressing trained choristers from other institutions.² Certainly by the time of the earliest surviving accounts of the College, it was enjoying the services of five lay-clerks of the choir:- the three clerks of the original 14th century foundation, the fourth clerk added c1450 by canon Roger Fysseywyke³, and the separate Instructor of the Choristers.⁴

A third college which simply added a specialist Instructor to its existing choral staff was St. Mary, Warwick. In this case, however, the college's unusual history had provided it with a distinct Instructor as early as c.1400; and it has already been observed how the anomalous features of this post were gradually stripped from it as the 15th century progressed, until by 1454/5, he had become fully assimilated into the chapel staff as a lay clerk with responsibility for teaching the choristers.⁵ This latter duty served to preserve the distinct existence of his particular slot in the college's constitution. At least by 1523 he was the highest paid member of the college's choral staff, at £8 p.a.; he could be described as 'organist', or as 'Master of the Chylder and organplear'.⁶

The secular cathedrals were no less alert than any other institutions to the need to begin to make provision at this time for the employment of a specialist Instructor of the Choristers. Indeed, Salisbury Cathedral was one of the earliest institutions of any type to do so. What took a bit of imagination, however, was the invention of a way in which a layman could be employed in a choir of which all the members were supposed to be in one of the three Major Orders. More than one device was tried.

1. Accounts of the provost of the College:- PRO DL 29 224/3568-3570; ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, vol.3,p.222. Aston may well have been a married man; Hugh and Katherine Aston both received cash pensiones from the Abbot and Convent of the Abbey of St. Mary de Pratis, Leicester, in 1536/7:- PRO E 315 279 fo.23r. He apparently served as Mayor of Leicester during 1541/2:- PRO DL 29 224/3570 - in Regardo dato hugoni Aston maiori ville Leicestrie nomine capituli x s.

2. See above, p. 6064.

3. See above, p. 5075.

4. PRO DL 29 224/3568 (1532/3).

5. See above, p. 5091.

6. PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3730; PRO E 36 154, p.235.

At Salisbury Cathedral, the chapter appears to have taken the decision to seek out and employ a specialist Instructor at least by about early 1461; in any event, by the beginning of March 1461 the earliest known lay Instructor there had been appointed, John Cachereu¹. He was a skilled musician recruited from outside the cathedral body; his was a totally new post and he was employed not by the chapter as a member of the choir, but by the Warden of the Choristers as a lay servant of the Choristers' boarding house.

In 1429, the cathedral had acquired lands and rents at Woodford (Wilts.) for the repair of the fabric²; and at some time between 1451 and 1461 it appears that the Chapter transferred some of this income to the Choristers' House.³ Its immediate effect on overall receipts is not evident, but certainly by 1461/2 the finances of the Choristers' House were bearing a new expense, perhaps out of this newly attached income from Woodford. This new expense was the annual livery and salary of John Cachereu, instructor choristarum in cantu⁴. His salary was paid at the rate of £4 p.a.; however, probably because of a recent breakdown in the whole financial organisation of the Choristers' House⁵, the Choristers' revenues could afford to pay him only four months' salary for the financial year ending Easter 1462⁶ (i.e. December 1461 - March 1462 inclusive). On 9 January 1462, however, the sub-treasurer had lent 60s. to the Custos Choristarum in order to pay certain arrears of salary to Cachereu⁷; 60s. was three terms' salary, and takes his original appointment back to the beginning of March 1461.

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1. His name is spelled in a bewildering variety of ways in the sources - see D. Robertson, Sarum Close, p.72. Mrs. Robertson supposed him to have been a Thatcher with a stammer; but it is possible that he was of French origin, and that the eccentric spellings of his name record various English scribes' attempts to represent the name Cachereau, or something similar.
 2. K. Edwards, "The Cathedral of Salisbury" in VCH Wiltshire, vol.3, p.182.
 3. Income from Woodford appears in the heading of SDC, account of the Collector of Choristers' Rents for the first time in 1461/62; cf. the previous surviving a/c., that for 1451/2. On the face of the account for 1461/2, the date has been altered from 1461/2 to 1460/1. However, the original date was the correct one. On the dorse of the roll are notes of payments made in October, 1 Edward 4 (1461) and April, 2 Edward 4 (1462). Canon William Osgodby is mentioned as the incoming Custos Choristarum for the year following that covered by this account, and he is known to have taken over in 1462:- SDC Reg. Newton, p.43.
 4. SDC, A/c of Collector of Choristers' Rents 1461/2; Reg. Newton, p.39.
 5. As reported to the episcopal visitation of August 1461:- SDC Reg. Newton, p.21. The cause of it was the neglect of the vicar of Preshute to pay his annual rent to the Choristers' House:- ibid., p.39.
 6. SDC A/c of Collector of Choristers' Rents, 1461/2:- Item in Stipendio Johannis Chachro pro terminis [Natalis] christi vj s. viij d. et pasche xx s.
 7. SDC Reg. Newton, p.39:- ... ad solvendum Johanni Caccherowe instructori dictorum Choristarum in cantu sallarium suum.

Cacherew is the earliest lay Instructor yet traced at Salisbury; his first tenure of office was only brief, and no indenture of appointment appears to have survived to reveal the exact nature of his duties. Fortunately, the registers preserve a summary of the terms of the indenture of his successor, John Kegwyn, dated 5 May 1463¹. It shows that the experiment of meeting the whole of the Instructor's salary out of the revenues of the Choristers' House, was not continued - such a charge was evidently more than it could bear, and this device was discontinued.

Instead, Kegwyn's salary as magister Choristarum in cantu was met partly from the income of the Choristers' House, and partly from the revenues of a vacant vicar's stall - of which, by 1463, there was no shortage, since the chapter had abandoned the policy of keeping full the complement of vicars choral about five years before.² From the revenues of the Choristers' House, he was to receive an annual livery of three yards of broadcloth, and 52s. per year for his commons. To bring his salary up to the level of that enjoyed by his predecessor, he was also granted all the revenues of the vacant vicarage-choral of the prebend of Chardstock - a subdeacon prebend, paying 26s. 8d. p.a. to its vicar.³ The following year he exchanged this stall for that of Torleton, a deacon stall worth 30s. p.a.⁴ - a device adopted to award him a small pay rise.

This, of course, was a highly irregular and totally unprecedented way of utilising the income paid by an individual canon to his vicar-choral. For Kegwyn was certainly not a vicar-choral of the cathedral, despite enjoying the revenues of a vacant vicar's stall. He was not in Holy Orders, and was thereby disqualified from employment as a vicar anyway⁵; he went through no formal process of admission as a vicar, and was not expected to perform the routine work of a vicar⁶. It was expressly stated that he was not to be fined for any absence from service, as an ordinary vicar would have been; indeed, he was not considered as one of the vicars, but merely received the emoluments of a vacant vicar's stall.

1. SDC Reg. Newton pp.57-8; transcribed as Appendix C4 below, p.AO58.

2. See above, pp.5020-1.

3. Stat.Sal., p.159; VE, vol.2, p.76.

4. ibid.; SDC Reg. Newton, p.69.

5. He was, however, still a bachelor, and since he was expected to live within the close, his indenture specified that in order to retain his post, he was to remain unmarried:- SDC Reg. Newton, p.58.

6. At his "translation" to the stall of Torleton in April 1464, the chapter clerk expressly recorded that 'Non tamen iuravit idem Johannes in admissione sua huiusmodi sicut ceteri vicarii faciunt, prout nec fecit in prima admissione sua, quia secum dispensatum fuit in servacione chori'.

Further, the revenue from the vacant stalls was not in fact at the chapter's disposal to hand out like this to a lay employee. It had been the chapter's decision to allow a certain number of stalls to stand vacant; and this decision had, of course, imposed extra work on the vicars who remained. To compensate for this, the chapter and vicars had come to an agreement whereby all the revenue from the vacant stalls should be paid to the vicars, to recompense them for their extra work.¹ It was the community of vicars, therefore, which was paying Kegwyn this part of his salary, not the chapter's common fund. It was for this reason no doubt that the text of Kegwyn's indenture concluded with an assurance that the authority and approval of the vicars had been secured for all its contents.

Therefore, Kegwyn's status as Instructor of the Choristers was as a lay employee of the cathedral, responsible to the Dean and Chapter for the conduct of his duties, but actually paid by the Warden of the Choristers and the community of Vicars Choral jointly. To such an elaborate contrivance was the chapter obliged to resort, in order to secure the services of a skilled musician as Instructor of the Choristers, without breaking any of the cathedral's traditional rules and customs. The complexity of the solution is eloquent testimony to the urgency of the problem which it was designed to solve; but it served its purpose, and allowed the chapter to inaugurate the employment of specialist lay musicians.²

6.4.1.B. The modification of existing posts.

Thanks to one unusual feature of its constitution, the chapter of Wells Cathedral was able to find a much more straightforward solution to the problems raised by initiating the employment of a skilled lay musician to instruct the choristers. As was observed above³, six of its 54 prebends could be held by men who were only in acolyte's or taperer's orders,

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1. The text of this agreement is not known to survive, but its existence was mentioned in a chapter act dated 28 May 1464:- SDC Reg. Newton, pp.73-4. Presumably the agreement was made between 1457 and 1460, for which years the volume of Chapter Acts has been lost. In 1535 the vicars choral reckoned to receive £24 p.a. from this source - from those prebendaries, that is, who could be prevailed upon to pay:- VE, vol.2,p.85.
 2. The successors of Cacherew and Kegwyn as Instructor of the Choristers can be traced down to the Reformation with only few breaks; see Appendix B4 below, p. A051. Unfortunately, no indenture of appointment survives for any of them earlier than that dated 30 April 1538 for Thomas Knight:- SDC Lease Book 136777, fo.24v.
 3. See p. 2005.

and not in any of the major orders at all. Of these, four were obliged to maintain vicars-choral at the cathedral - the four acolyte prebends of Combe 7, Combe 14, Wormester and Wedmore 4¹. Consequently these vicarages-choral could also be perfectly legitimately occupied by men in orders no higher than acolyte's - by laymen, in fact.

It would appear that advantage began to be taken of this feature in 1479, when the cathedral made the transition from the old style of Instructor to the new. By that year, Richard Hygons had already been a vicar-choral of Wells for 20 years;² he is not known ever to have proceeded beyond acolyte's orders³, and it appears that he must have occupied one of the four acolyte stalls - though it is not known which. On 7 December 1479, he entered into a contract with the Dean and Chapter, whereby he undertook the duties of the Instructor of the Choristers.⁴ The very fact of his contractual employment showed that the chapter were adopting a concept of his work very different from that of previous vicars who had been appointed as Instructor; and indeed, the duties to be required of him by the new trends in church music were of quite a different order from those expected of his predecessors.

However, thanks to this peculiarity of the cathedral's constitution it was quite in order for the chapter to employ Hygons as Instructor on the traditional basis without alteration - i.e. as a vicar-choral on whom had been conferred the extra duties and rewards of the cathedral's Instructor of the Choristers. Within this framework, however, much had to be changed. For Hygons, the remuneration traditionally paid to the Instructor had to be increased considerably. As recorded as recently as 1460-61, the traditional fee consisted of 40s. p.a. paid out of the revenues of the Choristers' House;⁵ for Hygons, this was increased by a

1. WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS, fo.8v.
2. He was admitted a full member of the community of vicars-choral during 1458/9:- WlsVC, A/c B39; and was collated to a house in the Vicars' Close on 18th September 1459:- ed. H.C. Maxwell-Lyte and M.C.B. Dawes, Register of Thomas Bekynton, p.328.
3. on 29 March 1460:- ibid., p.522.
4. WlsDC, charter without ref.:- found in a brown paper folder labelled "Papers handed in on the death of Miss Parfitt" in a cardboard box marked "Sundry MSS and papers" in the centre cupboard in the muniment room. The transcript reproduced in MMB, pp.425-8, is a little eccentric, but accurate in all material particulars.
5. Robert Cator's rules for the conduct of the Choristers' House:- WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS, pp.349-50.

further 26s. 8d. p.a. from the same source, 26s. 8d. p.a. from the Common Fund, and from 1487 onwards, a further 26s. 8d. p.a. from the Fabric Fund, by gift of the chapter¹. Remaining a fully-fledged vicarius perpetuus of the Cathedral, Hygons would have continued to receive his 20s. or 26s. 8d. p.a. from the canon-master of his stall²; however, he preferred now to live as an ordinary layman outside the cathedral precinct altogether, and was granted, rent-free, a house in town belonging to the cathedral, situated a little way from the South gateway to the close, worth 26s.8d. p.a.³ The value of his total emoluments, therefore was some £8. 6. 8d.

Hygons successor as Instructor, Richard Bramston, similarly was a layman who never entered Holy Orders. He was admitted in 1507 as vicar-choral of a subdeacon stall, and was appointed acting Instructor only six months later. However, his first tenure of this office was only brief, and in 1509 he left the cathedral rather than enter sub-deacon's orders as his stall required⁴. He had returned by 1515 however, and he soon resumed his job as Instructor of the Choristers; this time he was enabled to remain a layman by taking the acolyte stall of Combe 14, and thenceforth he remained a vicar of the cathedral until his death in 1554.⁵

Although no further details have yet been recovered from the archives, it would appear that the indenture of William Horwood as Instructor of the Choristers at Lincoln Cathedral, dated 29 March 1477, marks the Lincoln chapter's decision to update their provision for the choristers' instruction, and have them trained to participate in choral polyphonic music. His salary amounted to £5.13. 4d. p.a, with free livery; his successors can be traced with but few breaks down to the Reformation and beyond.⁶

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1. MMB, p.425; WlsDC Liber Ruber part 2, fo.9r.; Fabric A/cs., 1492/3, 1500/1, 1505/6.
 2. 20s. or 26s. 8d. p.a. was the salary payable by all four acolyte-prebendaries:- WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS, fo.8v.
 3. MMB, pp.425-6.
 4. WlsDC Liber Ruber part 2, ff.140v., 147v., 150r., 165r., 173v.
 5. WlsVC, A/c 8.111; WlsDC, Charters 749, 750; VE vol.1, p.138; ed. F.W. Weaver, Somerset Medieval Wills 1531-58, p.153.
 6. A.F. Leach, "Schools" in VCH Lincolnshire, vol.2, pp.436-7; MMB, pp.117-8.

At old-established collegiate churches where there already existed some statutory provision for a member of the choral staff to act as Instructor of the Choristers, the chapter might similarly feel constrained merely to adapt to modern conditions their existing provision, rather than abandon it and create a new post to be added to the statutory staff. At St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the expansion of the choral staff, involving the doubling of the number of choristers, necessarily involved also much modification in the role of their Instructor. However, the statutes already provided that a member of the chapel staff should service as Instructor - and in practice, this post had anyway long been filled by one of the lay clerks. So the chapter chose to retain this arrangement; consequently, all that they needed to do to attract to this post a man with all the necessary training and skills, was to offer an appropriate salary. Between 1476 and 1479 the salaries of all the clerks were raised to £10 p.a.; and on 1 January 1479, the extra fee payable to the Instructor was more than doubled, from 26s. 8d. to 66s. 8d. p.a.¹ The Instructor's combined salary, therefore, amounted to £13. 6. 8d. p.a., which left him very comfortably off indeed. Such an arrangement was a necessary part of the whole reconstruction of the choir, enabling it to perform the best in modern music; the post soon attracted to the service of the refounded St. George's, the services of a composer of the calibre of Walter Lambe, Instructor of the Choristers October 1479 - Michaelmas 1484.²

The colleges established between c.1415 and c.1460 found themselves already perfectly well placed to include in their choral forces a man with the necessary skills to act as Instructor. As has been observed, contemporary circumstances had already caused it to be generally specified in their statutes that one of the clerks or chaplains should serve as Instructor of the Choristers, a generous extra payment being allotted to him in respect of his extra duties.³ This arrangement seems to have continued to satisfy all demands without change throughout the rest of the 15th century, and indeed, until the dissolution of most of these colleges during the 1540's. During the 1490's, for instance,

1. WndDC xv 34 54, 55.

2. WndDC xv 34 57, 59, 60.

3. See above, pp. 4057-8, 5088-9.

Robert Lynne, one of the six clerici socii of Tattershall College, served as Instructor in exactly the manner anticipated by the statutes; he received his salary as a clerk, plus the statutory 40s. per year pro doctrina choristarum¹. At Fotheringhay College, Richard Ball, one of the clerks, served from 1537/8 until the dissolution of the College in 1548, as the Instructor required by the terms of the statutes; his predecessor, Robert White, had been paid the full statutory supplement of 40s. p.a. in 1535, but for some reason Ball himself received only 20s. p.a.² At Eton College, one of the clerks continued to act as Instructor throughout the period 1467-1500, unaffected by the much reduced size of the choir; even when not specifically named on the accounts, he can usually be identified by his receipt of a salary of £4 p.a., compared with the 20s.-40s. paid to the other clerks.³ Certain modifications had to be made to the nature of the post of Instructor at these colleges, as the rising qualifications required for the job began to cause some traditional aspects of its work to appear unsuitable for the highly skilled men now holding it⁴; otherwise, no conspicuous upheaval in the running of the choirs of these colleges was produced by their conversion to the new music of the late 15th century.

6.4.1.C. The necessity for adequate provision.

The experiences of the single new foundation of this period, Magdalen College Oxford, present a very clear example of the inescapable necessity for such an institution to secure the services of a highly skilled Instructor. Such a man commanded a high salary and an institution could employ him only if it had enough revenue to pay him the going rate for the job; but spare cash of this kind was a commodity which Magdalen College just did not have. All the way through the statutes of c.1480, there is evidence that Wayneflete was trying to emulate New College and

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1. Statute 30:- see above, p.5089 and fn.1; Receiver's A/cs., 1492/3, 1495/6:- DLD U1475 Q16/1, Q16/2.
 2. See above, p. 4057 ; also a/cs. of Master of Fotheringhay College 1537/8 - 1545/6 (PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 2774-6; E 315 301, ff.1-45,46-83; E 315 146, ff.1-156; E 315 145, fo.118v.); and VE, vol.4, p.290.
 3. EPF, Audit Rolls 10-16, MS 231, Audit Rolls 17-30, Stipendia Capellanorum et Clericorum.
 4. See below, pp. 6086-8.

King's College Cambridge without having the resources to do so.¹ This was certainly true of the chapel staff, where numbers equivalent to those of New College were secured only by the expedient of running the choir on the cheap. Its members were remarkably poorly paid. The chaplains received free board, lodging and livery, and a salary of only £2.13. 4d. p.a.; in their case, however, there were opportunities for increasing this by serving as precentor or sacrist, by celebrating the daily Lady Mass, and by reading the Gospel on festivals.² The eight clerks were allowed free board, loding and livery, and on top of that, only the meagre salary of 20s. p.a.³ The choristers received full maintenance but no salary, and only 4d. per week was allowed for their commons - half the standard rate elsewhere.⁴

The statutes recognised the need for an expert Instructor of the Choristers; but the founder, true to the penny-pinching constitution of the rest of the chapel choir, hoped to be able to secure one without paying the going rate. The statutes declared that if any of the chaplains or clerks of the chapel was sufficiently knowledgeable (eruditus) to instruct the choristers "in plainsong and other music" (in plano cantu et alio cantu), then the President of the College was to appoint him to the post. Only if none of these was willing or able to undertake these duties, was the President to take on someone suitably skilful from outside the College, and to negotiate with him concerning his commons and salary.⁵

At first the former scheme was followed - but this attempt to cut both corners and expenses was neither destined, nor was ever likely to succeed. John Claveryng, then one of the clerks, probably held this office - at a salary of 26s. 8d. p.a.-in 1481/2⁶; by 1482/3 he had entered priest's orders, and the Instructor's salary was raised to 30s. p.a.⁷

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1. e.g. the main personnel of the College consisted of the President and 70 scholars, as at New College and King's; but Wayneflete's resources would only stretch to this magic number by the expedient of describing as "scholars" 30 mere youths who were on half commons only (the "demyes"), and who in fact were no more than grammar school boys - indeed, under the schemes of Wykham and Henry 6, the "demyes" would not have been university students at all, but would still have been boys at Winchester and Eton respectively. Statute 3:- ed. H.M. Commissioners, Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, vol.2., pp.15-16.
 2. Statutes 5, 40,44 and supplementary statute of 1487:- ibid., pp.23-4, 64-5, 67, 71-2, 93.
 3. Statute 5:- ibid., p.23
 4. Weekly commons accounts on Libri Computi:- e.g. OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, ff.6v., 23r., 27r. (1481/2, 1482/3, 1483/4) etc. The five volumes of Libri Computi covering the years 1481-1559 are bound up in a very confusing manner; as a stopgap measure until the damage can be made good, the present writer has compiled lists of contents of each volume, and deposited them in the College library.
 5. Statute 5:- Her Majesty's Commissioners, Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford vol.2, p.24.
 6. He was paid 23s.4d. for noting a book that year, being referred to simply as John Claveryng; meanwhile a clerk unnamed was paid as Instructor. OMC (ctd.)

The following year dom. John Claveryng was paid 40s. as both Instructor and organist¹; he retained these positions until he left the college in December 1485², whereupon he was succeeded for a term by another chaplain, John Hardy, at the same rate³. Thereafter the job was held by one of the clerks, usually at a salary of 40s. p.a. in addition to his 20s. as a clerk; and due respect for his skill and importance was shown by his elevation to the group of senior members of the college, the Fellows and chaplains, who enjoyed commons at 12d. per week, the highest rate which the college supplied.⁴

This system appears not to have worked entirely satisfactorily. Instructors tended to be very short-lived, doubtless because of the inadequacy of the salary offered; and this was not satisfactory in a job where a degree of continuity and stability was desirable. By 1490, therefore, the college was experimenting along the lines permitted by the statutes, of appointing an Instructor from outside the college altogether. Calculations from the weekly commons accounts for 1490/1 show that throughout the year a distinct Instructor was employed at the college; 12d. per week was paid out for the commons of this man, in addition to the payment of commons for the four chaplains and 7-8 clerks⁵. The same arrangement continued for at least the first

p.6076, fn.6 contd...

Bursars' A/c 1481/2:- Liber Computi 1481-8, ff.10r., 13v.
7. ibid., ff.27r., 32v.

1. ibid., fo.72r.; OMC Bursary Book 1477-86, ff.15r., 24r., 33v.
2. View of Bursars' A/c 1484/5:- OMC Liber Computi 1481-8, fo.43r.; Hall Book 1485/6:- OMC Bursary Book 1477-86, ff.37v.-47v.; Bursars' A/c 1485/6:- OMC Liber Computi 1481-8, fo.98r.
3. Bursars' A/c 1485/6:- OMC Liber Computi 1481-8, fo.98r.
4. From March 1486 onwards, both in the Hall Books and in the commons accounts entered on the annual Bursars' A/cs, the Informator Choristarum appears as a separate entity, distinct from both the four chaplains and the eight clerks:- Hall Book 1485/6 - OMC Bursary Book 1477-86, fo.64v. et sqq.; Bursars' A/cs 1485/6 - OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, ff.96r.-97v. Calculations have to be undertaken to determine whether the allowance for the Informator was 4d. or 12d. Where 4d., it merely denotes a supplement paid to an existing clerk-Informator to bring his commons allowance up from 8d. to 12d.; however, where 12d. was allowed, it indicates that a totally separate appointment of a distinct Instructor had been made, in addition to the statutory complement of 4 chaplains and 8 clerks.
5. Bursars' A/c 1490/1:- OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, ff.3r.-4v.; cf. Hall Book 1490/1:- OMC Bursary Book 1490-99, ff.1r.-60v. Between December 1490 and June 1491, there was a full complement of 4 chaplains and 8 clerks, beside the Instructor; during the rest of the year there were 7 clerks on the books, and the Instructor was presumably considered as an eighth clerk.

term of the following year 1491/2¹.

This Instructor was the composer Richard Davy. It can be shown that he was not simply one of the clerks serving as Instructor, but was indeed the extraneus Instructor permitted by the statutes. For six months of 1490/1 his post was held in addition to the full chapel complement of 4 chaplains and 8 clerks²; and his name appears quite separately from those of the clerks on the draft account for September-December 1491³. Further, he was employed on terms allowing him a concession which could hardly have been granted to any ordinary clerk of the chapel, namely, dispensation from attending matins (presumably on non-festal days only); one Dobyll, formerly a chorister, and now a demy, was paid 20d. per term for taking Davy's place at Matins⁴. At least from Michaelmas 1490 until Christmas 1491, Davy served as Instructor of the Choristers, for a fee of 26s. 8d. per year, and he shared with dom. Bernard, one of the chaplains, the 13s. 4d. p.a. paid to the organist; for his service in choir, however, he was still paid only the standard clerk's rate of 20s. per year.⁵ Not surprisingly, therefore, Davy remained at Magdalen no longer than any of his predecessors.

So this experiment was not successful either, and thereafter the college returned to the expedient of appointing one of the clerks as Instructor, at an extra salary of between 33s. 4d. and 40s. p.a. They persevered with this device until Michaelmas 1510; it may not have been consistently satisfactory, for few Instructors stayed very long, but at least it was cheap. At a visitation in 1507, there was a complaint that the then Instructor, George Kendall, was negligent in teaching the choristers⁶, and the inadequacy of the whole arrangement may once again have been becoming painfully obvious. In any event, in 1510, the college decided at last to employ a fully professional Instructor of the Choristers, and to pay him the going rate for the job. In that year they recruited

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1. View of bursars' A/c:- OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.15r.
 2. See notes 4 & 5 above, p.6077.
 3. OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.18r.; Davy is listed between the chaplains and the clerks, with an entry to himself.
 4. ibid.:- Solut' dobyll suplenti vicem Ricardi davys tempore matutinarum xx d.
 5. 1490/1:- Solut' domino Bernarde et Ricardo davys pro informacione choristarum et pulsacione organorum xij s. viij d.; Bursars' A/c, OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.6r. Sept.-Dec.1491:- Solut' domino Bernard pro stallo suo xiiij s. iiiij d., pro medietate lecture evangeliorum xx d. et pro medietate organorum xx d. - xvj s. viij d. ...Solut' Ricardo davys pro stallo suo vs, pro informacione choristarum vj s viij d et pro media parte melodie organorum xx d - xiiij s iiiij d. :- ibid.,fo.18r.
 6. 19C volume of transcripts from Winchester Episcopal Registers:- OMC MS Visitaciones Collegii Magdalenensis Oxon', fo.49r.

Master Robert Porret as Instructor; he had been a clerk of the chapel of King's College, Cambridge between Michaelmas 1506 and June 1509¹, was already a Cambridge B.Mus.², and became a D. Mus. of Oxford University in February 1516³. His salary at Magdalen as Instructor was at first £7 p.a., increased to £8 p.a. in 1512; in addition the college paid 20s. p.a. for the rent of his house somewhere outside the college precinct, and 13s. 4d. p.a. for his livery⁴. Until Christmas 1513 the college compensated for the creation of Porret's post by keeping one of the clerkships vacant; but thereafter all were kept filled, so the total chapel staff became 4 chaplains, 1 expert Instructor of the Choristers, 8 clerks and 16 choristers - and so it remained at least until the reign of Queen Mary. Thereby the instruction of the college's choristers received the kind of continuity and stability which it needed. Porret served as Instructor without a break from Michaelmas 1510 until Michaelmas 1531, and as organist from Michaelmas 1529 until his death in 1550⁵.

Thus the experience of Magdalen College neatly exemplifies the over-riding need for any choir to make proper provision for the instruction of its choristers at this particular period. The statutes of c.1480 recognised the need for an expert Instructor, but financial stringency required that the attempt be made to get along without one; but this was one corner which could not be cut without some detrimental effect, and by 1510 the college had adopted the conventional expedient of employing a full-time professional church musician as its Instructor of the Choristers.

1. CKC Mundum Book 9, ff.7v.-8r.; Mundum Book 10, part 1, ff.11r,12v.

2. MMB, p.461

3. Muniments of the University of Oxford:- OBL Register of Congregation G (1505-16), fo.278r.

4. Bursars' A/cs 1510/11, 1512/13:- OMC Liber Computi 1510-30 (no foliation in this volume). As a supernumary appointment, the Bursars did not at first always consider Porrett to be a standard member of the chapel staff, and in 1512/13 and 1513/14 listed payment of his salary not under Stipendia Capellanorum et Clericorum but under Stipendia ffamulorum.

5. Bursars' A/cs 1510/11, 1529/30, 1530/1, 1549/50:- OMC Liber Computi 1510-30, unfoliated; Liber Computi 1530-42, ff.3v., 7v.; 19v., 21r.; 42r, 77r., 66r. etc.; Liber Computi 1543-59, ff.35v,90v.

This case-history certainly indicates that by now it was not really possible for a major institution to get by without the services of a skilled Instructor. Consequently, there is evidence of considerable demand on the part of the various institutions for competent and experienced Instructors, allowing the ambitious to move easily from job to job up the promotion tree. This is demonstrated by the career of Alexander Bell. He first appears as Informator Choristarum at Magdalen College Oxford at Michaelmas 1486, though he may already have held the job for six months before that.¹ In any event, he remained at Magdalen no more than a year at the most; he left Oxford on 25 March 1487, and next turns up as Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Durham Cathedral priory, remaining there eight years between Michaelmas 1487 and Michaelmas 1495.² At that point he moved south again to take up the post at Salisbury Cathedral, where he is recorded as having been Instructor of the Choristers during 1495/6³. At Salisbury, however, he entered Holy Orders, and by 1500 had been succeeded as Instructor by John Wever⁴. Bell, meanwhile, became a vicar-choral of the Cathedral, and as Dom. Alexander Bell was promoted to the priest-stall of Bytton on 1 May 1501; he was mentioned again as a vicar on 22 April 1503, but does not occur in the archives again.⁵

The institutions, too, could go to a considerable length to secure the services of a competent Instructor. For instance, at some point during 1498/9 Magdalen College Oxford found itself without an Instructor, and spent 10s. 3d. on the services of an agent riding round to various places to try to secure the services of a new one. One of the places to which he was sent was Salisbury⁶; by then their former Instructor Alexander Bell was at Salisbury Cathedral, but if the agent's visit was an invitation to him to return to Oxford, then it was unsuccessful.⁷

1. John Hardy, one of the chaplains, was Informator until 25 March 1486 (Bursars' A/c, 1485/6:- OMC Liber Computi 1481-8, fo.98r.). Calculations from the commons account show that it was one of the clerks who then took over (ibid., ff.94r-97v.; OMC Bursary Book 1477-86, ff.37v.-92r.; and see fn. 4 above), and Bell certainly held the post for the first two terms of 1486/7 immediately following (OMC Liber Computi 1481-8, fo.115r.)
2. ed. J.T.Fowler, Extracts from the account rolls..., vol.1, pp.282,194,100.
3. SDC, A/c of Collector of choristers' rents, 1495/6.
4. SDC, A/c of collector of choristers' rents 1500/1
5. SDC Reg. Harward, pp.1r.,14r.
6. Bursars' A/c 1498/9, OMC Liber Computi 1490-1510 fo.95r.:- Solut' uni equitanti ad Sar[isberiam] et alia loca pro Informatore Choristarum x s ij d.
7. Salisbury Cathedral's John Kegwyn (see above, pp. 6070-1) had a less conventional career. He too entered priest's orders while at Salisbury, and was being referred to as dom. John Kegwyn by August 1464 (SDC Reg. Newton p.76); however, in 1466 he went absent from the cathedral without leave for a time, and though he and the chapter settled their differences, he left Salisbury in May 1467 (SDC Reg. Newton, p.84; A/cs of Collector of Choristers' rents 1465/6, 1467/8). He later turns up briefly as priest of the gild of St. Michael and "repeter of the quere" of the parish church of St. Michael, Cornhill, London, for one quarter of the year 1 November 1474-1 November 1475 (Churchwardens' A/cs - LGL MS 4071/1 fo.26r); and as a vicar-choral of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, May-October 1475. (WndDC v B 2, ff.42v.45r.)

6.4.2. The duties of the Instructors of the Choristers.

6.4.2.A. The content of the choristers' instruction.

The duties of these professional Instructors of the Choristers at this period, as shown by such Indentures of appointment as have so far been traced, show that their work concentrated on the musical instruction of the choirboys, on attendance at the performance of votive masses and antiphons, and on attendance at High Mass and the more important Hours services on the greater festivals. The clearest account from an early date of the content of the education and training which the specialist Instructor was expected to provide for the choristers occurs in the indenture of William Horwood, appointed as Instructor at Lincoln Cathedral on 29 March 1477. He was to teach all the boys to play the organ, and also to teach the clavichord to two or three of the boys whom he found most suitable. The singing techniques he was to teach included plainsong (playnsonge), composed polyphony ('pryksonge'), and three methods of improvising lines of melody over a given plainsong - 'faburden, diskant and countour'¹ - probably the whole range of singing techniques then in use.²

John Kegwyn's appointment at Salisbury in 1463 specified merely that he was to teach the choristers in singing "and other accustomed things", "in the best manner he knew"³. In 1479 Richard Hygons' indenture at Wells Cathedral, though less specific than Horwood's at Lincoln, neatly covered the full range of singing techniques in the words in cantu plano, fracto et discantu - in plainsong, and both composed polyphony and descant; he was also to teach the boys organ-

1. A.F. Leach, "Schools" in VCH Lincolnshire, vol.2, p 436.

2. When Thomas Love, chantry chaplain in the collegiate church of St. Mary de Campis, Norwich, made his will in 1513, he bequeathed almost all his cash and goods to pious uses, including 40s. to help his nephew, also called Thomas Love, through school. Evidently he wanted a chorister's education for him:- Item I bequeth to Thomas Love the sonne of Edmunde Love my brother xl s to pay his scole hyre ther wyth be myn executors quarterly, that is to say to lerne pleyn songe pryksonge discant Organ pleyenge and gramer as forforth as the seid mony shall endure. NNRO Test. Reg. Spurlinge, fo.15r.

3. ...quod ipse idem Johannes diligenter instruet et meliori modo quo sciverit informabit Choristas eiusdem Ecclesie xiiijCem in numero in cantu et aliis consuetis:- SDC Reg. Newton, p.57.

playing according to their abilities¹. Two further indentures from a later period confirm this information. In 1531 Thomas Kirkby was appointed Instructor of the Choristers at York Minster, with the duty of teaching the boys 'planesong, prikesong, figuration and descaunt'²; and in 1538 Thomas Knight received an indenture of appointment as Instructor and organist at Salisbury Cathedral, with the duty of teaching the boys "playnsonge pryckesonge ffaburdon or descante"³. The duties of the Cantors of the monastic Lady Chapel choirs were couched in very similar terms⁴, and the regular appearance of the terms pricksong, cantus fractus and the like make it abundantly clear that teaching the choristers to take part in the singing of composed polyphonic music from written notation was an essential part of their duties.

6.4.2.B. The Instructor's attendance at service in church.

In church, the main daily work of the Instructors lay in attending the votive masses and antiphons sung outside the normal course of the cycle of High Mass and Canonical Hours. The surviving corpus of polyphonic music from the period c.1470 - c.1530 suggests that these were musically the most important occasions of the daily church routine, so it is hardly remarkable that they were the occasions on which the institution's principal musician was required to attend and take charge.

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1. in Cantu plano fracto et discantu lusuque Organorum iuxta eorum dispositionem et capacitatem:- indenture of Richard Hygons, ref. as in fn. 4, p. 6072 above).
 2. York Minster Archives, Register of Leases 1508-43, MS Wa., ff.50v-51r.; quoted by P. Aston, The Music of York Minster, p.5, fn.6.
 3. SDC Leasebook 136777 (1510-62), fo.24v.
 4. Durham, Indentures of Thomas Foderley (1496), John Tildesley (1502) and Thomas Ashwell (1513):- 'planesong, priknott, faburdon, dischant, swarenote et countre' and organ-playing - MMB, pp.187,429. Worcester, Indenture of John Hampton (1486):- 'in plano cantu et fracto viz. Pryked song' - WorDC A 6 (1) fo.82r.; Indenture of Daniel Boyce (1522):- in canticis planis et fractis - WorDC A 6 (2) fo.128r. Glastonbury, Indenture of James Renynger (1534):- 'pricke songe and descaunte' - PRO E 135 2/31. Cirencester, Indenture of Henry Edmunds (1538):- 'prickid songe...and ...Accidens of gramer' - PRO E 315 94, fo.160r. Gloucester, Indenture of John Tucke (1515):- in plano cantu, diviso sive fracto et discantu - ed. W.H. Hart, Historia et Cartularium Monasterii Gloucesterie, vol.3, p.291. etc. etc. etc.

At Lincoln, William Horwood was to attend daily at Lady Mass, and play the organ at the service.¹ John Kegwyn at Salisbury was similarly to attend Lady Mass and play the organ there daily, and to attend at the accustomed singing of votive antiphons². At Wells in 1479, Richard Hygons was to attend daily Lady Mass, and the votive antiphons to Jesus and the Virgin at all times at which they were accustomed to be sung³. Both of Hygons' surviving compositions - a five-part Salve Regina in the Eton Choirbook⁴, and a fragmentary Gaude virgo mater christi⁵ - are Marian antiphons appropriate to this latter devotion.

The content of the surviving corpus of polyphonic compositions suggests that at this period the only other occasions of great musical importance were High Mass, procession, and the greater Hours services on major festivals⁷; and, though details varied, it was largely at these services only that the attendance of the Instructors of the Choristers was expressly required. John Kegwyn was obliged to attend the daily round of Mass and all the canonical Hours only on principal feasts; on other feast-days he could turn up just as he pleased and as he found convenient, and on ferias he was apparently not expected to attend at all. It was especially stated on his indenture that he was not to be fined from any absence from service, as a vicar-choral would be⁶. At Wells, Richard Hygons' duties of attending service in choir were similarly light; he was required to attend and sing just at High Mass and first and second vespers on Sundays and festivals, and also at matins on five specified double feasts.⁸

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1. A.F. Leach, "Schools" in VCH Lincolnshire, vol.2., p.436.
 2. SDC Reg. Newton, p.57.
 3. Indenture of appointment, ref. as in note 4, p.6072 above.
 4. ed. F.Ll. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.2., p.39.
 5. WlsDC, item without reference, known as "the Hygons fragment".
 6. SDC Reg. Newton, pp.57-8.
 7. See the discussion of the repertoire of Tattershall College, 1496-99 above, pp. 6023-5.
 8. Indenture of appointment; ref. as in note 4, p.6072 above.

6.4.2.C. The method of the choristers' instruction.

Such arrangements and understandings were, of course, essential if sufficient time were to be found for the Instructors to discharge the cardinal feature of their work - teaching the boys the skills involved in singing solo and choral composed polyphony. Teaching a boy to sing plainsong or descant, and teaching him to sing late 15th century choral polyphony, were two jobs of totally different character. The difference is similar to that which lies between training a carthorse to pull carts, and training a racehorse to win steeple-chases. Salisbury plainsong was music essentially simple in form, slow-moving, sung in unison, and requiring no special voice-training since most of the repertoire is contained within a compass of only 10 notes. The corpus of Salisbury chant and ceremonial, and the techniques for improvising descant, were finite; once a boy had learnt and mastered them his musical education was complete, as far as his work in church was concerned, and he could devote himself to the ordinary grammar education of the day.

Teaching a boy to sing solo and choral polyphonic music was a totally different matter. The corpus of this music was not finite; new music was being composed all the time, and there was always fresh stuff to learn. Its performance required a mastery of rhythmic complexity, disciplined breath control, precise intonation, accurate articulation of rapid note-passages and exact vocal unanimity. These were skills for which the music sung by boys had not previously called at all, and it was in this field that the services of a skilled musician were most evidently needed.

One important development here was the progressive simplification of mensural notation which occurred during the 15th century. The artifices and complexities of late Ars Nova notation must have rendered it quite unteachable to children; but with the progressive abandonment of elaborate schemes of colouration, the general shortening of note-values, and the disappearance of many of the more abstruse effects of the principles of alteration, the teaching of mensural notation became a much simpler matter, and methods could be devised of teaching it to choristers. For instance, in the room known to have served at the time as the choristers' practice room at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, music in mensural notation has recently been discovered painted on to the plaster of one of the walls; the writing is large enough to be read straight off the wall, and has been dated c.1470-80.¹

¹P.E. Curnow, "Royal lodgings of the thirteenth century in the Lower Ward of Windsor Castle:- some recent archeological discoveries", 4 Reports of the Society of the Friends of St. George's, pp.218-28, esp.p.225-6; C.Rouse, "Recently discovered wall-paintings in the Lower Ward, Windsor Castle", ibid., pp.275-81; A.Hughes, "The painted music in No.25 The Cloisters", ibid., p.282.

Very little can now be deciphered, but it may not be accidental that amongst the few notes still visible there appear all the various shapes in which the ligature cum opposita proprietate can occur; it could well have been a permanent exercise painted on the wall to train the boys in recognising the shapes which mensural notation could take.

Also it was necessary to concoct vocal exercises to train boys' voices in the many skills which were involved in the singing of complex vocal polyphony, far beyond those for which the singing of plainsong and descant had ever called. A few such exercises still survive in a book in the British Museum, the nature of which can be established by comparison with similar examples preserved elsewhere. It is a volume containing both formal treatises on Latin grammar and several pages of Latin sentences concocted to exemplify various points of grammar and vocabulary. Such volumes were used by schoolmasters teaching Latin in boys' grammar schools.¹ The present volume was compiled c.1460-70, and appears to have been for use by a master teaching in the grammar school of St. Anthony's Hospital, London.² This Hospital had a flourishing chapel choir³, and it is evident that this book was for use by someone who was also concerned with the chapel music, since it contains - as well as its didactic material - sections devoted to the words of hymns, proses and sequences used in the Salisbury liturgy. The name John Claveryng appears from time to time in the book, possibly denoting its owner; a John Claveryng was later Instructor of the Choristers at Magdalen College, Oxford, 1481-86.⁴ On one page of the book appear four passages of music on five-line staves which certainly look like singing-exercises for voice-training; they are basically decorated scales in running crotchets, brief enough to be sung in one breath - just the kind of thing which an Instructor might devise as warming-up exercises for singing boys expected to perform the florid polyphony of the period.⁵

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1. B.M. Add. MS. 37075; cf. N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages, pp.98-100.
 2. See Catalogue of Additions to Manuscripts in the British Museum 1900-05, p.344 (referring to fo.306v.).
 3. See above, pp. 501c - 2.
 4. See above, p. 6076 and fn. 6 & 7, and p. 6077, and fn. 1 & 2.
 5. BM. Add. MS. 37075, fo.147r.; transcribed below as Appendix C9, p. A063. On fo.255v. appears the Salisbury plainsong of the hymn Veni creator spiritus, and alongside it a single part in mensural notation, set to a text beginning Te reformator sensium. This is stanza 4 of the hymn Salvator mundi domine, which in English secular uses was sung to the tune of Veni creator spiritus (MMB, p.151, fn.1.) With a bit of ingenuity the line of mensural music can be seen to fit a monorhythmic form of the plainsong.

6.4.3. The streamlining of the post of Instructor.

6.4.3.A. The Supervisor of the Choristers.

One corollary of the total transformation of the nature and status of the post of Instructor was the way in which many of its previous appurtenances came to appear unsuitable to the class of men now being recruited to the job. It has been noted how, for instance, under the terms of the statutes of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, made in 1352, the Instructor appeared as a pretty lowly figure, combining functions as general pedagogue, housemaster and banker. He taught Latin grammar as well as chant and all the other skills necessary for serving in chapel, and received the boys' salaries on their behalf, supervised their keep in board and lodging and clothing, looked after their savings, and made their excuses to the chapter for any absence from service.¹ As late as 1460-1, Robert Cator's rules for the upbringing of the choristers of Wells Cathedral, and his assessment of the qualities needed by their Instructor to apply them in the manner he envisaged, still required that he be very much the old-style pedagogue, housemaster, banker and moral tutor rolled into one.² The Instructor was to be in priest's orders, of upright character, and able to set his boys an admirable moral example by his own modest life-style. He was to be knowledgeable in grammar as well as in plainsong and descant; he was to be accountant of the income of the Choristers' House; he was banker for the wages and legacies which the boys received. Although apparently not resident in the choristers' house³, the Instructor was clearly not expected ever to be very far away from it. He taught the boys there most of the day, and was expected to supervise their play, and to look in at night after they had gone to bed. Similarly, at Tattershall College, the Instructor remained burdened with day-to-day attendance on the purchase of cloth for the boys' gowns and hose, and everything

1. Statutes 4,16:- WndDC iv B 1, ff.75v., 77r.; Dalton, pp.6,9; and see above, p. 3014 and fn.3. Each boy had his own money-box in which his savings were placed against the day he left the choir, and the Instructor was responsible for the safe-keeping of its contents - see payments to choristers on Treasurer's A/cs 1468/9, 1477/8 (WndDC xv 34 56,54) and cf. WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS, pp.347-8.
2. WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS, pp.347-55; and see also above, pp. 5087, 5094.
3. In the case of Cator himself, the muniments of the vicars-choral record that he served regularly as one of the principals of the New Close of the Vicars during his career at Wells, for which he needed to be a resident of the Vicars' close - see WlsVC, MS 63 (Register of the Vicars Choral 1393-1533) pp.7-15 passim, (1441-69).

else necessary for them¹; and at Eton College the Instructor was responsible for arranging for sick choristers to be nursed in the town, and for paying for their food during their incapacity.²

Such unspecialised functionaries could quite adequately cope with the Instruction of the Choristers in the days when the boys were largely inessential decorations in church. But this had now ceased to be the case, and it was no longer appropriate to expect the highly skilled and professional musicians who now acted as Instructors to perform the routine duties of supervising the board, lodging, clothing, and banking arrangements of the choristers as well. At many institutions, the Instructor was duly relieved of these routine chores, and left free to concentrate on the musical aspects of his job. This was achieved by the creation of a new post, that of the Supervisor Choristarum.

At St. George's Chapel, Windsor, this step was taken in 1477, while the increase in the number of choristers from 6 to 13 was in progress. The first supervisor was Mr. William Paynell, former vicar-choral, and now chantry chaplain and chapter clerk; his reward was 13s. 4d. p.a.³ In 1479 he was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Raynes, one of the vicars-choral⁴; later (1489-99) the job was discharged by John Frenshipp, one of the chantry chaplains⁵ - there was, obviously, no particular need for this job to be done by any of the musical staff. The responsibilities he had taken over were expressed in the phrase describing his duties on the Treasurer's Accounts:- pro supervisione necessariorum chorustarum.⁶

From 1492/3 onwards, King's College, Cambridge, effected a similar division in the duties formerly undertaken by the Instructor; and thenceforth one of the three fellows appointed each year as Bursars to manage the college's finances, was paid 6s. 8d. for extra work undertaken as Supervisor choristarum. He took over responsibility for all expenditure

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1. Expense choristarum sections on Receiver's A/cs:- DLD U1475 Q 16/1 (1492/3), Q 16/2 (1495/6).
 2. Custus fforinseci and Custus informorum sections on Bursars' Accounts; e.g. EPF Audit Roll 13 (1469/70), 15 (1470/1), 16 (1471/2) etc.
 3. WndDC xv 34 54; E.H. Fellows, The Vicars or Minor Canons...pp.62-3.
 4. WndDC xv 34 57; his salary as Supervisor was 40s. p.a.
 5. WndDC xv 34 62-71.
 6. In 1522, it was decreed by the chapter that the Supervisor choristarum should become their resident housemaster in the apartments built for them and the chantry priests of the college by canon James Denton:- CUL MS Dd.2.26, fo.13r.

on the choristers during the year¹. At Tattershall College, the Instructor had until the 1490's been burdened with day-to-day attendance on the purchase of the boys' clothing etc.²; but by 1502 his successor had shed these responsibilities and they were thenceforth undertaken by the stewards of the College "by virtue of their office"³. The labour of educating and looking after the choristers had similarly been divided at Fotheringhay by the 1530's; while one of the clerks was paid each year pro informacione choristarum, one of the chaplains was paid pro Choristarum tuicione⁴. At Salisbury Cathedral, the appointment of a specialised Instructor in 1461 had the same effect. While the Instructor took over from the Submagister choristarum the boys' training in music, the latter continued as before to run the choristers' boarding house, acting as housemaster and looking after their daily necessities⁵. Not until after the Reformation were these two jobs again amalgamated into the responsibility of a single man.⁶

1. Bursars' A/c 1492/3:- CKC Mundum Book 8, fo.31r.- Et solut' Mro hacumblen iij^o die Septembris per modum Regardi pro attendencia et labore suis circa empcionem Rerum necessariarum pro chorustis per annum vj s viij d. The phrase used later was simply 'pro supervisione chorustarum', as e.g. in 1518/9:- Exhibitio choristarum - Item solut' magistro Toche pro diversis emptis per eundem hoc anno ut patet per billam eius viij li xix s j d. Item solut' eidem pro supervisione chorustarum hoc anno vj s viij d.
2. Expense choristarum sections of Receiver's A/cs 1492/3 and 1495/6:- DLD U1475 Q 16/1-2; e.g. Q 16/2:- Et in denariis solutis Roberto Lynne habenti Gubernacionem doctrine choristarum super empciones et provisiones [sic] certorum ornamentorum et aliorum eisdem necessariorum lxxiiij s ob ... et sol' pro x virgis panni kersey Wachitt emptis pro caligis puerorum per R Lynne vij s x d.
3. Expense choristarum section of Stewards' A/c 1502/3, DLD U1475 Q19/8:- Et in denariis solutis per Computantes virtute officiorum suorum solutis pro diversis ornamentis emptis et provisiois pro choristis Collegii hoc anno ...cj s iij d.
4. e.g. Master of College's A/c 1537/8:- PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 2774.
5. SDC, A/cs of Collector of Choristers' Rents, 1461/2 - 1540/41. At first, this novel division of labour gave rise to some painful demarcation disputes between the Instructor and the Submagister:- SDC Reg. Machon, p.173.
6. D. Robertson, Sarum Close, pp.140-1

6.4.3.B. The contraction of the teaching of grammar.

There was another respect in which the work of both the Instructor and the choristers was pruned down in such a way as to allow them to concentrate on the purely musical side of their work. As has been observed above, it had traditionally been the practice to extend to choristers instruction not only in music and their parts in the ceremony of the liturgy, but also in Latin grammar, the backbone of the standard education of the day.¹ However, the cultivation of choral polyphonic music involving boys' voices added to their necessary achievements a grasp of a totally new notation system, and singing techniques far in advance of those required by plainsong and descant.² The corpus of polyphonic music was not finite, and new music was always coming along to be learnt - music of a type which must have been very time-consuming in rehearsal. There is some evidence that this eventually caused the teaching of Latin to be abandoned almost completely, while the musical content of the Instructor's teaching and of the boys' education expanded until it consumed the whole of the available time.

At Wells Cathedral, for instance, the Instructor envisaged in 1460 by Robert Cator's rules for the upbringing of the choristers was to be 'knowledgeable in grammar' (in grammatica scientificus) - and indeed, grammar teaching must have taken up a considerable part of his time, since it was envisaged that by the time a boy's voice broke, he might be ready to proceed straight to University.³ The basis on which the composer Richard Hygons was employed as Instructor in 1479 was quite different. Hygons was by no means Cator's priest - pedagogue (sacerdos, vir per omnia tam scientia quam moribus approbatus⁴); he was a layman, citizen and inhabitant of the City of Wells, and his sole qualification for the job was his being 'vir in cantu scientificus'. He was required to teach the choristers singing and organ-playing⁵ - but nothing was said about his teaching them Latin grammar, and this side of the choristers' education must thenceforth have been taken care of either at the

1. See above, pp. 5093-5

2. See above, pp. 6081-2, 6084-5.

3. WlsDC, Dean Cosyn's MS, pp. 347, 348.

4. ibid., p. 347

5. Indenture of appointment; ref. as in n. 4, p. 6072 above. Probably the clearest insight available into the transition from the old-style instructor to the new can be gained by comparing Robert Cator's rules of 1460 (WlsDC, Dean Cosyn's MS, pp. 347-355; English translation in ed. A. Watkin, A Wells Cathedral Miscellany, pp. 98-109) with the indenture of appointment of Richard Hygons as Instructor in 1479 (ref. as in fn. 4, p. 6072 above).

cathedral grammar school, or largely neglected - except for an ability to read Latin accurately enough to sing the liturgy and read the lessons.

At Tattershall College, it had never been contemplated that the Instructor of the Choristers should be responsible also for the boys' education in grammar; the college had a separate grammar school, and the choristers' were directed, by statute, to attend this¹. In 1492/3 and 1495/6 the college was still paying for the copying of grammar books for the choristers to use at school; Robert Lounde, one of the clerks, even obligingly copied out Donatus's Ars Minor for the use of his son, William, and was paid 6d. for his trouble.² However, by 1519 the boys had ceased to attend the grammar school, and the boys' training in grammar had been deputed to their Instructor in singing - and he largely neglected it, teaching little or none at all.³ From Injunctions issued by Commissioners of Edward 6 in 1547, and re-issued by Elizabeth 1 in 1559, it would appear that by then it was usual for a boy to emerge from choristerhood completely ignorant of a proper Latin education - wherefore church authorities were directed to support former choristers for up to five years at school after their voices broke, to compensate for the degree to which their duties in church had interfered with their due education.⁴ It seems clear that this decline in the pursuit of the non-musical side of the boys' education was caused by the increasing demands made on their time by the expansion of their contribution to the music of the church at this period. The Instructor of the Choristers had emerged as an official of solely musical capacities, concerned purely with the now highly technical and demanding job of teaching the choristers their parts in the performance of the music and ceremonial of the institution's daily religious devotions.

By the second quarter of the 16th century, it was recognised that the Instructor of the Choristers of a liturgical choir had evolved for himself a totally distinctive role in the preparation and conduct of the music of the church services. Consequently, it had become plain that it had totally ceased to be appropriate to consider his job any longer as being merely that of a regular chaplain or clerk with a few extra duties attached. His job now called for qualifications and qualities which

1. Statutes 10,22:- DLD U1475 Q21/1, ff.3v., 5v.

2. Expense Choristarum on Receiver's A/cs, DLD U1475 Q 16/1, 16/2.

3. Record of visitation by the bishop of Lincoln, 1519:- VDL*, vol.3, p.111.

4. SCMA, p.304; K. Edwards, "The Cathedral church of Salisbury", VCH Wiltshire, vol.3, pp.184-5.

*VDL = ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations in the Diocese of Lincoln, 1517-31.

made him quite distinct from the other members of the choir. In the statutes of Cardinal College, Oxford (founded 1526) therefore, the Instructor appeared as a member of the choral forces in his own right; he had a distinct post of his own, being neither one of the thirteen chaplains nor one of the 12 clerks, but simply the Informator Choristarum in his own right - the seniormost, and best-paid member of the chapel staff.¹ This appreciation of the role and importance of the Instructor received similar prominence in the framing of the statutes of the New Foundation Cathedrals during the 1540's, and remains in force to the present day.

6.5. The role of the gentlemen of the choir.

6.5.1. The cultivation of choral polyphony.

To quite a conspicuous degree, the composition and constitution of the men's voices in liturgical choirs were also affected by the developments in sacred music over the last 40 years of the 15th century. The increasing incidence of the large choirbook style of musical manuscript towards the end of the century indicates pretty clearly that the practice of performing large-scale polyphonic settings with a chorus of voices totalling up to 15 or more, was by then becoming increasingly commonly observed. The earliest book yet discovered, ^{that is} sufficiently large to justify the supposition that it was deliberately designed to permit a chorus of voices to sing from it, was that from which there now survives a single leaf in the Public Record Office, dating from c.1450-60.² Other fragments of large choirbooks are known from the last half of the 15th century³; while from the turn of the century itself, and the first few years of the 16th, there survive the Eton, Lambeth and Caius choirbooks, complete, or tolerably so.

1. YMB, pp.36-7

2. PRO E 163 22/1/3,; discussed above, pp.5078-9.

3. e.g. a fragment of a setting of Magnificat among the archives of Canterbury Cathedral priory (CDC, box of binding fragments); and another fragment in the archives of All Souls' College, Oxford, mentioned by F.L.Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.1, p.142.

Indeed, it may not be inaccurate to state that by 1500 the capacity to render choral polyphony in up to five parts, and covering the full three-octave compass, was considered to be a standard feature of the accomplishments of any competent liturgical choir.

This placed increasing emphasis on the need to provide men able to sing florid polyphony from mensural notation - and, in practice, that meant (at first) the provision not of men in priest's orders, but of professional lay clerks. The choir established for the chapel of Magdalen College Oxford in c.1480 incorporated this consideration; of its twelve men, four were chaplains and eight were lay clerks.¹ Similar proportions were observed when twelve extra men's voices were added to the choir of St. George's Chapel, Windsor, between 1476 and 1482 - of the twelve, three were priests, and nine were lay-clerks.² Although an exact breakdown of the figures is not immediately possible from the household accounts, it would appear that of the 36 gentlemen of Edward 4's Chapel Royal at Christmas 1465, 12 were priests and 24 lay-clerks.³ Henry 7 was content to maintain a more compact and better balanced chapel choir; in 1500 its 24 gentlemen consisted of 9 priests and 15 clerks (with 10 boys)⁴; in 1503 there were 26 gentlemen, consisting of 8 priests and 18 clerks (with 12 boys).⁵ At King's College, Cambridge, a short-lived reorganisation of the chapel choir was in progress around the years 1499-1503; briefly the number of chaplains was reduced from ten to six or seven, while the number of clerks was increased from six to eight.⁶ In all these examples, a clear preference for lay clerks over priests is detectable, and can be associated with the need for substantial teams of professional singers to render choral polyphonic music.

1. See above, pp. 6030-1.

2. See above, pp. 6039-41. The choir thus resulting consisted of 16 priest-vicars, and 15 lay-clerks.

3. PRO E 101 411/15, fo.17r. The chaplains appear to be listed together at the beginning of the list of names; then follow the lay clerks, headed by the most senior of them, John Plomer.

4. PRO LC 2/1, fo.4.

5. *ibid.*, fo.68v.

6. Bursars' A/cs 1499/1500 - 1502/3 inclusive - CKC Mundum Book 9.

6.5.2. The provision of expert singers.

6.5.2.A. Lay clerks and lay vicars.

This need to secure the services of expert singers provoked certain of the institutions into contriving some very ingenious devices to enable them to keep abreast of musical developments. As has been observed earlier, the chapel choir of Magdalen College, Oxford, had at first to be run on the cheap¹; in respect of the eight clerkships, therefore, the need to employ expert singers had to be reconciled with the unfortunate fact that there wasn't much money to pay them. Waynefleete solved this problem in an ingenious way. The eight clerks were allowed free board, lodging and livery, and on top of that only the meagre salary of 20s. p.a.² This was hardly tempting; so Waynefleete enhanced the attractions of the post by the novel idea of making available to the clerks free tuition in the University disciplines of Logica and sophista³. In fact, in 1550 it was stated that both the clerks and chaplains of the college "apply themselves to the liberal sciences and divinity, and thereunto are forced by the ordinances of our house"⁴. The clerkships thereby were made attractive to young men who lacked patronage or resources of their own, but who possessed good singing voices, and were seeking some elements of a University education; in order to secure this, they were prepared to serve as singing-men in the chapel, and to put up with the meagre salary (for a few years anyway) on the grounds that the educational opportunities offered made the inconvenience worthwhile. One result was that there was a very rapid turnover of clerks; lists of names recoverable from the bursars' accounts show that very few stayed for more than three or four years. For instance, of the eight clerks employed at Michaelmas 1488, not a single one was still on the books at Michaelmas 1491⁵. Nevertheless, despite all the vicissitudes faced by the Magdalen choir, the information which can be gleaned from the accounts and other sources concerning the cultivation of polyphonic music in the chapel would indicate that the quality of the singing, and of the singers was very high⁶; as short-term

1. See above, pp. 6075-6.

2. Statute 5:- Her Majesty's Commissioners, Statutes of the Colleges of Oxford, vol.2, p.23

3. Statute 49, :- ibid., p.78

4. J.R. Bloxam, A Register ...of Magdalen College...Oxford, vol.2, p.xlviii.

5. Bursars' A/cs 1487/8, Sept. 1491-Dec.1491:- OMC Liber Computi 1481-88, ff.163v.-4r.; Liber Computi 1490-1510, fo.18r.

6. It appears that a repertoire of polyphonic music was rapidly built up, and a stock of books of polyphonic settings acquired. The accounts contain a steady stream of payments for copying new music for the choir to learn; the matter is discussed more fully on pp. 6021-6023 above.

posts for able young singers seeking an academic education, these clerkships clearly had very positive attractions. Indeed, Wayneflete's inspired idea produced a system similar in essentials to that of the modern academical clerkships offered by Magdalen and other University college chapel choirs, with equally satisfactory results.

At Salisbury Cathedral, the obvious desirability of employing expert lay singers in the choir was rendered problematic by the long-established rule that all the men of the choir be vicars choral, in one of the three degrees of Major Orders.¹ The chapter could simply have created a new class of lay clerks, and just added them to the existing choir - as bishop Robert Shyrborne did at Chichester Cathedral in 1526². At Salisbury, however, the chapter shrank from this expedient - probably because another solution had already long been presenting itself, ever since a way was found in the 1460's of employing an expert lay Instructor of the Choristers.³ As has been seen, by an agreement of c.1458, the chapter agreed to pay to the community of vicars-choral the sums paid in by canons towards the wages of vicars of stalls which were in fact vacant.⁴ Now it may have been improper for the Dean and Chapter to admit as vicars-choral men who were not in the appropriate Holy Orders; but there was no reason whatever why the community of vicars itself should not use the income from vacant stalls to employ lay singers, and - with the chapter's approval - introduce them into the choir as substitute singers to fill the vacant stalls. Such a device was entirely legitimate, broke none of the rules, traditions or statutes of the Cathedral, and solved the problem of bringing expert musicians into the performance of the liturgy in the cathedral choir.

Exactly when this device was first adopted is not known - though in some respects, it was in application as early as the 1460's when the expedient was adopted of paying the lay Instructors of the Choristers for his duties in choir partly out of the revenues of a vacant vicar's stall.⁵

1. See above, p. 2007.

2. BM Cotton Charter xii 60; hereby the choir was enhanced by the services of four expert lay clerks.

3. See above, pp. 6068-71

4. See above, p. 6071, and n. 1.

5. See discussion of the indenture of John Kegwyn (1463) above, pp. 6070-1.

By the time of the two sole surviving accounts of the communar of the vicars, March-June 1493 and June-September 1494¹, there were already three of these "lay vicars", as they came to be called. In 1493, there were 19 vicars' stalls vacant, and in 1494 16; from them, the communar recorded receipt of various sums properly due to the vicars of those stalls. The 7s. 6d. per term received for each of three vacant deacon stalls was then paid by the communar to the three lay vicars employed by the community of vicars to occupy those stalls. Their names were Bremell, Bremshawe and Organista²; the man named Organista, very appropriately, played the organ at Lady Mass in the Lady Chapel³, and probably was in fact the then Instructor of the Choristers. By 1500, that is, the professional lay musician had become a feature of the choir of even a long-established cathedral such as Salisbury; however, the lay vicars were employees not of the chapter, but of the community of vicars⁴, and in the absence of any extant Register of the Vicars' College, little more about their origins and duties can be discovered.⁵

The lay vicar was a phenomenon known also at Wells Cathedral; though thanks to one unique feature of its constitution, the employment of up to four professional singers there could be undertaken with no problems at all. As observed above, six of its 54 prebends could be held by canons who were in only acolyte's or taperer's orders, and not in the Major Orders at all. Of these, four were obliged to maintain

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1. 1493 A/c :- SDC, roll without ref., in box marked "Misc. Account Rolls, connected with Masters of the Fabric and Procurators of St. Thomas"; 1494 a/c:- SDC, roll without ref. in box marked "Choristers I".
 2. Et solut' pro iij stallis diaconorum qui onerantur superius et occupantur per bremell, Bremshawe et Organista pro quolibet illorum vij s vj d. - refs. as in n.1 above.
 3. Et in stipendio Organiste Custodientis organa in Capella beate marie virginis ad perimplendum summam de iij s iiij d., hoc termino soluto... vij d.; ref. as in n.1 above. From the contexts in which his name appears on these accounts, it seems that Organista really was his name, and not merely a description of his job. In 1454 there had been a Thomas Organista among the Salisbury vicars (SDC Reg. Burgh, fo.55v.); as a surname, it is, of course, simply a Latinisation of the surname 'Organmaker', which is occasionally encountered in medieval records.
 4. For which, see also SDC Reg. Holte, fo.22r.
 5. More is known about the lay vicars from the middle of the 16th century onwards - see K. Edwards, "The Cathedral Church of Salisbury", VCH Wiltshire, vol.3, p.184. The four clerici who sang Lady Mass daily with the choristers in the Lady Chapel in 1535 were probably lay vicars:- VE, vol.2, p.85, cf.SDC Reg. Holte, fo.19v.

vicars-choral at the cathedral - and these vicars, therefore, did not need to be in major orders either, but could quite legitimately remain laymen in orders no higher than acolyte's.¹ The chapter continued to recruit to the four acolyte stalls, even while otherwise the number of vicars fell from 50 to 30; in 1535 the four lay vicars were William Harman (Combe 7), Richard Bramston (Combe 14), Michael Burton (Wormester) and Richard Bonde (Wedmore 4)². Unfortunately there seems to be no means of identifying the point in time at which the Chapter began consciously to use the opportunity presented by these four anomalous vicarages - choral to employ men of the skilled professional singer class.³

The expert lay singers thus introduced into the choirs of the secular cathedrals probably provided only the core of a recognised group of competent singers able to undertake the performance of polyphonic music; for it appears that there would normally have also been a small group of abler singers among the regular vicars-choral. At Salisbury Cathedral it was ordered in 1469 that thenceforth the singing at daily Lady Mass should be undertaken only by certain of the vicars recognised as those in cantu peritiores⁴. In 1479 the succentor and vicars of Lichfield Cathedral agreed that, in return for the benefits conferred upon them by Thomas Heywood, dean of Lichfield (1457-92), they would organise a priest-vicar to celebrate mass daily for the good estate of his soul; and also, every Friday, would have Jesus Mass and a Jesus antiphon sung by six vicars, "the able singers" (unacum sex vicariis cantatoribus ydonioribus), and four choristers⁵. These entries suggest that in some of the larger choirs, an informal sub-group of "the abler singers" was now being recognised as having something distinctive to offer to the conduct of divine service.

1. See above, pp. 2005, 2007, 6071-2.

2. VE, vol.1, p.138.

3. It is noticeable, however, that right from the beginning of the series in 1457/8, these four acolyte stalls very rarely occur on the lists of vacant vicars' stalls entered on the annual Fabric Accounts - WlsDC, Fabric A/cs 1457/8 - 1549/50 inc.

4. SDC Reg. Machon, pp.170,176. In 1547, when a new lay vicar was appointed, he was directed to attend every day at Lady Mass - SDC Reg. Holte, fo.19v.

5. Calendar of Papal Letters 1471-84:- C.Pap.Reg., vol.13, part 1, p.268

6.5.2.B. The extension of polyphonic competence to vicars and chaplains.

Towards the end of the century, however, it is possible that the institutions were able to impose higher standards of competence on the priests of their choirs. By then, several generations of choristers at all types of institution had been exposed to the new style of singing-boy's education, including training in singing from mensural notation. As these choristers grew up, it is not improbable that a fair proportion chose to follow an adult career in the music of the church; - some would remain as laymen and become lay-clerks, while others entered Holy Orders and became representative of a growing number of men in priest's orders who were both able and willing to take a share in the singing of choral polyphonic music. In any event, in 1503 a new statute at Ripon Minster ordered that no vicar or deacon should be admitted thenceforth unless he could sing both plainsong and composed polyphony (cantum planum et etiam fractum videlicet prykesange)¹. By 1507, all the existing vicars of York Minster were being obliged to learn to sing polyphonic music, under penalty of forfeiture of their share of the revenues of the community of vicars; and thenceforth every new vicar was to take an oath that he would become proficient in pricksong and faburden if he were a tenor, or descant, pricksong and faburden if his voice were otherwise.²

By the early 16th century, it is not improbable that at many prominent institutions it was coming to be expected that all the clerks and boys of the choir would be able to take their part in choral polyphony, and a significant proportion of the priests also. It remains a cause for regret, however, that for no English choir is the exact disposition of voices within the polyphonic ensemble known for any period prior to 1500; in fact the earliest such information is that which can be derived from certain lists, compiled at various times between 1511 and 1522, of the gentlemen and boys of the choir of the chapel of the household of Henry Percy, 5th earl of Northumberland.³ A list datable to 1517 or shortly thereafter lists

1. MMB, p.176.

2. MMB, p.181.

3. ed. T. Percy, The regulations...of the household..of..the..Earl of Northumberland..., pp.40-1, 44, 47-8, 254, 257, 324-5, 367-8, 371. It is possible to resolve most of the apparent contradictions and inconsistencies in these lists once the chronology of the compilation of the manuscript is established.

the dean and six priests of the chapel; eleven gentlemen, composed of four countertenors, four tenors and three basses; and six boys, composed of three trebles and three second trebles.¹ It is not clear whether or not the priests contributed at all to the polyphonic ensemble; nor is there any means of knowing whether this vocal balance represented a standard disposition of voices at its time, or not.²

6.6. Conclusion³.

By 1500, the choirs of the major secular religious institutions in England had evolved into highly professional bodies of skilled musicians; indeed, as a medium for the performance of art music, the choir had been brought to a point of development over which the experience of a further 475 years has not been able to cast any improvement. The art-form which they cultivated was still very much an applied art; their music served the needs of religion, and closely reflected the nature of late medieval Christian devotion. Music was just one part of the ever richer adornment with which the Christian ritual became clothed during the 200 years which immediately preceded the precipitous abolition of the Latin rite in England in 1549. The cultivation of increasingly complex polyphonic music was but one aspect of a whole approach to the expression of religious devotion, which otherwise found manifestation in the soaring yet richly-wrought grace of Perpendicular architecture, in the sheer elaboration of the liturgy itself, and in the ever lengthening lists of copes, vestments, images, relics, jewels, service-books, bibles, plate, chalices, crosses, and all the other ritual paraphernalia which encrust the Inventories of the major 15th and 16th century churches. In the process, the church wrought for its use both a repertoire of art music, and an instrument for its performance - the choir of human voices - which, even if judged by mere durability alone, constitute one of the finest achievements of the period.

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1. ibid., pp.323-5. There are also listed five other priests, whose titles show them to have been administrative and household officials rather than priests of the chapel.
 2. In 1469, the 14 singing men of the chapel of the household of Charles le Téméraire, duke of Burgundy, consisted of 'six hautes voix, troys teneurs, troys basses contres et deux moiens' - six high voices, three tenors, three low contras and two mean [contras]; or, in modern terminology, working downwards, six altos (hautes voix), two first tenors (deux moiens), three second tenors (teneurs) and three basses (basses contres). There were no choristers. I am grateful to Mr. David Fallows for drawing my attention to this information, and for his permission to consult his transcript of its manuscript source.
 3. For further observations on similar lines, see MMB, pp.xiv-xv., 218-9