

Part 5. 1425 - 60:- Consolidation.

The period 1380 - 1425 had, as has been observed, witnessed some major upheavals in the old-established conceptions of what constituted an appropriate composition for a liturgical choir. The Establishment's reaction to the heresy of John Wyclif and the Lollards produced new values which resulted, by c.1425, in the forging of a much transformed system of priorities, and a new generation of collegiate foundations whose statutes and practices reflected these new or modified emphases. Some of these changes proved appropriate only for the peculiar circumstances prevailing in the period which had produced them, and were not persevered with once the excitement had died down. One of these was the maximisation of the number of choristers; never again after 1422, for instance, would the Chapel Royal have so many as 16 boys. Later foundations found that 6 - 10 was an adequate number - more indeed than had been usual prior to c.1390, but fewer than the peaks achieved in some quarters c.1410 - 20.

Other changes were not only found to be appropriate to the circumstances of the 1380 - 1425 period, but were also found to promote in their turn developments which were seen to have enduring value. One such change was the alteration in the nature and number of clerkships, and the consequent admission to the choirs of lay expertise. This fresh evaluation of the status and number of clerks in a liturgical choir continued to be observed at such old-established institutions as had been able to make the change, and was built into the constitutions of colleges and household chapels established subsequently. Similarly, the monastic Lady Chapel choir, consisting of a Cantor and a team of boys, was clearly seen to answer a devotional need of a permanent nature; those already established continued to thrive, and others continued to be founded until the 16th century.

5.1. Developments in the music of the church, 1425 - 60.

The subsequent 35 years witnessed no comparably striking innovations in the history or composition of the liturgical choir. There were, however, some striking developments in the composition of church music in this period; and these can very fitly be interpreted

as a long-term consequence of the upheavals in the history of the performing medium over the previous 30 years. What composers were achieving was a consolidation of the developments effected during those years - the realisation of the possibilities which had been opened up to them, and their consequent exploitation of these possibilities in order to develop their art.

Very probably it was only in the 1380 - 1425 period that composed polyphonic music had first begun to be appreciated as a regular feature of divine worship as best conducted. In the subsequent 35 years, the innovation became the standard practice. By 1460, no major religious institution was founded (or refounded) without the necessary equipment and personnel to render possible the regular performance of polyphonic music at the times and on the occasions when it was appropriate.

However, there was more to it than just this. Composers attached to the greater churches and household chapels found that there was virtually a new performing medium to exploit. These choirs were composed of priests, many (though not necessarily all) of whom had competent, useful voices; and also of expert lay-clerks, employed for their skill as singers and familiarity with mensural notation. At such an institution as the Chapel Royal, there were some of equal skill among the priests also. The composers were, of course, themselves members of such choirs; and the favourable and appreciative atmosphere in which they found themselves working encouraged them to attempt to realise and exploit the great musical potential which these choirs offered. They were enabled to think bigger:- to compose on a bigger scale, and - if the choir were sufficiently talented - to involve a larger proportion of its members in the performance of their work.

Firstly, it is in this period that composed music ceased to be the province simply of the miniaturist. In terms of sheer size of artistic creation and imagination, music had lagged behind certain of the other arts during the fourteenth century. Architects had learnt how to enclose many thousands of cubic feet of space in buildings nonetheless successfully conceived as an artistic whole; painters had learnt how to cover hundreds of square feet of plaster with frescoes conceived on the largest scales. By contrast, prior to the early 15th century, few musical compositions were conceived on any scale other than that of the miniature, and few took more than just three or four minutes in performance. Mass movements were composed individually, and collected in manuscripts in groups of

Glorias, Credos, etc. On days when it was desired to sing the whole of the Ordinary of the Mass in polyphony, it was presumably necessary to put together an ad hoc Mass collected from any of the settings rendered appropriate to the particular day by their cantus firmi.

By the early 15th century, however, certain English composers were already beginning to think bigger than this. The Old Hall Manuscript contains certain mass movements which were clearly composed together as pairs, having identical overall lay-out, disposition and range of voices etc; two Gloria-Credo pairs and two Sanctus-Agnus Dei pairs by Lionel Power have been identified, for instance.¹ The second quarter of the century, in its turn, witnessed the natural development from this, again apparently in the hands of English composers - the unified isorhythmic cyclic mass, the earliest large-scale musical concept in the known history of Western music.² These settings of all five movements of the Ordinary of the Mass, conceived as a unit and bound together by the use of a single recurring musical element, may contain up to 15 minutes' worth of music, without repeats.³ Once this breakthrough had been made, the composers' musical imagination continued to expand; the process culminated in the next century, in the great festal masses of Fayrfax, Taverner and Sheppard, in up to six parts and exceeding 30 minutes in modern concert performance, and in the large-scale votive antiphons of Tallis and Mundy.

Also it is in this 1425-60 period that there may be detected the occurrence of certain other stages in the steady and eventually far-reaching developments of compositional style which eventually transformed the true medieval of c.1415 into the true renaissance of c.1515.

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1. Nos. 22-77, 24-84, 116-140 and 118-141 in ed. A. Hughes and M. Bent, The Old Hall Manuscript. Also A. Hughes, "Mass-pairs in the Old Hall Manuscript", 19 Revue Belge de Musicologie (1965), p.15
 2. M.F. Bukofzer, "English Church Music of the Fifteenth century" in 3 NOHM pp.202-13.
 3. Most of these English cyclic masses are preserved only in continental sources. Masses such as these were composed for performance on feast-days; consequently they were provided with Kyries appropriately troped. These troped Kyries were generally omitted by the continental copyists, so most English cyclic masses only survive incomplete. Sufficient settings of the Kyries to these masses have by now been discovered in native sources to show that the English cyclic mass did normally consist of all five movements. For instance, a Kyrie Deus creator surviving incomplete in SRO DD/L P29/29 fits the Mass Salve sancta parens found in Trent 90 and Trent 93; this identification was made by Mr. Nicholas Sandon, to whom I am grateful for communicating it to me.

One crucial feature of this development was the introduction of composition for a small chorus of voices. This choral polyphony did not supplant the traditional method of performance of polyphonic music by soloists; rather, it was set alongside it, and indeed, often used deliberately within the same composition as a contrast to it. What composers were doing was utilising a greater proportion of the adult members of the choir in the performance of their work, by allotting two or more voices to sing the polyphonic lines together. Prof. Bukofzer, in his discussion of this feature of early 15th century composition, put his finger on its significance in the history of music:-

"The medieval church knew principally only the unison choir and the solo ensemble. The polyphonic choir was an idea foreign to the medieval tradition. The beginnings of choral polyphony coincide with the beginnings of the musical Renaissance."¹

Composing for small chorus was just one more respect in which composers of the 1425-60 period realised and exploited the opportunities presented to them by the creation of large and expert choirs over the previous 40-odd years. This, however, is a complicated subject which must be dealt with in more detail in a later place.²

5.2. The choirs between 1425 and 1460.

In view of these developments in the music of the church, it may be expected that the composition of new choral foundations in the 1425-60 period would reflect not only the recently modified concepts of what constituted the ideal liturgical choir, but also the demands made by the contemporary composers who were writing the music that the best of these choirs would be expected to sing.

The increased contributions made by boys' voices to the singing of both liturgical and extra-liturgical plainsong - particularly Lady Mass and votive antiphons - was indeed reflected in newly-established choirs

1. M.F. Bukofzer, "The beginnings of choral polyphony" in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music, pp.176-189 @ p.189. Dr. Andrew Hughes has recently explored the subject further - "The Choir in Fifteenth-Century English music: Non-mensural polyphony" in ed. G. Reese and R.J. Snow, Musicological Studies in Honor of Dragan Plamenac, pp.127-145 and "Mensural Polyphony for choir in 15th-century England", 19 Journal of the American Musicological Society (1966), pp.352-369.

2. See below, pp. 5068-81.

by an increased number of choristers. 6-10 was usually found to be the optimum; but colleges which were planned on the largest scale, and which were principally academic and educational in intention, continued to follow the extravagances of an earlier period and allow for 16 choristers. As has been observed, this is more likely to have been done because the educational usefulness of the foundation was thereby increased, rather than because so many boys could really be utilised in chapel.¹

The clerks had ceased to be considered as youthful apprentice vicars-choral. They had become the skilled singers and musicians, laymen not at all in major orders, paid a career wage, of whom the most expert were considered in some respects to be of equal status with the chaplains. While the number of choristers rose, and the status and number of the lay clerks increased, the number of chaplains (in choirs intended to perform the whole Opus Dei, and not merely to multiply masses) tended to fall. The favoured maximum of earlier periods, thirteen, fell to ten or fewer. By the end of the period, indeed, choirs were being established in which the clerks outnumbered the chaplains; music, to some founders, was becoming more important than even prayer or sacrament.

5.2.1. New and refounded choral institutions.

5.2.1.A. New Collegiate churches.

Among the new foundations of the period 1425-60, there was the usual crop of small-scale colleges, in reality little more than multiple chantries:- for instance Lingfield (Surrey), Newport (Salop), Ruddington (Nottinghamshire) and St. Columb Major (Cornwall). The college of St. Gregory and St. Martin at Wye (Kent) was founded by John, Cardinal Kemp (Arch-bishop of York 1426-52, of Canterbury 1452-4) between 1432 and 1448. It was equipped with a choir of the intermediate type, with token numbers of clerks for the daily office:- the total staff was a master and six chaplains, two clerks and two choristers.² All Souls' College Oxford, founded in 1438, was equipped

1. See above, pp. 4052-3.

2. G.H. Cook, English Collegiate Churches, p.163; A.F. Leach, The Schools of Medieval England, p.255; this seems to be a more plausible constitution of the college than that given by R. C. Fowler in VCH Kent, vol.2, p.235

with a small-scale choral personnel of two chaplains, three clerks and six choristers.¹

The 1425-60 period also witnessed the foundation of three major new collegiate churches, with choirs adequately constituted to perform the totality of the liturgy:- Eton College, King's College Cambridge, and Tattershall College (Lincolnshire). The colleges of St. Mary, Eton-by-Windsor, and the King's College of St. Mary and St. Nicholas, Cambridge were founded by Henry 6 in 1440 and 1441 respectively. From the beginning, study was an important part of the scheme of each. Eton College was originally conceived as a collegiate church of a provost, ten chaplains-fellows, four clerks, six choristers, and a schoolmaster and 25 boy-scholars.² The intended role of the chaplains-fellows was probably in service as both administrators and chaplains in chapel, on Wykham's Winchester College model.³ King's College, Cambridge was originally planned as a typically small Cambridge university college, for a rector and twelve scholars, with no distinct chapel staff.⁴

By about 1445, however, the king had decided to expand and re-constitute both colleges on lines derived directly from Wykham's two foundations at Winchester and New College, Oxford. The revised constitution of Eton College provided it with a provost and 10 fellows to administer the college; a schoolmaster, usher and 70 boy-scholars; and a distinct chapel staff consisting of 10 chaplains, 10 clerks and 16 choristers.⁵ King's College, Cambridge was also to consist of a provost and 70 scholars and fellows. In a University College, administration and tuition could all be supplied by the scholars and fellows themselves; therefore there was need to add only a distinct chapel staff, consisting in this case of ten chaplains, six clerks and 16 choristers.⁶

The exact chronology of these revisions and changes is of some significance. The precise determination of these is involved, and appears below as Appendix A6⁷; the conclusions, however, can be summarised here.

1. MMB, p.33

2. H.M. Lyte, A History of Eton College, pp.3-7; ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws.... pp.389-90.

3. See above pp. 4012-4.

4. ed.J.Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws... pp.1-2.

5. Statute 2: - ibid., p.478

6. Statute 1:- ibid., pp.20-1

7. Below, pp. A026 - 30.

The decision to expand both colleges, and add distinct and copious chapel staffs, was apparently taken in 1445¹; presumably the general overall dimensions of each chapel choir were also decided upon about then. For Eton College the recruitment of the chapel staff was already well under way by October 1446; it progressed by stages, and was essentially complete by July 1449. At King's College, Cambridge, the appointment of the chapel staff was well under way by Michaelmas 1447, and was essentially complete by January 1449. The finer details, however, especially those concerning the exact numbers of clerks and the arrangements for their internal disposition and pay, were not decided upon until early in 1453. The necessary adjustments in the existing personnel of the choirs were then made over the summer of 1453; meanwhile the final, definitive texts of the statutes of both colleges were drawn up and completed. The codes of Statutes as they now survive, therefore, were drawn up in 1453, and were delivered to the colleges in November or December of that year.

The third large-scale college was the College of the Holy Trinity at Tattershall. On 14 July 1439 license was granted to Ralph Lord Cromwell to found this college with a staff consisting of a Master, 6 chaplains, 6 clerks and 6 choristers.² The first Master assumed office on 25 March 1444³, and with its prescribed staff the college began its existence. A set of statutes was drafted out c.1455 towards the end of Cromwell's lifetime, but no definitive version of them had yet been concluded when he died in 1456; his executors undertook to compile a definitive code; and there still survives a draft of these which may thus be dated c.1457.⁴ The body of these statutes confirmed the dimensions originally decided for the college staff back in 1439. However, the last statute in Cromwell's draft, incorporated with modifications into the executors' draft, authorised the Master of the college to increase its staff by adding to its existing personnel four extra clerks and four extra choristers.⁵ In c.1455, therefore, the choral staff being contemplated by Cromwell for his college numbered 6 chaplains, 10 clerks and 10 choristers; and when evidence of the choir actually maintained

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1. J. Saltmarsh, "The Founder's Statutes of King's College, Cambridge", in ed. J.C. Davies, Studies presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson, p.338. For Eton College, the revised complement of 70 scholars is mentioned on a document of 3 June 1446:- A.F. Leach, Educational Charters and Documents, p.412
 2. CPR 1436-41, p.292.
 3. DLD U1475 Q 18/1 nos.1 and 2. The De L'Isle and Dudley Manuscripts are the property of the Viscount De L'Isle to whom I am indebted for his permission to examine them, and to quote from them here. Anyone reading this dissertation is asked to note that nothing from the De L'Isle and Dudley Manuscripts may be printed without Viscount De L'Isle's express permission.
 4. The draft compiled during Cromwell's lifetime is now DLD U1475 Q 21/2. The draft code compiled by his executors is now Q 21/1. fn.5:- see over

begins to be available with the survival of accounts for 1492/3 and 1495/6, that was exactly the choral staff then being provided.¹ If this be compared with the constitution of e.g. St. Mary, Leicester, formulated exactly 100 years earlier, a more thorough-going reversal of the concept of how a liturgical choir should best be constituted can - within the immutable requirements of the time - hardly be imagined.

5.2.1.B. The modernisation of old-established hospitals and colleges.

Alongside the foundation of completely new establishments at this time, there must also be considered a widespread movement on the part of patrons and benefactors to bring up to date old-established institutions left behind by the upheavals of the previous 40 years. The type of institution most susceptible to this movement was the hospital. By the early 15th century there was in England a large number of hospital establishments, mostly of 12th or 13th century foundation, a few of which were very well endowed. The rather threadbare arrangements originally made for the conduct of divine service in their chapels has been discussed above.² As a result of recurrent visitations of plague since 1348, the population of England was substantially smaller in the first half of the 15th century than it had been 100 years earlier, and it is possible that the demand for hospital accommodation and services was likewise much reduced. Also, with the decline in the incidence of leprosy, it is likely that many leper hospitals were becoming largely redundant.

The richer hospitals, therefore, might well have seemed by c.1425 to be ripe for reorganisation and reform, whereby their resources might be applied to more useful purposes. In particular, over the previous 40 years there had been such great change in concepts of the manner in which divine service ought best to be conducted, that by c.1425 the provision made for the conduct of worship in their chapels - considering the wealth and resources enjoyed by some of these hospitals - must have seemed particularly meagre and unworthy: and consequently, especially ripe for reform.

fn.5,(p.5007.) DLD U1475 Q 21/2 fo.10v.(statute 41); Q 21/1 fo.5v.(statute 23).

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1. DLD U1475 Q 16/1, 16/2.

2. See above, pp. 2053-6.

In any event, whatever the underlying reasons, the period 1425-60 certainly witnessed the re-organisation, re-endowment and even refoundation of a number of ancient hospital foundations. This regularly involved the creation of fully constituted chapel choirs, and the diversion to their maintenance of a much increased proportion of the hospital's resources. The men responsible for these refoundations came from the same social stratum as most founders of collegiate institutions - most in fact were bishops - and there seems to be no way in which any distinction between these and the new foundations of the period can or need be drawn.

Prominent among these refoundations was that of the Hospital of St. Cross, Winchester. Its original constitution has been considered earlier. It was refounded by Henry, Cardinal Beaufort, Bishop of Winchester (1405-47) in 1445, and the refoundation supplied for the chapel a staff consisting of 6 priests, 6 clerks and 6 choristers.¹ St. Mark's Hospital at Billeswick, Bristol, known as Gaunt's Hospital, was a 13th century foundation; decay set in during the 14th century, and by 1391 the Master and 3 priests constituted the whole community. Some time during the 15th century the Hospital was reinvigorated and re-constituted, and by the 16th century, there appears to have been a chapel staff of four chaplains and a certain number of clerks and choristers.²

St. Katherine's Hospital by the Tower of London, an ancient foundation already once refounded in 1273, underwent a further refoundation apparently during the second quarter of the 15th century. The chaplains, clerks and choristers of the chapel of the hospital were mentioned in the will of Thomas Bekynton, bishop of Bath and Wells, made in November 1464;³ he had been master of the hospital between 1440 and 1446, and may well have been responsible for the re-organisation which established them there.

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1. J.C. Cox in VCH Hampshire, vol.2, p.196; A.F. Leach, English Schools at the Reformation, part ii, p.88.
 2. R. Graham in VCH Gloucestershire, vol.2. pp.116-7. At Christmas 1506, a tip of 3s. 4d. was given to the men and boys of the choir of the Hospital by the Almoner of St. Augustine's Abbey, Bristol, - GRO D 674a Z5:- Et in regardis datis viris et pueris de Gauntz in festo Natalis domini hoc anno iij s. iiij d.
 3. ed. F.W. Weaver, Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500, p.204.

A document of c.1540 gives the precise constitution of the chapel staff as three priests, six clerks, an Instructor of the Choristers and six choristers.¹ Of these, the 3 chaplains were part of the 1273 foundation, while the 6 choristers had developed out of the 6 poor scholars maintained of alms. The lay clerks and Instructor were innovations, probably added during a refoundation of the Hospital of c.1445.²

A further example is Sherburn Hospital, Durham, originally founded c.1181 by bishop Pudsey for a master and three priests, and 65 lepers. To this establishment, one extra priest was added by bishop Kellaw in 1316. By the 15th century reorganisation was seen to be required. In 1434 Thomas Langley, bishop of Durham, authorised new statutes, reducing the hospital side of the foundation to 2 lepers and 13 bedesmen, and establishing a chapel staff of 4 chaplains, 4 clerks and 2 choristers. By the early 16th century the hospital side of the foundation had lapsed altogether, and the chapel was staffed by 6 chaplains, 6 clerks and 6 choristers.³

Slightly different from these was the transformation of St. Anthony's Hospital, London, in the time of John Carpenter, master of the Hospital 1435 - 44. This institution had already had a chequered career by the time Carpenter took over direction of its fortunes in 1435⁴; but it was then already in the middle of a substantial revival of its fortunes, initiated by Carpenter's immediate predecessors. Historically the Hospital was a community of Augustinian canons, and nominally it was so still, though domestically there was no regular organisation, and a secular Use - that of Salisbury - was observed in the chapel. In 1429, a previous master had claimed that there were 14 canons and clerks celebrating divine service daily in the chapel.

1. PRO SC 12 11/15 fo.9r.

2. See also M. Reddan, VCH London, vol.1, p.527, for the history of the Hospital in the 1440's. John Holland, duke of Exeter, was buried in the Hospital church in 1447, and bequeathed to it the goods of his household chapel - ibid., p.527 and fn.55. The extent of his bequest can be gauged by an inventory of the contents of his household made at the time of his death:- WstDC WAM 6643. The chapel books included 'a boke of square note'.

3. M.E. Cornford in VCH Durham vol.2, pp.115-6.

4. This career has been traced in admirable detail by Rose Graham, "The Order of St. Antoine de Viennois and its English Commandery, St. Anthony's, Threadneedle Street" 2nd ser. 34 Archeological Journal (1930) pp.341-398, from which most of the following details are drawn.

First Carpenter secured for the master and brethren of St. Anthony's papal annulment of the last remaining relics of their origin as a regular community; from 1441 the hospital appears as an entirely secular institution, indistinguishable from a collegiate church with an attached almshouse. He then increased its income to over £600 p.a. by reviving the Confraternity of St. Anthony, and established a grammar school at the college which, as St. Anthony's School, rapidly achieved a high reputation.

No less important was the creation of a choir on secular lines to serve the chapel of the Hospital. The 14 canons and clerks mentioned in 1429 became the chaplains and clerks of the now secular choir of the chapel. A curious document, the precise import and intention of which is far from obvious, dated 27th August 1443,¹ shows that by then the remaining elements of the choir had been recruited - namely a team of choristers and a skilled Instructor to teach them. The choristers numbered 6²; their Instructor was one John Benet of London, clerk, who may well be identifiable with the John Benett whose compositions occur both in native manuscripts and in the North Italian codices. Benet was still at St. Anthony's in July 1449, when a permanent endowment was secured to perpetuate the employment of an Instructor of the Choristers.³

With provision thus made for priests, clerks, boys of the choir and an Instructor for them, Salisbury Use could now be properly observed in the chapel. However, the precise constitution of the choir which Carpenter created for St. Anthony's is not known, and no copy of the 1447 statutes is known to have survived. In 1494/5, the first year for which complete information is available, the total complement of the Hospital foundation comprehended the Master (non-resident); the master and usher of the grammar school and six boy-scholars; four

1. WndDC xi F 32.

2. Referred to as 'pueri predictorum Magistri et Confratrum....in ecclesia domus sive hospitalis predicte ad divina servicia continuantes et ministrantes....ad numerum sex personarum'. The obvious word choriste was avoided presumably because there had yet been no formal refoundation of the Hospital as a secular college; legally it was still an Augustinian priory, to which foundation the admission of choristers would have been wholly impermissible.

3. WndDC i G 10.

chaplains, eight clerks (one of them being the Instructor of the Choristers) and six choristers; and the verger.¹ It cannot be assumed that the choir established by Carpenter c.1441 was constituted in exactly the same form as this, but it seems unlikely to have been very different.

Certainly it must have been these meagre, ill-defined, ill-balanced and part-time Hospital chapel choirs which most apparently stood in need of reorganisation by the second quarter of the 15th century. This was achieved principally by the introduction of lay-clerks, and by converting the part-time singing-boys into proper choristers, such as the liturgy called for. However, it was not only these Hospital chapels which had been left behind by the developments of the period 1380-1425; certain old-established secular colleges could also very appropriately undergo either total refoundation, or at least judicious augmentation of their choral forces under the auspices of sufficiently pious and wealthy patrons.

One such was the indefatigable John Carpenter, who resigned the mastership of St. Anthony's Hospital in 1445 on being consecrated as bishop of Worcester. He revived bishop Gifford's plans to create for his diocese a secular cathedral chapter alongside the existing monastic chapter at Worcester cathedral itself. Similarly, he decided to establish this just outside Bristol, the other great city of his diocese, at the existing college of Westbury-on-Trym. It is very probable that in 1445 this college was in just the same run-down state that Archbishop Whittlesey had found it in, in 1366.² Carpenter began to reorganise and rebuild the college in 1447; and by 1455 he had completed the re-constitution of its personnel³, somewhat incongruously adding an up-to-date choral staff, of generous proportions, to the existing dean and canons.

No documentation emanating directly from the administration of the college is known to survive, but the outlines of Carpenter's reorganisation can be deduced from its entry on the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535.⁴

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1. Drawn from the account for 1494/5, the various leaves of which now compose WndDC xv 37 8 and xv 37 21; number of choristers from WndDC xv 37 33
 2. See above, pp. 2043-4. fo.12r.
 3. R. Graham in VCH Gloucestershire, vol.2, p.108, also A.H. Thompson, The English Clergy, p.150.
 4. VE vol.2, pp.432-5.

To the deanery and its existing prebend of £2. p.a., he annexed the rectory of Kempsey (Worcestershire) worth £44.10. 0d. p.a. clear, and cotidians of £17. 6. 8d. p.a. for residence; so generous a provision probably ensured the presence of a resident dean.

The existing five prebends were reduced to a flat £2. p.a. each; worth so little, and with no provision now for dividends for residents, these undoubtedly were conferred on canons who were neither required nor expected either to perform any residence themselves, or to supply vicars-choral. Carpenter then added to the foundation a working chapel staff, consisting of a subdean and eight chaplains, four lay clerks¹ and twelve choristers; plus a priest for his own chantry, and - as at St. Anthony's Hospital, London - a schoolmaster to teach a grammar-school.

Another college to benefit from the attention of a pious patron at this period was St. Mary, Warwick. It has already been seen how Thomas Beauchamp 2, Earl of Warwick, revived this moribund college during the 1390's, so that at least by 1410/11, the time of its earliest surviving account, it had an adequate working choral staff of 6 vicars-choral, a Master of the Song School, three clerks and six choristers.² Richard Beauchamp (1382-1439), heir and successor of Earl Thomas, was an equally great benefactor. Under the terms of his will, made in 1435, he directed his executors to have built at St. Mary's the magnificent Lady Chapel which now stands there, to serve as his tomb and chantry chapel; and he left money to the College as an endowment for the support of the extra priests necessary to serve his chantry. Earl Richard died in 1439; his executors did not complete his ambitious building programme until 1463. He required three masses to be performed every day in his Lady Chapel for the benefit of his soul, the principal being a sung Lady Mass according to Salisbury Use. Rather than merely add chantry chaplains, loosely attached - if attached at all - to the College to celebrate these masses, he chose instead to accept the opportunity to adhere to the trend towards enlarged choral forces, and to increase the choral staff of the College itself.

1. Three are named on the Valor Ecclesiasticus; but four (a more likely number) may be traced among the staff of the college benefitting under the terms of the will of William Cannyngs, dean of Westbury, made in November 1474:- T.P. Wadley, Notes or Abstracts of...The Great Orphan Book, p.151.

2. WrkRO CR 895/9; and see above, pp. 4014-8.

He directed the purchase of £40 p.a. of land, to support an additional six members of the choir. To ensure the celebration of his three daily masses, he directed that four priests should be added to the personnel of the college, to be paid 11 marks a year (£7. 6. 8d.); these became additional vicars-choral, and Earl Richard directed that one mark per year be added to the salaries of the existing vicars-choral to bring their salaries up to the same sum. The remaining two were to be clerks, to be paid the far from generous sum of £3. 6. 8d. p.a.¹

Thus the total augmented choral strength of the college as envisaged by Earl Richard consisted of 10 priest-vicars, 6 clerks and 6 choristers. The two clerks were the first to be appointed; they appear as the clerici Beate Marie on the account of 1454/5.² By the early 1460's, when the major building expenses were concluded, there was no reason why the expanded choir should not have been fully staffed. However, it is not until the date of the next surviving accounts, 1520/1 and 1523/4, that the full choir can be observed in working order:- 10 vicars-choral, 6 choristers and 6 clerks (composed of the three obscure clerks of the ancient foundation, the organist and master of the choristers (successor of the Master of the Song School) and the 2 clerks of Earl Richard's foundation)³. By c.1460, therefore, St. Mary's Warwick had become one of the best-equipped of the second-rank colleges, with 16 singing-men and 6 boys.

In terms of sheer numbers of major new collegiate institutions, therefore, the period 1425-60 certainly cannot compete with the 35 years immediately previous. Nevertheless, alongside the impressive foundations at Eton, King's College Cambridge, Westbury and Tattershall, there emerged a fair number of lesser choral establishments, the principal new feature of their staffs being the balance chosen between the various categories of their members. Few allowed for any more than the bare working minimum of choristers; six was enough, any more was a luxury. The number of priests was modest, and was generally kept down to six; while the number of clerks was generally raised to a similar number. Certainly by the second quarter of the 15th century, contemporaries were recognising that over the previous 50 years some major transformations

1. W. Dugdale, The Antiquities of Warwickshire, pp.329, 356.

2. D. Styles, Ministers' Accounts of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick, p.60.

3. PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3729, 3730.

had occurred in conceptions of what composed a well-constituted liturgical choir; most conspicuous of these was the way in which each was now equipped with a distinct core of professional lay singers.

5.2.2. The secular cathedrals.

There was one class of institution which at first found it impossible to adjust to these transformed concepts - the secular cathedrals. As regards the music of the church, they had become dinosaurs; their choral personnel was geared to the requirements of the music of a past age. As fully constituted, they were very large, with between 28 and 52 men's voices. This was a splendid full-throated chorus for the singing of plainsong, but an unwieldy - and largely unemployed - body for the rendering of the more up-to-date styles of musical expression, polyphonic settings of the liturgy and votive antiphon sung by soloists or very small chorus. Further, the rule that each vicar be ordained to the order stipulated by the stall he occupied precluded the appointment of expert lay clerks.

Certainly contemporaries recognised that the type of choir maintained at the secular cathedrals was no longer well suited to the job it had to do. When bishop Carpenter refounded Westbury College, he hoped that he would be able to secure cathedral status for it; he actually styled himself "bishop of Worcester and Westbury".¹ Henry 6 originally planned that the dimensions of the chapel of Eton College should match those of the cathedrals of Lincoln and Salisbury². In neither case, however, did the founders equip their churches with choral forces also modelled on those of the secular cathedrals; in both cases they preferred the far more compact and manageable proportions of the choir of a larger college of chantry-priests, and even Eton College was provided with only 20 men's voices.

The secular cathedrals, however, were committed to their ancient rules and their very large numbers; Salisbury certainly, at the height of the reaction against Lollardy, clearly kept going the attempt to keep its numbers full. The calculations explained above,³ which produce an absolute minimum for the number of vicars on the books at any one time, show that between 1390 and 1430, mean attendance at service per quarter hovered between 43 and 50.⁴ The chapter's policy

1. R. Graham in VCH Gloucestershire, vol.2, p.108

2. G.H. Cook, English Collegiate Churches, pp.193, 196-7.

3. see pp. 2008-9, 4036-7, and below, Appendix A3, pp. A014-6.

4. SDC Communar's A/cs, 15-45.

appears to have been to keep full its complement of 52 vicars. In 1432 49 vicars attended a visitation¹; in 1440, 51 and in 1447 48.² Calculations from surviving Communar's accounts, of which only 4 survive from between 1430 and 1454, give mean attendance figures of 43.2 in October - December 1438, 42.5 in October-December 1448, and 40.6 in January - March 1449. In July - September 1450 the figure fell temporarily to only 35.0;³ this, however, is probably only a reflection of the turbulent summer experienced in Wiltshire that year. In Kent, it was the summer of Jack Cade's rebellion; in Wiltshire, endemic disorder culminated in the brutal murder of William Aiscough, the unpopular bishop of Salisbury, at Edington on 29 June. If even the bishop could be dragged from the altar and lynched by a mob, many a vicar-choral of Salisbury might have considered it prudent to retire from his cathedral city for the duration, and make for the countryside. By September, indeed, rumours of riots in Salisbury itself were reaching Wells.⁴ In October-December 1454 mean attendance stood at 39.1, and in October-December 1455 at 42.4, indicating that the chapter was still trying to keep numbers up to the full complement.⁵

There is much evidence to show that it was a losing struggle, and that numbers were being maintained only at the cost of a serious decline in the quality of recruits. Of all the various types of religious institution which could now employ men of musical ability, the secular cathedrals must have been among the least attractive. For men in priest's orders there was the possibility of being granted a chantry in the cathedral in time; but otherwise, the pay was not generous, and it was composed of many different elements, some of which

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1. SBR Reg. Nevill fo.49v. There were 21 priest-vicars, 16 deacon and 10 subdeacon, total 47; Mr. John Pedewell, subdean, and dom William Malton, succentor, must also have been vicars, since neither is shown as holding a prebend.
 2. SBR Reg. Aiscough, 2nd foliation ff.80v., 86r.
 3. SDC Communar's A/cs 46,47, 48a, 48b.
 4. An atmosphere of panic had already reached Somerset. At Wells, the resident chapter bought in a stock of arms, employed a stonemason to hide the jewels and treasures of the church, sent into Wales for men to come and defend the cathedral and its ministers, and welcomed Lord Bonville and several other gentry into the close for the same purpose. Messengers were sent to Salisbury, first to investigate rumours that the French had landed at Southampton, and secondly on 16th September, to find out about the riots that had taken place in Salisbury itself:- WlsDC Communar's A/c. 1449/50.
 5. SDC Communar's A/cs. 49, 50.

could prove difficult to collect.¹ There was the prodigious inconvenience of having to rise at midnight to sing matins, a practice universally avoided at all non-cathedral collegiate churches, but evidently maintained at the secular cathedrals.² Until 1455 there was the continued insistence that all vicars learn by heart for examination the great bulk of the corpus of plainsong³ - a burdensome and unnecessary requirement long since abandoned at all the more recently-founded institutions. Also the secular chapters appear to have continued to insist on all their vicars-choral being in the holy orders appropriate to their stall,⁴ thus effectively driving from their service the novel, but obviously important element among musicians who were laymen and had no wish to enter orders. Canons frequently neglected to nominate and present vicars now, so that the resident chapter had either to go out looking for men, or - more likely - wait for men to come to them looking for work; men who perhaps were those who had been unable to find employment at the more rewarding colleges and household chapels.

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1. There were, for instance, the payment from the canon to whose stall the vicar was attituded; payment of the daily penny from the Common Fund; payments for attendance at Lady Mass; payment as priest of a chantry; payments for attendance at obits; dividends from the income of vacant stalls; and dividends from the revenues of the Corporation of Vicars Choral. At the visitation of Salisbury in 1440, 16 vicars complained that their canon-masters were in arrear with their salaries - SBR Reg. Aiscough, 2nd foliation, fo.85r. ff., SDC Reg. Hutchins p.14. It was, in fact, a common complaint.
 2. Among the Salisbury records, there was reference to an event occurring on 14 February 1390 'de nocte post matutinas dictas in choro' - SDC Reg. Dunham fo.65v. In 1461 complaint was made that the altarists wouldn't get up at night, or bother during the day to ring to service:- altariste non surgunt de nocte nec etiam vacant de die ad pulsacionem ad divina - SDC Reg. Newton p.8. Fines levied of vicars not coming to matins were recorded thus:- 'Et de viij s. iij d. ob. de defectibus dormientium divers' vicar' media nocte ad matutinas' - A/c of Communar of Vicars, 1493:- roll without ref., in box marked "Misc. Account Rolls, connected with Masters of the Fabric and Procurators of St. Thomas". An injunction of 1547 required the end of singing divine service at night, and making 6 a.m. the hour for matins thenceforth:- Stat.Sal. p.360
 3. e.g. SDC Reg. Draper fo.19v., Holmes fo.lv., Vyring fo.22r., Hutchins p.75; SBR Ep. Reg. Aiscough ff.84v., 87r.
 4. Salisbury, Statute first enacted 1268, confirmed 1319-24:- Stat.Sal. pp.111, 214. The chapter frequently warned men not in the appropriate orders to get themselves ordained without delay:- e.g. SDC Reg. Corfe fo.40r., Dunham fo.136v., Burgh fo.50v. Occasionally they expelled those who refused or neglected to do so - SDC Reg. Newton pp.19, 82, 83. In 1509 Richard Bramston left his vicarage-choral at Wells Cathedral, rather than lose his lay status and enter subdeacon's orders as his stall required:- WlsDC Liber Ruber, part 2, ff.165r., 173v.

In all these respects, therefore, the secular cathedrals were at a disadvantage in the recruitment of able men to serve in the choir. If numbers were to be maintained, and all the traditional rules observed, the result could only be a serious fall in the quality of recruits. The surviving records of visitations and Chapter Acts at both Wells and Salisbury tend to confirm that this was indeed the case. At Salisbury in particular, the records of successive visitations are increasingly full of complaints of vicars who broke the laws of the church, neglected altogether to attend service, or were inattentive, incompetent and troublesome when they did.¹ With tedious regularity the Chapter Acts record warnings to individual vicars, and occasionally blanket warnings to all the vicars, to mend their ways in these respects.

It would, of course, be as unfair to judge the vicars choral of Salisbury or Wells as a whole by records of this kind, as it would be to judge modern society solely by the contents of the Law Reports or the "News of the World". By their very nature, Chapter Acts and Visitation detecta and comperta never recorded what was going right, but only what was, or was alleged to be, going wrong.² A fairly clear impression, however, does remain after sifting through the material. At any given time, there were, probably, some six or eight men among the 50-odd vicars choral at Salisbury who were indeed grossly unsuited to the job by both lack of ability and unsuitability of temperament, and who secured for themselves a totally disproportionate degree of attention among the surviving records. On the other hand, there were some ten or a dozen men of a totally different nature, dependable and reliable, attaining maturity, experience and responsibility in the service of the cathedral.

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1. Visitation records:- 1418 SDC Reg. Pountney fo.51r.; 1432 SBR Ep. Reg. Nevill fo.49r.; 1440 SBR Ep. Reg. Aiscough, second foliation fo.79v.; 1447 ibid., fo.86r.; 1454 SDC Reg. Burgh fo.47r.; 1461 SDC Reg. Newton p.4; 1468 SDC Reg. Machon p.165; 1476 SCL MS 189, fo.35r.
 2. The visitation detecta and comperta are particularly unreliable. They add^{up} to an aggregate of all the complaints made to the Visitor, whether justified or not, sometimes whether even plausible or not. There was little sifting out at that stage of ludicrous, or merely malicious complaints. The bishop or his vicar-general, neither of them a frequent visitor to the cathedral, would not know which charges were nonsense and which not until they began to investigate. Some complaints were clearly merely a malicious expression of choleric ill temper, on the part of the canons resident against the younger vicars. As often as not the accused were innocent, and were acquitted on producing compurgators. These compurgators were fellow vicars, or even canons resident; and presumably they were acting honestly, since it seems improbable that they would have been willing to risk the penalties of perjury merely to exculpate some irresponsible young tearaway who wasn't worth it:- SDC Reg. Pountney ff. 51r.-53r. Reg. Newton pp.9-10,14.

They appear in the records just as much as their more disreputable colleagues, but in far less spectacular a fashion. They received the patronage which the chapter could offer to its deserving vicars:- chantries within the cathedral, benefices outside it, and a host of administrative jobs in and around it in which these vicars were essential to the smooth running of the whole cathedral administration.¹ There seems every likelihood that the vicars appointed to celebrate chantry masses and the misse cursorie, to ride daily to the castle chapel of Old Salisbury to say mass, to act as succentor or subdean, subcommunar or subtreasurer, clerk of the fabric, warden of a shrine, subcustos of the choristers, were as diligent in their attendance at the choir service as the chapter hoped they would be in these other duties.

Between the two extremes there were the rest of the vicars, who probably more than outnumbered the other two categories put together. It is amongst these that the decline in standards took place; they became decreasingly dedicated to the job in hand, and by the 1450's had become sufficiently disinterested to reduce the chapter to perennial dismay, through never quite indifferent or inadequate enough to reduce them to complete despair. Probably they could be relied upon to comport themselves adequately on high days and holy days, but by their sloth and indifference let down their more conscientious fellows in the conduct of the general routine of divine service.²

This they were doing to an increasing degree; it is likely that in the 1440's and 1450's, the situation as regards the conduct and quality of these vicars was worsening. In 1418 it is true that most of the detecta at the visitation concerned the vicars; but there were only 26 detecta altogether, and all but 2 of the 15 concerning the vicars complained of fornication, not of failure to attend service, or of misbehaviour while there.³ In 1432 there were only 8 detecta altogether, none of them recording complaint against the vicars.⁴

1. SCMA pp.272-3

2. On 28 April 1414 the chapter especially warned the vicars not to fail to attend service, and to behave themselves properly when there, while the Friars Minor were holding their General Council in Salisbury (SDC Reg. Pountney fo.9r.). Again, on 5 May 1470, in the presence of Bishop Beauchamp, the chapter exhorted all the vicars and chantry chaplains most urgently to show maximum diligence over attendance to their work, since the King was shortly expected to be staying in Salisbury on his way from Southampton (SDC Reg. Machon p.38). There is indeed something rather dismal in the manner in which the chapter had to plead with the vicars not to let them down or disgrace them on important occasions.

3. SDC Reg. Pountney fo.51r.

4. SBR Ep. Reg. Nevill, 2nd foliation fo.49r.

In 1440, however, there were 68 detecta, 35 in 1447, and 90 in 1454, and complaints about the vicars were rife.¹ Although, as has been explained, Visitation detecta and comperta need to be taken with numerous pinches of salt, the principle of "no smoke without fire" cannot be ignored when the same complaints are reiterated several times at a single visitation, and at several visitations successively. The vicars were negligent in attending service, so that frequently there were fewer than the statutory 13 vicars per side at every service; Lady Mass and the Hours of the Virgin suffered particularly in this respect.² There were repeated complaints of incompetence; of inattention and misbehaviour; of improper abbreviation of the services; of neglect to learn the services.

At length, the chapter gave up the struggle. First they began to relax their demands that the vicars learn by heart, and present themselves for examination in, the great bulk of the corpus of liturgical plainsong. By 1455 they had abandoned the requirement that the huge antiphoner be known by heart; examinations thenceforth were only in the hymner, psalter and troper.³ Eventually in 1472 the whole examination was recast on far less demanding lines⁴; but if this was intended to cease discouraging able men from seeking employment at the cathedral, it had no immediate effect.⁵

Secondly, and far more important, the chapter decided to abandon the policy of keeping full the complement of 52 vicars. In October-December 1455 mean attendance at service had been 42.4, indicating some 47-48 vicars actually on the books, and allowing for a very reasonable figure of 4-5 vacancies due to death or resignation. However, by the next quarter for which an account survives, April-June 1459, mean attendance had taken a sharp fall to 32.4; and it

1. SDC Reg. Hutchins, p.7 (1440); SBR Ep. Reg. Aiscough, 2nd foliation, ff.79v. (1440), 86r.(1447); SDC Reg. Burgh fo.47r.(1454)

2. 1440, §§ 5, 6, 32; 1447, §§ 1,5; 1454, §§ 4, 9, 15,17; 1461 SDC Reg. Newton pp.5,9,13,16.

3. SDC Reg. Burgh fo.61r.

4. SDC Reg. Machon p.243.

5. SCL MS 189 fo.36v. At Wells the Chapter seems fairly early to have relaxed, through not totally to have abandoned, the old rules requiring vicars to learn by heart the totality of the plainsong of the liturgy. In 1394/5 breviaries, graduals and troper iacentes in choro were repaired; these however may have been for the canons who were permitted books at service (see above, p. 2006). However, from 1407/8 onwards payments occasionally appear on the accounts for the repair of books lying in secunda forma, where stood the vicars not in priest's orders - e.g. a gradual and an antiphoner in 1407/8 (WisDC Communar's A/c, sub Barlynche). Certainly by 1487, when the earliest surviving Chapter Act book commences, all that a vicar was expected to know by heart was just the psalter and the hymner - not an inconsiderable requirement, but more modest than the old rules

was never again to rise above 35.0.¹ Between 1455 and 1459, that is, the Chapter seems to have let go, and to have settled on 40 or thereabouts as the best practical number of vicars. Between April 1459 and June 1480 mean attendance generally hovered between 32 and 35.² 40 vicars attended the obit of bishop Waltham on 18 September 1465³, but at the visitation of 1468 there were only 31.⁴; 36 were present at the Waltham obit of which an account is now attached to, but may not properly form part of, the Fabric Account for 1477/8. At the visitation of 1476, bishop Richard Beauchamp tendered to the chapter a complaint that there were too few vicars, to which they could only make the pathetic reply:—"That fewness of numbers is not the fault of the Dean and Chapter; rather they wish most willingly to receive worthy and suitable persons - if only they could find any such men."⁵

However, without total reform of the whole basis on which the cathedral choir was constructed, the few alterations already effected hardly put the cathedral in a position to tempt able men away from the more rationally established collegiate churches and household chapels. From 1484 onwards, the actual number of vicars on the books is recorded on the Communar's accounts; and the number attending the obit of bishop Richard Metford, held each 5th May, appears on the accounts of the Masters of the Fabric on receipts from St. Thomas' church. Once the principle of maintaining the number of vicars full had been abandoned, nothing could stop it drifting down. Numbers declined, unevenly but inexorably, from 38 in 1484 to 30 by 1522. Here numbers were stabilised for a while⁶, until decline set in again c.1540; after 1551 they never again exceeded 20, and by the 1560's numbered only 15.

p.5020, fn.5 contd...

(WlsDC Liber Ruber part 2, ff 9r.,21r. etc). It would seem that, as in the colleges of more recent foundation, services at Wells were sung mostly from books - and may have been all the better performed as a result.

1. SDC Communar's A/cs 50,51.
2. SDC Communar's A/cs 51-75.
3. SDC Fabric A/c 1464/5.
4. SDC Reg. Machon p.169.
5. illa paucitas numeri non stat per decanum et capitulum, set libentissime accepture vellent personas honestas et idoneas si quas in hac parte invenire possent - SCL MS 189 fo.38r.
6. A little simple arithmetic applied to the entries concerning the vicars choral in the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535 shows that 30 was then considered to be the full complement of vicars - VE vol.2, p.85. (£54.17. 6d. ÷ 36s.7d. = 30).

At Wells Cathedral an overall pattern of decline in numbers can similarly be discerned. As has been seen, the number of vicars at Wells never returned to the full complement of 50 maintained in the period prior to the Black Death.¹ Between 1400 and 1438 mean attendance at services² hovered consistently within one or two points of 35, suggesting that 40 was then considered to be as full a complement as could practicably be aimed at. Between 1438 and 1443, however, possibly in response to the same shortage of suitable men observed at Salisbury, numbers were allowed to fall to a yet lower plateau. Between 1443 and 1471 mean attendance at service fluctuated around 31, indicating perhaps that 35 or 36 was a full complement. At a meeting of vicars in the Vicars' Hall in 1443 there were 27 present; 29 in 1447, 30 in 1448, 27 in 1449 and 28 in 1462.³ Between 1473 and 1505 mean attendance stood at a new lower plateau of 27 or thereabouts; 32 vicars attended a meeting in the Vicars' Hall in 1502, 28 in 1505.⁴ Thereafter mean attendance fluctuated around 25, indicating that 30 was considered to be the full working complement of vicars-choral; thirty was actually stated to be the number of vicarages on the Valor Ecclesiasticus of 1535.⁵ The general pattern at Wells was, therefore, virtually identical to that observable for Salisbury; at both, a working staff of vicars, standing at 50 or 52 in 1340, had declined to 30 by 1535.

The nett long-term consequence of these changes, of course, was to create in the cathedral choirs a far more manageable and better-balanced ensemble for the performance of the music of the church services. But this effect seems to have been entirely fortuitous. This reduction in the number of men's voices, however salutary, was not effected voluntarily by cathedral chapters consciously responding to a particular development in the contemporary composition of church music. (Indeed, as long as the ritual liturgical plainsong remained the staple fare of

1. See above, p. 4038.

2. Calculated from the Communar's A/cs; see above, pp.

3. Register of Vicars-choral :- WlsVC MS 63, 2nd layer fo.3r., 1st layer pp.11,12,12. In 1457/8 the wardens of the Fabric received the salaries paid by canons for 17 vicars' stalls vacant for all or part of the year. In 1480/1 15 stalls were vacant all year (4 for part of the year); in 1492/3 19 whole year, 3 part year; in 1500/01 16 whole year, 3 part year; in 1505/6 17 whole year, 6 part year; in 1549/50 25 were left vacant all year:- Fabric A/cs, years quoted.

4. Register of Vicars Choral:- WlsVC MS 63 pp.17,18.

5. VE vol.1, pp.127,137-8.

any church choir, only the most startling developments in the composition of polyphonic music could have seemed to warrant the making of wholesale changes in the construction of ancient choral institutions which were still well suited to the singing of plainsong). Rather, the reduction of the number of vicars was the product of forces largely beyond the control of any cathedral chapter - the difficulty in finding suitable men in the 15th century, and inflation in the 16th. The resident canons saw themselves as the trustees of ancient and worthy traditions; only with reluctance and dismay did they abandon them, even when conditions had rendered their continuance quite impossible - and even then, they ran the risk of being censured by the bishop for doing so.

It was fortuitous, therefore, that the secular cathedrals should have been reducing their choral forces at just the time when composers were rapidly expanding the volume of composed polyphonic music requiring very small forces for its performance. There is no necessary causal connection between these two phenomena. This seems to be an instance where the reason for the alteration of the composition of an established liturgical choir must be sought in motives and influences of purely non-musical nature - even if its consequences were consistent with developments observable among other types of choir which certainly were of musical origin.

5.2.3. Household chapels.

5.2.3.A. The Chapel Royal.

It is for the permanent endowed secular institutions that most information concerning the composition of their choral forces can now be found. However, it seems probable that the much more obscure house-hold chapel choirs of the lay aristocracy remained the musically pre-eminent choral institutions throughout this period. Indeed, it seems equally probable that it was in these establishments that there first emerged many of those trends which so far have only been detected when subsequently adopted into the constitutions of the more modest endowed foundations of the time.

For this period, however, less information concerning these household chapel choirs has yet come to light than even for the previous period. Only of the Chapel Royal can an accurate assessment of its composition be made for this period; and even this information has to be treated with considerable care, since the constitution of Henry 6's Chapel Royal was unusually subject to pressures and influences which in origin were simply political and financial, and can in fact bear no interpretation relating to contemporary musical or devotional practices.

For instance, there were considerable fluctuations during Henry's reign in the simple overall number of members of his chapel; but all, it seems, can be explained purely by extra-musical pressures and influences. Henry 5 had maintained a large chapel probably for motives compounded of display, piety and ostentatious orthodoxy. Probably his successor would have maintained an even grander establishment even if piety had been his only motive, since Henry 6's extreme devotion, especially to the Virgin Mary, caused him to lavish great care on the ordering of his daily religious observances. However, the size of the Chapel Royal was not always a matter within the King's immediate control. During his minority 1422-37, all such matters were determined by the Regency council. Further, between August 1453 and December 1454, October 1455 and February 1456, and from November 1460 until the end of his effective reign in March 1461, he suffered from attacks of depression so intense as to render him incapable of any comprehension of his surroundings or responsibilities. During these attacks of catatonic schizophrenic psychosis the government of the kingdom again passed into the hands of an aristocratic council of regency. Even when the King was fully compos mentis, factions at court and in Parliament repeatedly urged the reduction of the personnel of the royal household, to help close the gap between income and expenditure. For the members of the Chapel Royal, therefore, the period was an unsettled one; their numbers fluctuated considerably, depending on whose will happened to be the strongest at any given moment.

Probably the dimensions of the Chapel such as the King himself considered suitable for his estate are those written into the opening section of a description of the Chapel and the services peculiar to it compiled by William Say, Dean of the Chapel Royal, early in 1449.¹

1. ed. W.Ullman, Liber Regie Capelle, 92 Henry Bradshaw Society (1961)pp.5-7. For the dating of the MS, see ibid., p.14; Ullmann's dating can be further refined by the fact that Say did not become Dean of the Chapel Royal until after Christmas 1448:- PRO E 101 410/3 fo.30r.

According to this, the personnel of the Chapel consisted of the Dean; 30 selected singers (of whom it was the custom that half should be priests), plus a priest to celebrate Lady Mass and read the gospel at High Mass, plus an Instructor of the Choristers; one clerk to read the epistle; and 10 choristers, instructed in reading and singing.¹ The singers and priests all had the status of generosi², so in calculating the number of gentlemen, the Lady Mass priest and the Instructor must both be reckoned in; total gentlemen, therefore 32, as there had been in the last years of Henry 5. These gentlemen were described as primarily cantores electi³; this confirms that the main criterion for selection as either a priest or a lay-clerk of the Chapel was the capacity to contribute to the music of the chapel.

This may also have been the chapel's own idea of its ideal constitution, and is valuable information for being so. However, it was not observed in practice. Between the end of his minority in 1437 and the autumn of 1449 the King himself was responsible for the composition of his own household; the chapel expanded steadily, and there was even a brief period when numbers seemed not to matter - recruitment of singers went ahead without thought for what their numbers ought to be. From the 20 gentlemen maintained during the minority, numbers had risen to 26 by 1438/9⁴ and to 28 by 1443/4⁵. At Christmas 1446 there were 30 gentlemen of the chapel; at Whitsun 1447,³⁴ during 1447/8 there were 35, and during 1448/9 37, possibly the all time record.⁶

1. ibid., pp.56-7. To look after the jewels, books, vestments and other ornaments of the Chapel there was a clerk called the serjeant of the vestry, and to assist him one valectus and two garciones. Also attached to the Chapel was a master of grammar, to teach Latin to the King's henchmen and to the choristers of the chapel.

2. ibid., p.65.

3. ibid., p.56.

4. PRO E 101 408/25 ff.lv-2r.; this fragment can be dated by the facts that (1) Easter fell on 5 April, which occurred in 1439, and (2) the account ended on 9 April, which coincides with the termination of John Popham's tenure of the office as Keeper of the Great Wardrobe, 9 April 1439 (ed. F.M. Powicke, Handbook of British Chronology, (2nd edition, London, 1961) p.79).

5. PRO E 101 409/11 fo.38r. There had been 26 gentlemen in 1441/2:-409/9fo.36r.

6. PRO E 101 409/16 fo.33v., 410/1 fo.29v., 410/3 fo.30r. Since c.1445, however, one of the gentlemen, William Boston, had been on apparently permanent secondment to King's College, Cambridge, as Instructor of the Choristers:- PRO E 403 771 m.11; H. Chitty, "Henry VI and Winchester College" in Notes and Queries, 12th series vol.1(1916) p.482; CKC, Commons Books, vol.1 passim. The effective complement of gentlemen thus stood at 36.

It was at this point that calls for economy in the royal administration achieved their greatest stridency, culminating in the enactment of the Statute of Resumption of March 1450. Hereafter, the number of Chapel staff was allowed to fall to 32 in 1450/1 and to 30 in 1451/2¹; then in July 1453 the King suffered his first attack of psychosis and thenceforth the constitution of the Chapel Royal ceased effectively to be in his hands.

The number of choristers of the Chapel Royal also underwent expansion during Henry's effective reign. There had been six during his minority (1422-37)², a number which the Regency council agreed with many other founders was a good working minimum; and there were still 6 in 1439.³ However, in July 1440, Henry licensed the Dean of the Chapel to impress from anywhere in England as many boys as he considered to be needed to serve God and the King in the Chapel Royal⁴; this probably was the occasion on which their number was increased to eight⁵, at which figure it certainly stood by 1444.⁶ By the time William saywas compiling the Liber Regie Capelle early in 1449 the number had risen to 10^{6a}, where it still stood in 1455/6⁷, and probably at least until the end of Henry's reign.

Equally instructive for our understanding of the priorities of this period are the dimensions thought most suitable for the Chapel by the regency councils who directed the government of the country at various times when the King was unable to do so. Their principal concern was to keep down the cost of the royal household; but they always had to keep in mind the royal dignity, which could under no circumstances be diminished

1. PRO E 101 410/6 fo.39v., 410/9 fo.42r.

2. Equipment for six choristers of the chapel was supplied in 1422, 1423, 1425, 1433/4 and 1435:- ed. H. Nicolas, Proceedings and Ordinances... vol.3, p.104; PRO E 101 407/13 fo.29v., 407/20 no.5; 408/17 (unfoliated), BM Add. MS 17721 fo.35r.

3. PRO E 101 409/2' fo.40r.

4. PRO C 66 447 m.14v.(CPR 1436-41 p.452).

5. According to a document known to E.S.Roper, the number of choristers stood at eight by 1441:- E.S.Roper, "Music at the English Chapels Royal", 54 Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1927/8) p.22

6. PRO C 66 459 m. 20 (CPR 1441-6 p.311)

6a. ed. W.Ullmann. Liber Regie Capelle p.57

7. PRO C 66 481 m. 18 (CPR 1452-61, p.279)

by the reduction of the household to a point below the dimensions appropriate for a king to maintain. During Henry 6's minority (1422-37) the chapel was held at 20 gentlemen (8 priests and 12 lay-clerks in 1426) and 6 choristers¹ - still a large-scale organisation. These numbers continued to be recommended by those who after 1437 continued to urge that the royal household be kept down to the minimum numbers compatible with the royal dignity. A scheme dated 23 Henry 6 (i.e. 1444/5), which certainly seems not to have come into effect, recommended that the number of gentlemen be 20 and of boys seven². The same numbers were put forward again by the council in November 1454, during an economy drive permitted by the king's first onset of incapacity.³ On this occasion, it appears that the council's decision was put successfully into effect, the complement of gentlemen being thereupon reduced to the twenty which they recommended. Nine months later (August 1455) the priests and clerks of the chapel petitioned the king to remedy this situation; they begged him to consider the pressure of work upon them "because the nombre of hir feliship is lasse than it was woned to be", and to restore their number at least to 24.⁴ There appears to have been no response to this petition, and numbers may not again have risen above 20 for the rest of Henry's reign.⁵

Therefore, even the Regency Councils considered a chapel of 20 gentlemen and 7 boys to be the minimum which a King could decently maintain; Henry himself preferred to maintain 10 boys and up to 36 men, all of them expert singers, even if not all were singers of polyphony. The large numbers involved were only to be expected in the elevated circles of royalty. What is more striking is the abandonment of that balanced proportion between men and boys which appears to have been built into the smaller choirs established in this period.

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1. PRO E 101 408/1 fo.16v (1425/6); and note 2, p.5026 (above).
 2. Contemporary copy, incomplete:- PRO C 47 3/36; complete copy in late 16th century transcript:- BM Landowne 1 fo.86r. It is discussed and transcribed in A.R. Myers, The Household of Edward IV, pp.8-9,50,69ff.
 3. ed.H. Nicolas, Proceedings and Ordinances...vol.6, p.223.
 4. ed. H. Nicolas, Proceedings and Ordinances...vol.6, p.256
 5. For Henry's reign no list of chapel members has yet turned up later than 1451/2 (PRO E 101 410/9 fo.42r.) so the precise effect of the Council's ordinance is not known. There were 27 gentlemen in 1463/4 (PRO E 101 411/13 fo.36v.); of these, 14 had been in office in 1451/2 and may well have served right through.

The number of choristers did not keep pace with the expansion in the number of gentlemen; the proportion of 10 boys to 36 men was as much out of balance as that of 4 or 5 boys to 16 men during the reign of Edward 3 80 years earlier. An explanation for this will be forthcoming when a closer study is made of the actual music composed and sung at this period.¹

5.2.3.8. Other household chapels.

The Chapel Royal was only one example of what probably was the pre-eminent class of liturgical choirs of the period, the household chapels of the great lay and spiritual magnates. The lay magnates, enriched by successful war at the expense of the French, were thicker on the ground than they were to be again until the 17th century. Henry 6 had no brothers, and his son was only seven years old when Henry was deposed; but there were two royal dukes, Henry's uncles, John duke of Bedford and Humphrey duke of Gloucester. There were at least seven ducal families:- the Beaufort dukes of Somerset, the Holland dukes of Exeter, the Mowbray dukes of Norfolk, the Plantagenet dukes of York, the de la Pole dukes of Suffolk, the Stafford dukes of Buckingham, and the Beauchamp dukes of Warwick. Prominent among those of comital rank were the Courtenay earls of Devon; the Fitzalan earls of Arundel; the Montague earls of Salisbury; the Mortimer earls of March; the Neville earls of Westmorland, of Salisbury, of Warwick and of Kent; the Percy earls of Northumberland; and the Vere earls of Oxford. The heads of all, or very nearly all, of these families probably maintained household chapels as befitted their rank; so too, probably, did any dowager duchesses and countesses with which the families might be afflicted. Below them in precedence, but not necessarily far behind them in wealth, were viscounts and barons and gentlemen of landed wealth and military prowess, grown rich in the wars. Any of these who felt so disposed might also have maintained household chapels.²

1. See particularly pp. 6059 - 63 below.

2. Certainly by 1471, when the Black Book of the Household of Edward 4 was compiled, it was considered that a Duke, a Marquis and an Earl would maintain a household chapel as a matter of course. A viscount might raise a chapel singing in three parts (capella cantancium trina voce) from existing members of his household. PRO E 36 230, pp.24-34 passim; A.R.Myers, The Household of Edward IV, pp.94-102 passim. (Myers' text reads trina vice at the point above.).

The spiritual magnates were the equals of the lay magnates, in terms both of contemporary protocol and landed wealth. The archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the bishops of Durham, Ely, Winchester and Lincoln all enjoyed revenues, as bishops, exceeding £2,000 p.a.; the bishops of Norwich, Worcester, Exeter, London, Salisbury and Wells all enjoyed incomes exceeding £1,000 p.a.¹ By this period all may well have maintained household chapels as a matter of course.

Of these institutions, miserably little information has yet come to light. The two royal dukes, John duke of Bedford and Humphrey duke of Gloucester, were both successively heir presumptive to the throne (Bedford 1422-35, Gloucester 1435-47). Both had a great deal of grandeur to maintain, and not only as uncles of the King; Bedford was Regent of France, and Gloucester protector of England during the minority of Henry 6. In all probability neither maintained a household chapel on a scale any smaller than that of their late elder brother, Thomas, duke of Clarence, which had consisted of 8 chaplains, 16 clerks and 4 choristers.²

For neither, however, have more than mere scraps of information yet turned up. Among the chapel staff of John, duke of Bedford, may have been John Pyamour, composer, and formerly clerk of the chapel royal in 1420-21³; a man of this name was in the duke's retinue in 1427.⁴ An ungrammatical inscription in a mid-15th century hand on a small treatise on astrology records that it belonged to John Dunstable, musician with the duke of Bedford.⁵ Doubtless, Bedford employed many categories of musician; but the discovery that his contemporary Lionel Power served in the household chapel of Bedford's elder brother, makes it at least likely that Dunstable served Bedford in a similar capacity, especially as the great bulk of his surviving music is sacred. An inventory of the goods of Bedford's chapel made in 1433, used as the definitive list after his death in 1435 and now existing only in a copy dated 1449, mentions

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1. These are 1535 figures, collected by Tanner from VE and quoted in D. Knowles and R.N. Hadcock, Medieval Religious Houses, p.447
 2. See above pp. 4033, 4048.
 3. PRO C 66 402 m.11v.; E 403 643 m.16; E 101 407/4 fo.36r.
 4. Calendar of French Rolls, Henry 6, p.246
 5. Iste libellus pertinet Johanni dunstaple cum duci Bedfordie musico:- CSJ MS F25 (James 162). M.R.James, A descriptive catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of St.John's college, Cambridge, p.192.

vestments for men and boys; and it lists the most valuable chapel books, including 'a book of motets in the French style'.¹ This presumably refers to motets composed in isorhythmic technique. The name of one member of Bedford's household chapel - Edmund Swanton, a clerk of the chapel - can be recovered from the accounts of the executors of Bedford's will.²

Of the chapel of Humphrey, duke of Gloucester, nothing is known except that Eton College and King's College, Cambridge both begged for first choice of its books and ornaments after his death in 1447³; and that Henry Abyndon, later clerk first of Eton College, then of the Chapel Royal, was in duke Humphrey's employment 1445-47⁴. An inventory of the possessions of John Holland, duke of Exeter, made shortly after his death in 1447, listed large quantities of the vestments, books and other items of his household chapel⁵. Also it is known that the Flemish composer Gilles Binchois and the Frenchman Guillaume Bénéoit were in the employment of William de la Pole, earl of Suffolk, during the 1420's.⁶

Amongst the princes of the church, references have been found to the chapels of four successive Archbishops of Canterbury. A chorister of the chapel of Henry Chichele (1414-43) was mentioned in 1424⁷, and its chaplains and clerks in 1441⁸. The members of the chapel of Archbishop John Stafford (1443-52) attended at the first mass celebrated at Canterbury Cathedral by the newly-installed prior Thomas Goldston in 1449, and sang a setting of Gloria by one Gydne⁹. References have been found to the chapel of Archbishop John Kemp (1452-4)¹⁰, and to that of his successor Thomas Bourchier (1454-86); certain members of the latter went into Salisbury town in 1468 with some cronies from the cathedral choir, descended upon an inn, and serenaded the inmates with Cantus vocatos Balettes, clamosis vocibus ad modum histrionum¹¹.

1. PRO E 154 1/33 ff.7v. 10v.:— Itm ung Livre de motez a la maniere de france couvert de cuir blanc. A further inventory E 154 1/39 contains nothing relevant.
2. PRO E 101 411/7
3. MMB p.25
4. For Abyndon's career, see Appendix A9 below, pp.A039-44.
5. WstDC MS 6643.
6. MMB p.245; B. Trowell, Music under the later Plantagenets, p.87; R. von Ficker, "The Transition on the Continent", 3 NOHM p.148
7. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church, Canterbury...p.187.
8. Will of Roger Heron, master of Maidstone College, extracted in OBL CCC 256 fo.143r.
9. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church, Canterbury...p.46:— ...cui assistebat tota capella domini Cantuariensis. Et ibidem cantaverunt et in terra Gydne.
10. Calendar of an inventory of the goods of his chapel:— ed. J.B. Sheppard, Third Report on the manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury, 9 Historical Manuscripts Commission, p.105.
11. SDC Reg. Machon pp.174,181.

Other bishops, too, are known to have maintained household chapels. In about 1435 Henry Cardinal Beaufort, bishop of Winchester (1405-47) requisitioned for his own household chapel choir the services of one Robert Bygbroke, until then employed by Winchester Cathedral Priory as organist at services in the monks' choir and as instructor of the young monks in chant. Prior Aulton sent with Bygbroke a letter designed to get him returned to the cathedral; he explained that Bygbroke was badly needed at Winchester, and would be so 'slight among the nightingales of your superb chapel' that Beaufort could do without him.¹ The outcome of this is not known. In 1438 Cardinal Beaufort visited Canterbury with his household, and his chapel took part in the singing of Lady Mass in the cathedral, with polyphony.²

Amongst other bishops known to have maintained household chapels at this period was William Alnwick, bishop of Lincoln (1436-49); his entire household was given gratuities by Richard Assheton on his election as abbot of Peterborough in 1438, and the clerks of Alnwick's chapel received 26s.8d. for singing mass on the day of Assheton's confirmation as abbot.³ By his will made in 1464, Thomas Bekynton, bishop of Bath and Wells, bequeathed 10d. per week to each of ten poor scholars to enable them to study at University in Oxford, boys of his chapel having preference over others.⁴

This is a meagre collection of information for a class consisting of some 9 ducal, 10 comital and 12 episcopal households. What is known of the establishments kept by two men lower down the social scale than any of them suggests that a wealth of information still waits to be discovered. Ralph, baron Cromwell of Tattershall maintained his own household chapel, and while he lived, he reserved the right to recruit to it chaplains, clerks and choristers of his collegiate church of Tattershall.⁵ In 1453/4 16 surplices were made for the members of his chapel, so it was of not negligible dimensions.⁶ Even more striking is the chapel establishment maintained by a mere landed knight, albeit a very wealthy one. Sir Andrew Ogard was a Dane by birth, a soldier of fortune who made a fortune by being in the right place at the right time as a captain on the English side in the French wars. He retired from fighting in 1446, and

1. WinDC Priory Register I fo.54r.:-'..quod dictus presbiter licet inter philomenas eximie capelle vestre foret satis exiguus...'

2. MMB, p.173, quoting ed.W.G.Searle, Christ Church Canterbury...p.22

3. PDC Register of Abbots Assheton and Ramsey (1438-96) fo.4r.

4. ed.F.W. Weaver, Somerset Medieval Wills 1383-1500, p.206

5. Founder's draft statute 34:- DLD U 1475 Q 21/2 fo.8v.

6. DLD U1475 Q 18/3.

settled down on the estates which he had bought in England out of the loot; and for the last eight years of his life (1446-54) he maintained a chapel of 4 priests and 16 clerks and choristers, at a cost of £100 p.a.¹ Ogard was a very wealthy man²; Cromwell for his part was Henry 6's Lord Treasurer, and was well known for his avarice³; neither had heirs or successors to consider. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the resources of either of these men were larger than those of earls or dukes of established landed families; aristocratic household chapel choirs would have been more splendid than either of these and potentially the leaders in musical innovation and fashion.

5.2.4. Monastic Lady Chapel choirs.

One feature of the upheavals of the 1380-1425 period which proved to be of permanent value was the creation by the monasteries of secular Lady Chapel choirs., consisting of a single adult Cantor and a team of boys to sing a votive mass to the Virgin daily in the Lady Chapel of the monastery church. These seem to have answered some permanent devotional need; those that were created in the first flush of enthusiasm continued to flourish even after the panic had otherwise largely died down, and new ones continued to be created right down to the very eve of the Dissolution of the Monasteries themselves. Their method of performing Lady Mass predominantly with boys' voices was copied and adopted at many of the newly founded or newly reconstituted collegiate churches of the period:- Tattershall College, for instance, and St. Anthony's Hospital, London.

5.2.4. A. Bridlington Priory and Peterborough Abbey.

The constitution of these Lady Chapel choirs was remarkably uniform; the established pattern of a single adult Cantor and a team of boys continued

1. ed. J.H. Harvey, The itineraries of William Worcestre, p.46

2. ibid., pp.46-8.

3. K.B. Macfarlane, The Nobility of Later Medieval England, p.49

to be observed.¹ At the richer monasteries all that was needed was the will to establish such a choir, since the necessary money could be supplied from existing funds of one sort or another. At monasteries with less than about £1000 p.a. to dispose of, however, a separate benefaction to maintain the choir appears to have been necessary.

The establishment of a Lady Chapel choir at the large Augustinian priory at Bridlington (Yorkshire) is a good example of the latter process, the benefactor being Henry 6. The priory church sheltered the remains of the most recent of English saints, St. John of Bridlington (John Thweng, prior 1362-79, canonised 1401) and as such drew the pious king's particular attention. He wished St. John to be his 'continual advocate at the tribunal of God', and in June 1445 granted the prior and convent considerable fiscal privileges in return for the daily celebration of mass and recitation of prayers for the good estate of himself and his queen while living, and a daily Mass of Requiem and a yearly obit after his death.² Two years later a further bargain was struck; the priory extended its services for the good of Henry's soul, and Henry extended the fiscal exemptions and privileges enjoyed by the monastery. On 10th October 1447 the prior and convent sealed an indenture whereby the priory bound itself thenceforth to maintain 'xij Quaresters and a Maister to teche hem both gramer and song, to admyner at oure Lady Mass daily with note'; as well as singing Lady Mass daily in the Lady Chapel, these boys were to gather each evening after vespers at an image of the Virgin in the priory church to sing there a votive antiphon to the Virgin, followed by collects, prayers and the psalm De profundis.³ The king's part of the bargain

1. A possible exception to this was the choir maintained at Ramsey Abbey, though evidence survives only for a few years in the middle of the 15th century. The choir was already a going concern by 1435, when the evidence commences; the surviving Treasurer's Accounts and Custos Capelle accounts for the period 1435-47 record that for those years the Abbey maintained a team of three stipendiary singers, based apparently on the Lady Chapel. This organisation is reminiscent of that which had been maintained at Worcester Cathedral since the late 14th century. There is nothing in the Ramsey evidence to suggest the participation of boys in the performance of Lady Mass; by the 1430's and 1440's the fad for adding boys' voices had, as at Worcester, died away. After 1447, only single stipendiary singers appear to be mentioned on the accounts; after 1470 the evidence ceases. Too little information remains to bear any realistic attempt at interpretation. BM Add. Ch. 34518, 34762-6, 34673-83, PRO SC 6 1259/9.

2. CCHR 1427-1516, p.118

3. ed. J. Strachey, Rotuli Parliamentorum, vol.5., p.188; CCHR 1427-1516, p.119.

was kept on 9 November 1447, when he granted by charter further extensive privileges, both fiscal and at law¹; in this document the number of boys was given as six, and unfortunately it remains unclear whether the choir was to consist of six boys, or twelve. Nothing more is known about this Lady Chapel choir; but few of its kind have their personnel and duties quite so clearly described in documentation of a relatively early date:- an Instructor and a team of boys, responsible daily for singing Lady Mass and an evening antiphon to the Virgin. It seems very typical of what can be discovered of the great majority of the other institutions of its class.

Probably similar in most respects was the Lady Chapel choir maintained at Peterborough Abbey, of which the earliest evidence occurs in the private account and memorandum book of William Morton, Almoner 1448-67.² This choir appears already to have been a going concern in 1449; it is not known when it was inaugurated. Peterborough Abbey's annual income approached £2,000 p.a., and the choir may not have needed separate endowment. As was the case at other large monasteries, the care of the Almonry boys was delegated by the Almoner to his sub-almoner; consequently there are only passing references to them in Morton's account book.³ The number of boys is nowhere stated; however, the fact that 3d. per day was enough to provide them with meat for 10 days in Advent 1454 suggests that they did not exceed six or eight.⁴ Mention occurs in passing of four men

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1. CChR 1427-1516, pp.95-7. These grants to Bridlington priory were specifically exempted from the operation of the Act of Resumption of 1450; but subsequently it was discovered that this exemption was inoperative, because the grants had been made by charter, whereas the exemption from the Act of Resumption extended only to grants made by letters patent. Technically, therefore, the priory had ceased to enjoy its privileges; in July 1452, therefore, since the priory was continuing to keep its part of the bargain, and since the King did not wish these arrangements to become void, he promptly granted all these privileges back to the priory again. CChR 1427-1516, pp.95-7, 118-120; ed. J. Strachey, Rotuli Parliamentorum, vol.5, p.183 ff., esp. p.188.
 2. transcr. W.T. Mellows, ed. P.I. King, The Book of William Morton, 16 Northamptonshire Record Society (1954). A number of obediatory accounts of Peterborough Abbey still survive:- NthRC, MSS of Dean and Chapter of Peterborough, Boxes I-V passim; Fitzwilliam MSS, rolls 265, 266, 268. These have not yet been examined.
 3. ibid., pp.22, 39, 65, 72.
 4. ibid., p.72.

who were successively employed as Master of the Lady Chapel Choir, cantor in capella Beate Marie as Morton described the earliest of them. These were William Depyng, mentioned in 1448/9 and again in September 1456¹; Richard Haryngton, mentioned in June 1457 and June 1458, and later Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Ely Cathedral 1469-84²; Richard Scharppe, mentioned in August 1459³; and dom John Reede, priest, mentioned in 1462/3⁴.

The Lady Chapel Choir at Ely Cathedral priory is one of which little more can be said other than that it continued to flourish. A virtually complete list of Masters of the choir can be compiled for the 15th century⁵, and the choir apparently enjoyed an uninterrupted history. On feast days, especially the two great Ely feasts of the Translation and the Deposition of St. Etheldreda, the small choral establishment in the Lady Chapel was joined by visiting singers, who received tips for their services, especially those who sang polyphony at Lady Mass.⁶ There were rewards also for the boys who sang at Lady Mass on these occasions, though there is never any specific mention of their singing polyphony.⁷ The boys probably were few in number, not exceeding half a dozen. Indeed, when in 1448 John Dounham was collated to the mastership of the Grammar School in the Almonry, he was required to teach grammar to five boys of the Almonry 'if so many shall be maintained there'⁸ - and in all probability it was from the Almonry school that the boys of the Lady Chapel choir were drawn.

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1. ibid., p.19, where William Depyng was mentioned as the tenant of a house in Cowgate (1448/9); and ibid., pp.90-1, where William Depyng, cantor in capella beate Marie, was mentioned as being in arrears with his rent for a tenement on Cowgate (Sept.1456).
 2. ibid., pp.100,120; EDC Granator 42-44; Treasurer 14,16, and two unnumbered (1469/70 and 1474/5); Custos Capelle 12-13; Almoner 14, Cellarer 32, Precentor 9.
 3. ibid., p.134
 4. ibid., p.163. In 1465/6 a dom Johannes Rede de Scotia cantor received a gratuity of 4s. from the Precentor at Ely Cathedral Priory - EDC Precentor 8.
 5. See below, Appendix 85, p. A052
 6. EDC Custos Capelle 9 (1443/4):- Et dat' Clericis auxiliantibus in Capella tempore Translacionis et Depositionis Sancte Etheldrede et tempore Indulencie cum victualibus emptis pro eisdem iij s. Et dat' diversis Clericis cantantibus organum ad missam beate Marie virginis per vices hoc anno v s iij d. Similar entries occur on EDC Custos Capelle 10 (1452/3). Visiting singing clerks were also welcome to join the monks singing in choir, though this was a considerable breach of at least the letter of the Benedictine rule; there also the visitors sang polyphony - EDC Precentor 7,8,11.
 7. e.g. EDC Custos Capelle 9 (1443/4):- Et in xij paribus cultellorum emptis et datis pueris cantantibus ad missam beate Marie xvij d.
 8. CUL EDC G/2/3 (Liber 8) fo.36r.:- ...predictus Johannes Dounham... quinque pueros .Elemosinarie si totidem exhibiti fuerint ad scolarum gramaticalem docebit....

5.2.4.B. Canterbury Cathedral Priory.

The fashion for performing daily Lady Mass with boys' voices was one to which, it seems, not even the most musically self-sufficient monastery was immune. Canterbury Cathedral priory has already been noted as one of probably a very small group of important monasteries where amongst the monks great ability in singing, and especially the capacity to perform polyphonic settings of items in the liturgy, continued to be cultivated and valued.¹ Polyphonic music was one way of honouring an important guest at the priory. On 28 September 1447, for instance, Queen Margaret, wife of Henry 6, visited the cathedral on foot as a pilgrim; as she was met at the West door by the prior and monks, the precentor began the antiphon Audi filia, and when they had processed into the nave of the church, its verse was sung in polyphony.²

Further, unlike many other of the greater monasteries, there is no evidence that the prior and convent of Canterbury ever employed a lay musician to play the organ at service in the monks' choir. The monastery was large - between 1214 and 1535 "there were usually from 70 to 80 brethren on the books at any one time",³ and it was apparently always possible to find among so large a number a monk sufficiently skilful to discharge the duties of an organist. Four monk-organists can be traced in the archives, mostly through the payment to each of his 10s. p.a. fee from the Sacrist:- William Bonyngton (monk 1381-1412)⁴, John Pirie (monk 1435-50, recorded as organist 1449-50)⁵, Thomas Chart (monk 1451-1501, recorded as organist 1486-93)⁶, and John Wodnysborough (monk 1498-1534, recorded as organist 1516-33)⁷.

1. See above, pp. 4070-1, 4074.
2. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury... p.42; OBL MS CCC 256 fo. 63v.: - ...cantore incipiente Antiphonam Audifilia, et cum pervenissent in navem ecclesie [sic] cantabant versum cantu organico...; (printed inaccurately in ed. C.E. Woodruff, "The Chronicle of William Glastynbury", 37 Archeologia Cantiana (1925), p.126.)
3. R.A. L. Smith, Canterbury Cathedral Priory, p.4.
4. ed. W.G.Searle, Christ Church, Canterbury... p.183; CDC Lit MS D 12 fo.19v.- in cantu et ludo organico egregie eruditus.
5. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury... p.188; CDC Lit MS E vi, fo.55r.; named as organ-player CDC A/c Sacrist 37 (1449/50).
6. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury..., p.189; CDC Lit.MS.D 12 ff.29r.,28v., 33r.: - in musicis et organis bene instructus; died 14th March (ACL MS 20 fo.172v) 1501 (bells rung for his decease, CDC A/c Sacrist 70, 1501/2); named as organ player on all Sacrist's A/cs 1486/7-1493/3 (CDC A/c Sacrist 58 and 68; Misc. A/cs. vol.7, ff.4v., 35r.,59v. 116v. 118v. 137v; vol.9 fo.27v.)
7. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury.. p.192; W.L.Sumner, The Organ, p.107; died 24 July (ACL MS 20 fo.204v.) 1534 (CDC Reg.T2 fo.33v.); named as organ player on all sacrist's a/cs 1516/17 - 1532/3 (CDC A/cs.Sacrist 74,75; Misc. A/cs.vol.14ff.1r,37r,67r,102r,135r,175r,222r,279r; vol.30,ff.129r, 151r; vol.15,ff.2r,51r,101r,160r; vol.16,ff.1r,63r,103r.)

Probably, therefore, the monastery's own resident talent was sufficient to supply all the musical needs of services in the monks' choir. Canterbury Cathedral, however, was too prominent a monastery to remain immune from the fashion for performing daily Lady Mass with boys' voices - and that was something which the monks could not provide. However, the establishment of a Lady Chapel choir on the models already worked out elsewhere need have presented no problems. So rich a priory would have no difficulty finding the necessary money; the monastery had maintained a flourishing Almonry School since at least the early years of the 14th century¹, and with the ready availability of boys, all that was needed was the appointment of a Cantor.

Evidence of this development has proved difficult to come by. No indentures of appointment of a Master of the Lady Chapel choir appear to have survived in any of the numerous priory registers.² If there was a monk-Warden of the Lady Chapel, his office was not endowed and he has left no accounts. All details of the Lady Chapel choir discovered so far have had to be gleaned from terse and abbreviated entries casually entered on the accounts of other obedientiaries; they are only just sufficient to build up a coherent picture.

Prior to 1438, there is no evidence at all to suggest that any Lady Chapel choir had yet been created. Substantial evidence that both of the constituent elements of such a choir - the Cantor and the team of singing boys - had indeed been established, finally emerges at Michaelmas 1446; for during the financial year 1446/7 references can be found both to a group of singing boys and to a "Master of the Singing Boys" named Thomas Ware.³ This Thomas Ware's first appearance in the Canterbury archives occurs on the prior's livery list for Christmas 1446⁴; while on Epiphany day 1447 the prior gave tips of 3s. 4d. to the singing boys, and a little later, 6s. 8d. to Thomas Ware, master of the boys, and 20d. for the refreshment of his singing boys.⁵

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1. A chantry of six priests was established in the Almonry chapel in 1320; this occasioned certain alteration to the organisation of an already existing almonry school: BM Galba E iv ff.88v.-89v.
 2. CDC Registers N, S, T and T2 were searched, as seeming to be the most promising in this respect, but in vain.
 3. A boy called Thomas Ware had been a chorister of the Chapel Royal in 1421:- PRO E 101 407/4 ff.21r, 46r.
 4. OBL Tanner 165 fo.166r.:- distribution of livery by the prior to certain lay servants of the monastery.
 5. Journal of Prior's Expenses:- CDC Misc.A/cs 4 fo.142r.:- dona - Et dat' pueris cantantibus die Epiphanie iij s. iiijd.; fo.142v.:- dona - Et dat' Thome Ware magistro puerorum pro riguardo vjs. viijd. Et dat' ad recreacionem puerorum suorum cantantium xxd.; fo.144v.:- dona - Et dat' Thome Ware et pueris suis venientibus ad Eastry iij s. iiijd. Further references to Thomas Ware and his boys occur in later journals of prior's expenses, e.g. ibid., fo.187r. (1447/8).

By the nature of these prior's accounts, however, such references to the singing boys and their master as occur relate only to isolated occasions when the boys and their master entertained the prior on certain feasts; they give no indication of the nature of their regular daily work in the priory. Elsewhere, however, there are clear indications that this concerned the singing of Lady Mass. A substantial part of Thomas Ware's total salary came from the £2. p.a. he received from the Sacrist; this he received each year in his capacity as clerk of the Lady Chapel.¹ In 1454 Queen Margaret, coming again to Canterbury as a pilgrim, attended at the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the crypt to hear [Lady] Mass sung by the boys². In 1449 amongst a group of payments relating to the death and burial of prior John Elham, occurs one of 20d. to Thomas Ware and his boys for singing mass.³ Thomas Ware remained Master of the Singing Boys and Clerk of the Lady Chapel until 1470⁴; his two immediate successors were the composers William Corbrand (1471-4) and John Nesbett (1474-88)⁵. Certainly their successor, Nicholas Bremmer (1488-c.1530) was concerned with the performance of Lady Mass, since by c.1507 he was receiving an extra 10s. p.a. from the prior for observing it with polyphonic music.⁶

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1. E.g. CDC A/c Sacrist 40 (1456/7) Item clerico capelle beate marie Thome Ware xxxiiij s viij d. Item solutum eidem clerico ultra stipendia consueta vs iiij d. Ware is named as clerk of the Lady Chapel on all the Sacrist's A/cs from 1452/3 to 1469/70 (CDC A/cs Sacrist 39, 40, 42-9, 62); Accounts prior to 1452/3 record the payment of the salary, but do not give the name of the recipient.
 2. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury... p.61. The Master of the Singing boys received a further £2 p.a. of his salary from the monk-Warden of the altar of the Blessed Virgin in the crypt - in 1510/11 anyway, the only year for which evidence is available:- 10s. quarterly to Nicholas Bremmer, CDC Misc. A/cs 36, ff.3r., 6v., 9r., 11r., 13v.
 3. CDC Misc. A/cs vol.4 fo.226v.:- dona - Et dat' Thome Ware cum pueris decantantibus missam xxd.
 4. CDC A/cs Sacrist 39, 40, 42-9, 62.
 5. CDC A/cs Sacrist 51-55. A/cs Sacrist 55-58, Misc. A/cs vol.7, ff.4v., 35r.; MS Scrapbook B, nos.47-9; MS Scrapbook C, no.95.
 6. 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 xs. Bremmer was recorded as clerk of the Lady Chapel on Sacrist's A/cs from 1488/9 onward (CDC A/cs Sacrist 58 with 68; Misc. A/cs vol.7 ff.36v., 61v., 119v., 139v.,; vol.9 fo.27v.); and as Master of the Boys on the a/cs of the Warden of the Altar of BVM in the crypt - CDC Misc. A/cs vol.36, ff. 3r., 6v., 9r., 11r., 13v.

The singing boys occur on their own in a number of places on the accounts. Prior John Elham provided for their livery out of his own funds at Christmas 1446 and Christmas 1447¹. From 1453 onwards, however, they were provided for alongside the numerous other types of servants and inmates of the prior supplied with livery at the prior's annual Christmas distribution; on the appropriate lists they appear as the octo pueri Cantoris - the cantor's eight boys². Eight is a number directly comparable with the boys of Lady Chapel choirs at other monasteries. The Canterbury boys appear again as Octo pueri Cantoris on a document dated 1504³; they can be shown to be identifiable with the boys of the Almonry school, the viiij pueri in elemosinaria which appear on certain documents of the second half of the 15th century.⁴

This evidence is admittedly fragmentary. However, from what is known of the creation of Lady Chapel choirs at other major monasteries at this period, it seems fair enough to conclude that the appearance in the Canterbury archives, from Michaelmas 1446 onwards, of a team of singing boys who attend at Lady Mass, and of a Master of the Singing boys who is known also as Cantor and Clerk of the Lady Chapel, indicates pretty firmly that Canterbury had, like them, instituted a Lady Chapel choir of the standard type. However, there are grounds for thinking that Thomas Ware was not the first Master of the Lady Chapel choir at Canterbury. In the first place, Queen Margaret had made a visit to the cathedral on an occasion earlier than either of the two already mentioned; on 19 September 1446 she heard [Lady] mass sung at the altar of Our Lady Undercroft by the boys of the church (a pueris istius ecclesie cum nota)⁵. That indicates that the cathedral already had a ^ateam of trained singing boys before Thomas Ware took up his appointment at Michaelmas 1446. There is strong evidence pointing toward the identity of the man who had been their Instructor, and this line of enquiry is worth pursuing here for the light which it sheds on the later career of one of Europe's most distinguished musicians.

1. CDC Misc. A/cs. vol.4 ff.141v.,186v.

2. OBL Tanner 165, ff.171r-177r.,passim.

3. CDC MS Scrapbook C, unnumbered item on sixth page from end of volume.

4. They are mentioned on the main series of accounts of the Prior and of the Treasurers, and on various subsidiary documents between the two offices:- CDC A/cs Prior 12,14; Treasurer 16,17,18,20; Treasurer, file without reference; MS Scrapbook C, nos.22,96; Domest.Econ.21,22,48.

5. ed. W.G.Searle, Christ Church, Canterbury... p.39

Lionel Power's association with Canterbury Cathedral can probably be traced back at least to September 1421, when the clerks and chaplains of the chapel of Thomas, duke of Clarence, were present at their late employer's burial there.¹ In May 1423 Lionel was admitted as a member of the confraternity of the priory²; too much, however, should not be read into this. It was an honour, and indicated the high esteem in which Lionel was held in his profession; but it was an honour lavishly conferred by the priory on anyone whose influence the monks believed could be useful to them. Admission to the confraternity involved no necessarily close connection with any of the priory's internal activities, therefore, and Lionel's name does not appear in any of the cathedral archives for this particular period of his career.

However, by 1438 - by which time he was probably over 60 years old³ - he had certainly become a resident of Canterbury. On a private document dated at Canterbury on 20 September 1438, and engrossed on the dorse of the Close Rolls in Chancery on 19 April 1444, he styled himself Lionel Power of Canterbury, gentleman.⁴ In 1439, one year later, his name begins to appear in the archives of the cathedral, in contexts which indicate that he had by then entered full-time employment there in some capacity. Nowhere, unfortunately, is his position there described; but this can be deduced with some certainty since in every respect that can still be traced, he was employed on exactly the same terms as Thomas Ware, master of the Lady Chapel choir.

Among the emoluments received by Ware was an annual livery of cloth for his gown. At Christmas every year, the prior supplied a livery of cloth to the lay and secular servants of the priory. In odd years there was a liberacio generalis, to probably all of these servants; in even years there was a much restricted liberacio privata apparently to just those servants for whom the prior exercised a direct responsibility. From the content of these lists, it seems certain that appearance on them indicates that the recipient was in full time employment in the service of the priory. Thomas Ware appears on all lists of both types from Christmas 1446 onwards, among the armigeri or generosi, the highest class of lay servants of the priory.⁵

1. WstDC WAM 12163 ff.23r., 20r., 14v.

2. BM Arundel 68, fo.62v.

3. Certain of his compositions in the Old Hall Manuscript appear to have been composed before 1400.

4. PRO C 54 294 m.18v.: - Lionellus power de Cantuaria armiger (CCR 1441-47, p.211).

5. Information from OBL MS Tanner 165 ff.121-177, covering the years 1398-1466. The years 1446-66 appear on ff.166r-177r.

The name of Lionel Power appears in precisely the same place on all the lists for Christmas 1439 to Christmas 1444¹.

Amongst Thomas Ware's other emoluments was an annual pensio of 6s. 8d., paid to him by the prior out of the revenues of the Almonry which the prior administered, in four termly instalments of 20d. each.² Lionel Power had been the previous recipient of this pensio, at least for one term of the year 1444/5, the one year of which there is record.³

Most telling of all, however, is the significant transformation in the functions and status of the clerk of the Lady Chapel which occurred at just about the time that Lionel was joining the staff of the priory, in 1438 or 1439. It has already been noticed that amongst the responsibilities of the Sacrist was the payment from his account of the annual salary of the clerk of the Lady Chapel; this item occurs on every one of the 115 sacrist's accounts which survive, covering the year 1341/2 and 90 of the years between 1361 and 1533. Until 1436/7 this salary amounted to the modest sum of 34s. 8d. p.a., which was 8d. per week.⁴ In these early accounts, there is nothing to suggest that the clerk of the Lady Chapel can in any way be distinguished from the other, similar clerks who are mentioned sporadically in the Canterbury archives, e.g. the clerk of the altar of our Lady Undercroft, the clerk at the choir door, the clerk of the Shrine of St. Thomas, the clerk of the Corona, the clerk of the Martyrdom and so on. These were all lay employees of the priory of humble status, their duty being to attend every day in the Cathedral church, each at his special post. Their first duty was to serve at the private masses celebrated at their altars by the monks of the priory⁵; thereafter they attended to the pilgrims visiting the cathedral, summoning them to the altars and shrines, answering their questions, hurrying them off the premises when meal times approached, safeguarding the offerings left by the pilgrims and delivering the money intact to the warden of the shrine.⁶

1. ibid., ff.155v.-163v.

2. 1446/7:- CDC Misc. A/cs vol.4 fo.134r.; 1447/8:- ibid., fo.177r.; 1448/9:- ibid., fo.219r.; 1451/2:- Lit. MS E vi, ff.43r.55r.

3. Journal of Prior's expenses 1444/5:- Et solut' pro pencione Lionell power pro termino Natalis domini xxd. - CDC Misc.A/cs., vol.4, fo.33r.

4. e.g. CDC A/c Sacrist 28 (1436/7):- Item clerico Capelle beate Marie in navi Ecclesie xxxiiij s. viij d. At this time, the Lady Chapel was situated in the two Easternmost bays of the north aisle of the nave - J.W. Legg and W.H. St.J.Hope, Inventories of Christ Church Canterbury, pp.160-1.

5. According to injunctions left by Archbishop Winchelsey after a visitation, dated December 1298:- 8M Galba E iv fo.67r.

6. Information drawn from the oath taken by the clerks on their admission:- CDC Lit.MS.C 11 fo.37r. This copy was made in 1503 by William Ingram, a monk recently appointed Warden of the Martyrdom shrine.

Between 1437 and 1441 an alteration was made in the wage paid to the clerk of the Lady Chapel. In the Sacrist's account for 1436/7 his wage of 34s. 8d. for the year was recorded as usual.¹ The next surviving account, that for 1441/2, records both that, and the payment of an additional sum of 5s. 4d., thus raising his salary to a round £2. p.a.² This may not seem of much significance; but in fact it must represent some major transformation in the whole nature of the functions of the clerk of the Lady Chapel. Until 1437, his job was one that required trustworthiness and patience, but no particular training or skill, and he was consequently paid a weekly wage - the mode of payment used by the priory for employees of the lowest statuses, those of valectus and garcio. Between 1437 and 1441, however, it was transformed into an annual stipendium, a round lump sum indivisible by 52 and usually paid quarterly - the mode of paying the salaries of lay servants in the highest generosus and armiger classes.

Evidently, therefore, the whole nature of the post of clerk of the Lady Chapel had been radically transformed, and taken over by a man of much higher status; it is unfortunate, therefore, that the Sacrist's accounts do not yet record the name of the Clerk of the Lady Chapel. For it is known that within 10 years or so of the making of this arrangement, it was the then Master of the Lady Chapel choir, Thomas Ware, who was in receipt of this payment; and it is therefore by no means fanciful to suppose that this upgrading in the status of the clerk of the Lady Chapel, effected between 1437 and 1441, was in fact part of the arrangement made in 1438 or 1439 to accommodate the appointment of Lionel Power to the staff of the priory. That is, Lionel was appointed as Master of the Lady Chapel choir in 1438 or 1439, a newly created office which absorbed (with a bonus) the stipend of the clerk of the Lady Chapel, as well as having other sources of income allotted to it under the title of Master of the Singing Boys - a title which actually occurred on later accounts.

This speculation is turned into virtual certainty by the later history of this payment, and its exact co-incidence with the careers at the Priory of Lionel and Thomas Ware. Payment of the full augmented salary of £2. p.a. was made in 1441/2, 1442/3 and 1443/4.³ During the following year, 1444/5, the full daily wage of 34s. 8d. was paid, but of the Cantor's bonus of 5s. 4d. only 4s. 0d. was accounted for. This indicates that it was paid for only three quarters of the year, and
ceased in June 1445.⁴

1. CDC A/c Sacrist 28. See note 4 above, p. 5041.

2. CDC A/c Sacrist 29:- item clerico beate marie in Navi ecclesie xxxiiij s. viij d. Item solut' eidem clerico ultra stipendium consuetum v s. iiij d.

3. CDC A/cs Sacrist 29, 30, 31.

4. CDC A/c Sacrist 32.

If this sum were being paid to Lionel Power, then this is precisely what we would expect to find; for John Stone's Chronicle of events in the priory 1415-71 records that Lionel Power, armiger of the church, died within the precincts of the Cathedral, in the guesthouse opposite the Curia on 6 June 1445, and was buried the same day by the gate of the cemetery.¹

No immediate replacement for Lionel was found. No payment of the Cantor's pensio of 6s. 8d. p.a. from the prior out of the revenues of the Almonry was made in 1445/6²; no livery of cloth was made at Christmas 1445; and whoever was appointed as clerk of the Lady Chapel in succession to Lionel was employed at just the basic 8d. per week wage, presumably in return for performance of merely the standard duties of an altar-clerk.³

In fact, as has been observed, no successor to Lionel was appointed until Michaelmas 1446, 15 months after his death. It seems possible that this was the deliberate policy of the prior, John Sarisbury; and that it was not to the liking of the Archbishop. There still survives the text of a letter written by the archbishop from Lambeth to the prior and convent at Canterbury; it is, unfortunately, dated only by day and month (9 May), but it appears in a collection of miscellaneous material all relating to the period 1435-49. Amongst other things, the Archbishop had two requests to make in regard to the music of his cathedral church. Firstly, he requested the prior that distinct pauses be incorporated into their manner of singing the psalms; but he asked "not this only, but also that you take pains to continue (the singing of) that antiphon to the honour of the glorious mother of Christ, recently inspired to you by God..."⁴

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1. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church Canterbury..., p.37. Lionel's obit as a member of the confraternity was observed annually on 6th June:- BM Arundel 68 fo.29v., ACL MS 20 fo.192r. In 1449 prior Thomas Goldston paid for the anniversary to be marked by the tolling of the cathedral bells:- [solucio] privata - Et dat' pulsatoribus pro obbitu Lionell Power xij d.:- CDC Misc. A/cs vol.4, fo.226r.
 2. CDC Misc. A/cs. vol.4 fo.85v. records the prior's payments during 1445/6 from the Officium Eleemosinarie; the payment of this pensio is conspicuously absent.
 3. CDC A/c Sacrist 33 (1445/6).
 4. ...rogantes quatinus non solum hoc, verum eciam antiphonam illam ad honorem gloriose christi matris vobis a deo noviter inspiratam continuare curetis...:- OBL MS CCC 256 fo.166v. This letter was copied into the commonplace book kept by one of the monks, William Glastynbury, which contains much miscellaneous material relating to the period 1435-49. The names of both archbishop and prior are represented only by conventional initials.

It seems plausible to associate this recent adoption of the singing of a votive antiphon to the Virgin with the creation of the Lady Chapel choir; and to go on to assume that the need to urge its continuation was occasioned by a danger that it might be allowed to lapse - such a danger lying in prior John Sarisbury's neglect to appoint a new Cantor to succeed Lionel Power in June 1445. Arguably, therefore, this letter was written on 9 May 1446, and was addressed by Archbishop John Stafford to prior John Elham, who had been elected to succeed Sarisbury just four weeks before.

If the Archbishop were hoping that the new prior might prove more amenable, then his hopes were fulfilled, for Thomas Ware was appointed at Michaelmas 1446. Ware received his firstlivery allowance at Christmas 1446¹; he was paid the 6s. 8d. p.a. pensio from the prior as from Michaelmas 1446². The next surviving sacrist's account, that for 1448/9, shows that by then, payment of the 5s. 4d. p.a. bonus to the clerk of the Lady Chapel had been resumed; and from 1452/3 onwards Thomas Ware is named as its recipient.³

In conclusion, therefore, there is a strong circumstantial case for considering that Lionel Power was the first Master of the Lady Chapel Choir at Canterbury, holding this office from 1438 or 1439 until his death on 6 June 1445. The main duties of the eight singing boys and their Master appear to have been to sing Lady Mass and a votive antiphon to the Virgin daily in the Lady Chapel of the cathedral. Canterbury cathedral was in no particular need of lay musical expertise, and it is possible that the Lady Chapel choir was inaugurated simply to create a post for Lionel Power to retire to, with no intention of its being perpetuated after his death. Prior John Salisbury certainly allowed the position to lapse, and it remained vacant for some 15 months. However, the contemporary preference for having Lady Mass sung by boys' voices was too strong to be suppressed, once it had asserted itself; due to the initiative of a new prior, prompted by the archbishop himself, the choir was resuscitated in September 1446, and appears to have continued to flourish without a break until the Dissolution of the priory on 4th April 1540.⁴

1. OBL Tanner 165 fo.166r.

2. CDC Misc.A/cs vol.4, fo.134r.

3. CDC A/cs Sacrist 35,39.

4. An apparently complete list of the Masters of the Lady Chapel choir has been compiled, and appears below as Appendix B6, p.A053.

As observed before, it is doubtful whether these Lady Chapel choirs were, at this period, of sufficient musical significance to justify the labour necessary to trace and describe their creation and work.¹ Even if the establishment of such a choir was considered desirable at the greater monasteries, it was by no means essential or indispensable. For instance, the extensive archives of the abbey of St. Benet at Hulme, Norfolk, contain no indication that any Lady Chapel choir was ever established there;² the somewhat less voluminous account rolls of the even greater abbey of Bury St. Edmunds appear to require a similar conclusion to be drawn.³ Norwich Cathedral priory, one of the poorest of the greater monasteries, witnessed two attempts to inaugurate a Lady Chapel choir. The first, in 1424, appears to have proved completely abortive with the death of its promoter, bishop John Wakeryng, the following year; the second attempt got under way in 1441, flourished for a few years, but petered out in about 1469.⁴ The story of the Norwich Cathedral Lady Chapel choir stands as a salutary reminder that although the general climate of religious devotion in the fifteenth century was favourable to the creation of ever-increasing numbers of choral foundations, yet not every new establishment was predestined to take root and flourish. No amount of mere concern that God be praised with music could negate the debilitating consequences of plain lack of funds, or the absence of any interested patron.

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1. See above, Chapter 4, pp. 4099-100.
 2. About 100 obedientiary rolls have so far been traced, mostly in NNRO Diocesan Archives, and OBL Norfolk Rolls. The Almoner's accounts (mostly NNRO, Diocesan archives EST/2-5,13) contain no trace of any Almonry school; the two surviving accounts of the Warden of the Lady Chapel (1395 and 1505/6:- NNRO Dioc. Arch. EST/13) contain no evidence of any Lady Chapel choir. The Abbey's site, in the midst of a great desolation of river, swamp and fen, precluded any civil community from growing up outside its gates; it was not, therefore, well placed to attract laymen to its service.
 3. About a score of obedientiary rolls has been traced, in WSRO, BM and PRO. The one surviving account of the Warden of the Lady Chapel (PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3391) contains no reference to any Lady Chapel choir; nor is there such reference in any of the other account rolls. The Abbey may not have had a distinct Almonry school of its own, and so lacked a ready supply of boys.
 4. The story of the Lady Chapel choir at Norwich is related below in Appendix A7, pp. A031-5.

5.3. The cultivation of polyphonic music.

The foregoing survey seeks to analyse the composition of the choirs provided at the newly founded and newly refounded choral institutions of this period, and to describe such modifications in the composition of older-established choirs as can be ascribed to musical pressures and stimuli. It seems to demonstrate that there were no startling innovations put into practice in the overall constitution or composition of liturgical choirs between 1425 and, say, 1455. Rather, these choirs either simply incorporated and preserved, or took to a further point of development, those innovations which had been evolved during the remarkably fecund period of 35 years or so immediately previous. These were the innovations which had emerged as a response to the Establishment's need to find ways of cultivating as conspicuously as possible all those elements in contemporary methods of worship which were under attack from the Lollards. Most of these innovations now became absorbed into accepted standard practice, and the achievements of the previous generation became consolidated.

One conspicuous departure, for instance, had been the creation of monastic Lady Chapel choirs. These continued to flourish, and new ones to be founded, singing Lady Mass and the votive antiphon with boys' voices; there were yet no further developments in their composition, however, and all remained constituted on lines identical to those worked out in the first few years of the 15th century. The lay clerk, too, was not an invention of the present period, but had been called forth during the 1390's; the achievement of the following generation was to establish him as an indispensable feature of all liturgical choirs of major importance. The lay clerks emerged as the principal source of musical expertise; with a team of four to six of them, any choir was equipped with a distinct core of skilled singers able to cope with mensural notation and to perform composed polyphonic music.

One principal feature of the development of European music as a whole in the period 1425-60, lies in the positive realisation and exploitation by English composers of liturgical music of the potential which was being offered to them by the opportunities now to be found in their own society. For it was in the composition of music at this time that the most striking progress was being made. It was enough to place the work of English composers firmly in the forefront of European music for the span of a whole generation, distinguished as they were by their own distinct sweetness of harmony and suavity of melody, their lengthy multi-movement works, and their exploitation of the contrast between solo and choral polyphony. This was the

product of three distinct but interacting elements. Firstly, there was the prevailing climate in England of earnest religious devotion, in which those able to evolve new and satisfying methods of giving it expression were valued, encouraged and rewarded. Secondly, there was the existence of a skilful and co-operative performing medium - the expert choirs created (for another purpose) in the previous generation. Thirdly, there was the entirely fortuitous appearance of composers of genius, able to appreciate and capitalise on the opportunities thereby open to them. Between 1425 and 1460, these three elements combined with earlier traditions in English composition to produce the distinct contenance angloise of Dunstable, Power, Forest, Benet and others, that was both admired and emulated by their continental contemporaries.

5.3.1. The incidence of composed polyphony.

Evidence can be found for the cultivation of polyphonic music at this period at a broad cross-section of the many types of choral institution then flourishing; between the years 1425 and 1460, it would appear that composed polyphonic music consolidated the position it had won previously as an indispensable feature of worship as most fitly conducted. This practice must, however, always be seen in its proper context. Composed polyphony never replaced the ritual plainsong as the staple fare of the pre-Reformation choir. For the ritual of the lesser Hours services, virtually no polyphonic settings were ever composed at all, and these remained sung entirely in plainsong right down to the Reformation; similarly, no polyphonic settings were ever composed for certain parts of the more important services - the psalms, for instance. Neither did composed polyphony supplant the well-established techniques of improvised polyphony; descant, counter and faburdon continued to thrive right down to the Reformation, and only disappeared at the same time as the ritual plainsong which their practice was designed to enhance.

Composed polyphony was cultivated as an offering to be made ad maiorem gloriam Dei, as an addition to, and not as a replacement for, long-familiar expressions of worship. If the contents of surviving manuscripts are sufficient to judge by, composed polyphony was considered most appropriate for settings of the Ordinary of the Mass on festivals; for festal motets; for votive antiphons; for certain sections of the Office of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Day; and for settings of non-liturgical carol texts. Without doubt, the members of the best-ordered choirs of the day would have considered the ability to offer the singing

of composed polyphony to be an essential part of their very qualification to do the job at all; but in relation to the great bulk of their work, it remained no more than the festal gilt on the plainsong gingerbread.

5.3.1.A. The provenance of surviving manuscripts.

Evidence for the cultivation of composed polyphony is widespread among institutions of pretty well all types. Two virtually complete manuscripts have survived from the middle years of the 15th century:- OBL Selden B.26 and BM Egerton 3307. Both contain a collection of carols; Egerton 3307 also has music for the office of Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Easter Sunday, and various miscellaneous items; neither manuscript contains any mass-cycles, but Selden B26 includes some 15 votive antiphons.¹ It is unfortunate that for neither manuscript can any provenance be definitely assigned. Prof. Harrison has suggested reasons for proposing St. Mary Newarke College, Leicester, as the possible origin of Selden B 26.² Prof. McPeck has assembled a considerable body of evidence to demonstrate that St. George's Chapel, Windsor, is likely to have been the provenance of Egerton 3307.³ The evidence is of variable quality and very far from conclusive, but certainly St. George's Chapel does appear as a very much more plausible candidate than any other institution yet suggested.

In addition to complete manuscripts, there survive numerous fragments consisting of up to half-a-dozen leaves or so. Some still remain in the libraries of the institutions which probably produced and used them. Of the fragments preserved in the Library of Canterbury Cathedral⁴, the Dunstable Preco preheminencie and the settings of Asperges me domine date from this period, and may well have been part of the repertoire of the monk-organiste themselves. The archives of Wells Cathedral preserve a small scrap of polyphonic music in handwriting of c.1450. It carries four staves and part of a fifth of one part of a setting of Sanctus and

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1. The carols in both MSS are ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, pp.11-62; the liturgical music in OBL Selden B 26 is ed. A. Hughes, Fifteenth Century liturgical music, nos.1-15, 33; the liturgical music of BM Egerton 3307 is ibid., nos.19-32, 34-39; and the remaining items of BM Egerton 3307 are in ed. G.S.McPeck, Egerton 3307.
 2. MMB, p.300
 3. ed. G.S.McPeck, Egerton 3307, pp.7-14.
 4. discussed above, chapter 4, p. 4070.

Benedictus from the ordinary of the Mass.¹ It is now barely legible, but from its mere existence it can be inferred that polyphonic settings of the Mass were among the repertoire of the cathedral choir at this date.

5.3.1.B. The distribution of books of polyphony.

Alongside actual surviving manuscripts, there remain from a broad variety of institutions entries in accounts relating to expenditure on the production or repair of books of polyphony now lost, and entries on inventories of chapel books and equipment. Among the collegiate churches, King's College, Cambridge owned a book of cantus fractus which was repaired in 1448/9². In 1438/9 St. George's Chapel, Windsor, spent 14s. on the purchase of parchment, and on the writing of a book of polyphonic music.³ An even larger outlay followed in 1449/50 when Richard Prydeux, one of the clerks, was paid 24s. just for the writing of the texts and music of a large book called Le Orgonboke; this consisted of 12 gatherings each composed of six leaves, thus totalling 72 folios.⁴ A very substantial repertoire of polyphonic music could have been entered in such a volume. At Eton College, 15d. was spent during 1444/5 on five quaterna of paper pro canticis inde scribendis.⁵

Inventories of chapel books and goods can be particularly informative in any attempt to estimate the incidence of the performance of composed polyphonic music. It cannot be assumed, however, that they necessarily give a complete picture. Most surviving inventories are Sacrists' inventories, of which the purpose was to list just those essential items of chapel furnishings and equipment which the church

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1. WlsDC, MS fragment without reference, known as "The Hygons fragment", (verso). Wells Cathedral may also be the provenance of certain leaves of polyphonic music now serving as the cover to the Court-book of the manor of Minehead, Somerset, for 1546-1559 (SR0 DD/L P29/29). They contain settings of the Kyrie and other movements from the Ordinary of the Mass, some in a mid-15th century hand, some in a hand of the early 16th century. Under the circumstances of their preservation, it seems unlikely that these leaves are of other than local origin.
 2. CKC, Mundum Book 1, fo.137r.:— Item pro emendacione unius libri de cantu fracto Et pro pellibus pro eodem v s.
 3. In pergamenno pro libro organizac' cum notacione eiusdem empto et solut' xiiij s. — WndDC xv 34 39.
 4. et solut' Ricardo Prydeux pro scriptura et le notyng unius libri vocati le Orgonboke continentis xij quaternos ad usum Collegii ad quemlibet quaternum pertinentibus vj foliis pro quolibet quaterno ij s. — xxiiij s.:— WndDC xv 34 44. McPeck dated Egerton 3307 to c.1435-45 (ed. G.S.McPeck, Egerton 3307, p.14-16); however, it doesn't match this description of the 'Orgonboke' compiled at St. George's in 1449/50, since even in its present incomplete state, it contains 88 folios.
 5. EPF Audit Roll 1.

was bound by canon law to provide, and for the care and maintenance of which the sacrist was responsible. His charge certainly extended to the plainsong service books indispensable for the proper conduct of the chapel services. These books lay permanently on the choir-stalls, and to the sacrist was deputed the duty of ensuring their availability; consequently they were always listed in full on his inventories. However, the sacrist's charge did not necessarily extend to the books of polyphonic music as well. They could not be considered essential to the performance of the liturgy, and were never left lying on the choirstalls; rather, they were kept by whoever was in charge of the performance of polyphonic music.¹ On sacrist's inventories, therefore, there was no need for the books of polyphony to be entered at all. When they were entered on an inventory, they were almost never listed with the plainsong service books; rather, they were usually scribbled in casually in any convenient blank space, or among the miscellaneous items at the end. It certainly cannot be assumed, therefore, that the absence of any books of polyphony from a sacrist's inventory necessarily indicates that composed polyphony was not observed at the institution concerned; and when polyphonic books were listed, no confidence can be felt that any serious effort had been made to make the list complete, unless some specified essential purpose was being served thereby.

Inventories for the period have been discovered for four collegiate institutions - Eton College, King's College Cambridge, Fotheringhay and Warwick. No books of polyphony appear on an Eton College inventory of April 1445.² At the time of the disbandment of the college in September 1465, however, a complete Inventory of the college's entire possessions was drawn up.³ Amongst the chapel service-books was listed one volume for use at the organ, second folio 'laris qui'; while down amongst the

1. see e.g. MMB, p.166

2. EPF Inventory I. This includes some 55 articles of plate, relics, images etc., and a fair number of service books including 8 missals, 8 graduals, 9 processions, 6 antiphoners and 2 breviaries; this however was quite inadequate for the expanded college of 1446 onwards, and complaint was made in 1447 that the college was insufficiently supplied with service-books (H.M.Lyte, A History of Eton College, p.27) In 1445 there was a quaternus pro venite cantando, which appears in a later inventory as a volume 'for orgains' (EPF Inventory VII, April 1531 or 1532).

3. EPF Inventories IV (English) and V (Latin), the former dated 7 September 1465. Some words on these inventories which are now illegible can be restored from transcripts published by M.R.James "Chapel Inventories", 25 Etoniana (1920) p.385 ff. By 1465 the stock of plainsong service-books included 21 antiphoners, 20 graduals, 6 missals and 21 processions.

the miscellanea at the end of the Inventorium librorum chori appeared two books of vocal polyphony, (libri organici, 'bokes of prykyd song'), the second folio of one beginning illud et, the second folio of the other beginning beata dei - perhaps the Marian antiphon Beata dei genetrix Maria.¹

At King's College, Cambridge, an Inventory of c.1452 contains the following three items, entered casually in the space between lists of Antiphoners and Graduals on an Inventory of chapel books:-

Item duo libri de cantu fracto quorum 2m folium unius incipit kirieleyson

Item 2m folium alterius incipit Nos autem populus

Item alius liber de cantu fracto emptus de Boston cuius 2m folium incipit fa.sol.la.²

The first of these items probably began with a setting of the ordinary of the Mass for use at High Mass, or with a collection of Kyries, Alleluias and other items for use at Lady Mass. The words nos autem populi occur in the Venite, sung daily at Matins.³ The third item, a book of polyphony using solmisation terms, must presumably have been a book for teaching descant⁴ - almost certainly for the choristers, since the book had been bought from William Boston, the first Instructor of the Choristers.⁵

An Inventory for 1445 of Fotheringhay College shows that despite the financial difficulties which falling income from rents was causing

1. Inventory V:- liber pro Organis	Item j liber pro organis	ij fo laris qui
Libri organici	In primis j liber	ij fo illud et
	Item alius liber	ij fo beat'dei
Inventory IV:- for Organys.	Item a boke for Organys	ij fo laris qui
Song	Item a boke of prykyd song	ij fo illud et
	Item a nother boke of prykyd song	ij fo beata dei.

See also MMB, p.163. The chapel was equipped with 'ij peyre of Organes' by 1465.

2. CKC, Register no ref. (containing this inventory of c.1452 and much other material) fo.7r.; see also MMB, p.163 and fn.8. The stock of plainsong books included 26 antiphoners, 18 graduals, 18 processioners, 9 missals, 7 breviaries and a number of other items:- ibid., ff.6v.-8v.
3. MMB, p.163, fn.8.
4. As suggested by Prof. Harrison, ibid.
5. William Boston, described in 1448 as Clericus Chori Collegii Regis de Canteburgia et informator Quarestarum eiusdem Colegii - PRO E 403 771 m.11r.

....
 item j [olde lined out] reed parchemyn book of square note
 and other songes of the gieft of ser Thomas Tippes

With eight separate manuscripts of composed polyphony, St. Mary Warwick was certainly the best equipped of the four colleges for which Inventories have so far been found.² The nature of these inventories makes their contents difficult to interpret, but the brevity of these lists of books of polyphonic music does help to place the role of polyphony in its proper context:- some very well equipped choirs, even in the 1450's, were considered amply supplied even if they possessed only a handful of polyphonic manuscripts. Of course, quite a large repertoire could be compressed into a single manuscript; nevertheless, comparison with the handsome collections of choir books which had been accumulated at, eg. Magdalen College, Oxford, and King's College, Cambridge, by 1522 and 1529 respectively¹, shows that the polyphonic repertoire of a mid-15th century college might have looked pretty puny compared with that which a major choir could tackle 70 years later. However, it remains significant that all four colleges did possess such manuscripts - all did possess a polyphonic repertoire.

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1. OMC, roll without reference, in bundle labelled "Sacrist's Inventories"; CKC MS "College Inventories" fo.46r.; both printed in MMB, pp.431-3
 2. The designs of the 15th century glass of the Beauchamp chapel incorporate angels holding scrolls of music, including a few notes of a two part setting of Gloria in excelsis deo, the verse of Hodie nobis celorum rex, a Responsory at Matins on Christmas Day:- C.F.Hardy, "On the music in the painted glass of the windows in the Beauchamp Chapel at Warwick", 61 Archaeologia (1909), p.597.

5.3.1.C. The dispersal of composers.

Almost as instructive as the Inventories in assessing the degree of incidence of polyphonic music is consideration of the many types of institution at which composers of polyphonic music are known to have worked. Among those working in household choirs, John Plummer was a clerk of the Chapel Royal 1438-67¹, and there is some evidence that John Dunstable may have been a member of the chapel of John, duke of Bedford (died 1435)²; Lionel Power had been clerk of the chapel of Thomas, duke of Clarence until the duke's death in 1421, and may well have continued to work in similar circles until his retirement to Canterbury in 1438 or 1439. Five of Plummer's compositions survive; his music gives some idea of the smaller, unpretentious kind of item in the Chapel Royal repertoire of his time, for both the votive antiphon and festal High Mass.³

Among the refounded hospital chapel choirs, the John Benet who was Instructor of the Choristers at St. Anthony's Hospital, London, between 1443 and 1449⁴ may be identifiable with the composer of that name. John Bedyngham was on the staff of St. Stephen Westminster in 1457⁵; John Soursby was Instructor of the Choristers at St. Mary Warwick in 1432/3 and 1448/9⁶ - both of these were old established colleges of

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1. PRO E 101 408/25 fo.2r., 412/2 fo.36v.
 2. See above, p. 5029
 3. Plummer's compositions are discussed in ed. B. Trowell, John Plummer:- Four Motets, pp.7-10, and M. and I. Bent "Dufay, Dunstable, Plummer - A new source", 22 Journal of the American Musicological Society (1969), pp.398,405.
 4. WndDC xi F 32, i G 10.
 5. PRO C 54 308 m 2lv. (CCR 1454-61, p.283). Bedyngham was listed among existing members of the Fraternity of St. Nicholas (the parish clerks' gild), London, when its extant Register was drawn up in 1448 or 1449; this, however, does not necessarily mean that he was already working in London or in its vicinity. His death was communicated to the gild between Ascension Day 1459 and Ascension Day 1460 (Register of the Fraternity of St. Nicholas:- LGL, MS 4889 ff.2r., 4r.) The column in which Bedyngham's name occurs on fo.4r. was dated by H. Baillie to 1454 (H. Baillie, "A London gild of musicians", 83 Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1956/7) p. 20 ; H. Baillie, "Some biographical notes on English church musicians", 2 RMA Research Chronicle (1962), p. 25) but it can in fact be shown to relate to 1459/60.
 6. D. Styles, Ministers' Accounts of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick, pp.6, 32.

14th century foundation (or re-foundation) which were managing to keep up with the times. Among the more recently established colleges, it has been suggested that the William Typp who was Chaplain and Precentor of Fotheringhay in 1438 may be identifiable with the W. Typp who contributed seven pieces to the Old Hall Manuscript.¹ This is possible; however, since all of Typp's compositions appear in the first layer of the Manuscript, probably complete by 1415, the gap in time of over 20 years would seem to render any supposed identification of the two Typps too remote to be acceptable without better evidence than the mere coincidence of names.²

For the secular cathedrals, the John Garnesey who was a vicar-choral of Wells 1443-1458³ seems a plausible candidate for identification with the Garnesey whose setting of Laudes deo occurs in Pepys 1236.⁴ At Salisbury Cathedral, the Robert Dryffeld who was vicar-choral 1424-1468 and submagister of the choristers 1428 - 1435⁵, is perhaps a plausible candidate for identification with the Driffelde whose compositions appear in the Trent codices.

These composers may not, of course, have been members of the establishments among whose archives their names have survived, at the

1. MMB pp.27, 176; and by all writers since. Typp appeared as precentor at a visitation of 1438; he was not mentioned in the record of the visitation of 1442, by which time he had been succeeded as precentor by one John Brownynge:- ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations of Religious Houses in the diocese of Lincoln, vol.2, pp.94, 108ff.
2. Anyway, the job of the precentor at Fotheringhay was not primarily a musical one; what the statutes record of his duties make it clear that it was an administrator, as much as a musician, that was required in that post:- ed. A.H. Thompson, The Statutes of the Collegiate Church of...Fotheringhay, pp.252-5, 279-80.
3. ed. H.C. Maxwell-Lyte and M.C.B. Dawes, Register of Thomas Bekynton pp.4,299. In 1458 Garnesey was installed as a canon of Wells, and collated to the prebend of Combe 12; he died the following year:- ibid., pp.299, 322.
4. ed. S.R. Charles, The Music^{of} Pepys 1236, 40 Corpus Musicae Mensurabilis (1969) no.86.
5. SDC Reg. Harding ff.50r., 95r., 106v; a/c of Collector of Choristers' Rents 1463/4; SDC Reg. Machon p.169. A vicar named 'dryfyd' appears on a list of vicars attending the obit of bishop John Waltham, attached to, but not necessarily forming part of, the account of the clerk of the Fabric for 1477/8. The Richard Driffylde who was listed as an already deceased member of the Fraternity of St. Nicholas, London by 1448/9 (see above, note 5, p.5045) appears among the lay fratres et sorores and not among the clerici, so he is very unlikely to have been the composer:- LGL MS 4889 fo.3v.

time they composed their surviving music. Still, the overall impression left by this survey of the incidence of the composition and performance of polyphonic music is that it had indeed become a widespread observance at all the more significant types of choral establishment by the mid-15th century - a method of expressing devotion and worship which any competent secular choir could have been expected to be able to perform, alongside the established traditions of plainsong and improvised polyphony.

5.3.2. Provision for the performance of polyphonic music.

It was at precisely these more significant choral institutions that there were available both the scope and the opportunity necessary to enable the performance of composed polyphony to be undertaken sufficiently frequently for it to become established as a regular feature of worship as most worthily conducted. However, the mere provision of the necessary books was not by itself enough to render possible the performance of polyphonic music; special provision had to be made to ensure the availability of men able to sing from them.

The capacity to cope with the sometimes arcane science of mensural notation had never been part of the routine qualifications of liturgical singers, and prior to c.1390 it may have been a skill of relatively rare cultivation. When the reaction to the Lollard assault began to create a demand for this skill, it was, as has been seen, most commonly filled by expert laymen who were employed by the church, for want of anywhere more appropriate to put them, as clerks of the second form.¹ The archives of the succeeding period indicate that this practice was found to serve its purpose satisfactorily, and show that it came to be widely accepted as the standard mode whereby expert singers might be employed. Hereby, through the distinctive and valued contribution to the conduct of divine service which they were able to make, the lay-clerks consolidated their position as indispensable constituents of any important liturgical choir. Within the hierarchy of working servants of the church, their status steadily rose, and with it the rewards which it seemed fit to pay them.

1. See above, pp. 4040-50

5.3.2.A. The numbers of singers of polyphony provided.

The most conspicuous feature of the constitutions of liturgical choirs during the second quarter of the 15th century is this consolidation of the position of the lay clerks as the means of satisfying the need for skilled performers of polyphonic music. It amounted to a complete transformation in the nature of the occupants of the second row of choirstalls, and no newly founded or refounded institution of any significance could now be established without its team of clerks of the second form. These numbered four at Manchester (1421), Higham Ferrers (1422), Eton (1440, until c.1445), Sherburn Hospital (1434) and Westbury-on-Trym (c.1450); six at Hemingborough (1426), St. Mary Warwick (1439), Tattershall (1439, until c.1455), King's College Cambridge (c.1445), St. Cross Winchester (1445), St. Katherine, London (c.1445) and Tattershall (c.1455)¹. At many of the smaller institutions, the number of clerks now actually equalled the number of chaplains.

However, the places of the clerici secunde forme, whose positions the singers had usurped, had never been intended to be filled in this way; and the work ancillary to the chapel services, the traditional sphere of the clerks of the second form at collegiate churches, still had to be done by someone. In most colleges, these duties could be discharged by the vergers and his staff; elsewhere the more junior polyphony-clerks continued to perform these duties for an extra fee.² At least at Eton College, however, the body of clerks of the second form incorporated two completely distinct elements - a group of skilled singers of polyphony, and a more lowly body of ancillary staff akin to the traditional clerks of the second form. In assessing the exact nature of the special provision made at these institutions for the performance of polyphonic music, it is first necessary to distinguish between the specialised polyphony-clerks and the traditional clerks of the second form.

At Eton, one of the two colleges equipped with a total of ten clerks³ the very detailed provisions of the 1453 statutes make it clear that not all of this large number were intended to be able to contribute to the

1. See above, pp. 5005-15 passim.

2. At King's College Cambridge the college staff included a distinct clericus vestibuli to look after these duties - see below, p. 5061. At Tattershall College one of the polyphony-clerks served as sacrista at an extra fee of 26s. 8d. p.a.: statute 30, DLD U1475 Q 21/1, fo. 7r.; Receiver's A/c 1495/6, Q 16/2, Stipendia diversorum Officiariorum. Probably this latter device was the commoner.

3. Statute 2:- ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws..., p. 478.

performance of the more advanced styles of music which the founder certainly intended should be performed in the chapel. The ten clerks were divided into two distinct groups, the top four being of a character very different from the other six. The first four were the specialised practitioners, having absolutely no duties in college other than singing at service in the chapel. The particular skill which they existed to provide was the singing of polyphonic music:- all four were to be well-endowed in voice, and possess the skills of reading, chanting, and singing cantus organicus. One of these clerks was also to serve as the Instructor of the Choristers, and at least one was to know how to play the organ; indeed, in order to acquire a competent organist, the college was even prepared to relax its rules and permit a married man to be appointed. They were paid at the rate of £4.-£6 p.a., all found.¹

The remaining six clerks were clearly considered to be of distinctly less consequence in the college hierarchy. The six who were to be selected were all to be able to take the part of clerks (of the second form) in the chapel services, though they were required to have no more than just sufficient skill in reading and singing, and knowledge of the chant for this purpose. The main work of each of them, however, was really merely incidental to the principal business of the chapel; each had his own ancillary job to do in and around it, and making contribution directly to the Opus Dei was by no means their primary function. One was to serve as clerk of the vestry, in charge of the laying out of the working materials of the chapel under the direction of the fellow chosen as sacrist. Another was to serve as the parish clerk. The ante-chapel of the college chapel served as the parish church for the parish of Eton; apparently it was intended that a parish vicar should be appointed to look after the needs of the parishioners, and that in performing the parish services in the ante-chapel, he should be assisted by one of the clerks of the college as parish clerk. The vestry clerk and parish clerk were each to be paid the not inconsiderable sum of 66s. 8d. p.a. all found.²

1. Statute 10, ibid., p.514

2. Statutes 10, 12, ibid., pp.514-9, 522. The statute contemplated the parish clerk's being a mere youth, to be admitted to the college grammar school as a pupil, if suitable. This is difficult to fathom. Certainly, it was not unknown for poor boys to be given the job of parish Aquebaiulus to provide them with the income necessary to pay school fees (A.F. Leach, A History of Winchester College, pp.40-1; N. Orme, English Schools in the Middle Ages, pp.180-1); but the holy-water-carrier was a very humble being compared with the parish clerk. Certainly there is no evidence that the Eton College clericus parochialis was ever, in fact, anything but a mature adult, some of whom stayed many years in the job:- e.g. John Spycer 1444-55, and Thomas Absolon 1457-76.

Of the remaining four clerks, two were assistants to the vestry clerk, and two to the parish clerk, especially in ringing the bells. On the accounts, individuals among them were referred to as clericus deputatus ad pulsandum campanas and subclericus vestibuli. Their salaries were negotiable with the provost; the accounts show that the going rate lay between 26s. 8d. and 53. 4d.pa. all found.¹

These four lesser clerks appear to have been something of an afterthought; certainly the section of statute 10 which deals with them appears to be a rather clumsy addition tacked on at the end as a late revision. In fact they were purely ancillary, and by no means essential for the worthy conduct of divine service; King's College chapel, for instance, was considered perfectly adequately equipped with only 6 clerks.² What made them necessary in the Eton scheme was almost certainly the King's grandiose intentions for the college chapel. Throughout the period 1447-53, when the constitution of the choir was being formulated and its members recruited, it was intended that the college should have for its chapel a building of very considerable size; indeed, in 1449 building actually began on a church of colossal proportions, of dimensions comparable with Salisbury and Winchester cathedrals.³ Almost certainly it was to service such a building as this that four assistants had to be supplied for the vestry and parish clerks. The full body of ten clerks was, in fact, maintained only between December 1447 and Michaelmas 1455.⁴ By then, it must have been becoming apparent that Henry 6's grandiose scheme would never be completed, and two of the ancillary clerks were dispensed with. The places of the four polyphony-clerks were kept filled, but a total of only eight clerks was maintained between 1457 and the disbandment of the college in September 1465.⁵ After its revival in December 1466, no more than six clerks were ever employed, at least between 1466 and 1500.⁶

Of Eton's large body of chapel clerks, therefore, detailed consideration of the provisions of the 1453 statutes reveals that only four were concerned with the singing of polyphonic music in the

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1. Statute 10, ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws..., pp.517-8; EPF Audit Rolls 2 and 3, - 9a. passim
 2. Since King's College chapel was not a parish church, there was, of course, no need for any equivalent to the Eton College clericus parochialis.
 3. H. Maxwell-Lyte, A History of Eton College, pp.37-50.
 4. EPF Audit Rolls 3-7, stipendia capellanorum et clericorum.
 5. EPF Audit Rolls 8, 9, 9a.
 6. EPF Audit Rolls 10-16, MS.231, Audit Rolls 17-30.

college chapel, while the other six were responsible merely for the duties traditionally expected of the clerks of the second form. The sole ability of the four polyphony-clerks to provide a commodity which was in considerable demand is further demonstrated by the high level of esteem, status and pay which they were accorded within the college hierarchy. For instance, the basic salary of a chaplain was £5 p.a., with free board and lodging and an annual livery of cloth,¹ - generous pay, but the polyphony-clerks more than achieved equality with it. The statutory salary of the Instructor of the Choristers was £6 p.a., and of the other three clerks £4 p.a., all found plus livery²; but the accounts show in fact that while the Instructor received his £6 p.a., two of the other clerks received £5. 6. 8d. and only the fourth clerk £4 p.a.³ This gave them an average salary exceeding that of the chaplains, a situation totally without precedent.

Further, among the college staff, the four polyphony-clerks, with the chaplains and the top administrators, constituted the highest class of college servants, those of generosus or "gentleman" status. Indeed, the polyphony-clerks were referred to as the clerici generosi⁴; they ate at first sitting in hall on one of the tables reserved for employees of their exalted status, and their commons was assessed, like theirs, at 14d. per week.⁵ The four skilled singers thereby achieved parity of esteem with some very senior members of the college hierarchy.

The six ancillary clerks, by contrast, were on a distinctly lower level; indeed, they were modest creatures of merely valectus (yeoman) status. In a will made on 19th August 1468, they were described as the "yeoman-clerks", evidently to distinguish them from the gentleman-clerks,⁶ - that is, the singers of polyphony. During first sittings at meals in the college hall, the six yeoman-clerks assisted the other hall servants in waiting on and serving the senior members of the college (including the clerici generosi). They themselves ate with the other servants at a second sitting; 10d. per week was allowed for their commons, the same rate

1. Statute 10:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws...pp.513-4.

2. ibid.

3. These rates prevailed 1457-61:- EPF Audit Rolls 8, 9, 9a. Ever since 1446, however, the actual pay of the clerks had been to some degree in excess of the statutory salaries.

4. Statutes 15,61:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws...pp.528,617

5. Statutes 10,15:- ibid., pp.515,528. In the commons accounts on the Audit Rolls, they are the clerici of the category clerici et generosi.

6. Item lego cuilibet clerico ibidem vocato yeman clerkes :- will of Thomas Jourdelay, EPF Register 1457-1536, fo.106.

as for scholars and choristers and menial servants.¹ Evidently these lesser clerks had inherited the lowly status of their distant ancestors, the youths aspiring to priesthood and vicarages-choral of pre-Lollard days; there was understood to be a considerable gulf between them and the four clerici generosi, the singers of polyphony.

By comparison with Henry 6's intentions for Eton College Chapel, the chapels planned for King's College, Cambridge, and Tattershall College were relatively modest; at both places, the statutory body of clerks was consequently far more homogeneous in composition, and warranted far less detailed description in the statutes. At King's the six clerks were all of the same status; and there does indeed seem to be ground for presumption that all were solely singing-clerks, since the statutes made no demand that any of them perform any duties in chapel except those of singing and serving at the Opus Dei. Rather, each year one of the fellows in priest's orders was selected as sacrist, with responsibility for all the books, vessels, ornaments and vestments of the chapel. To assist him, and no doubt to do all the routine work, there was a distinct clerk of the Vestry, "discreet, trustworthy and hardworking", in receipt of the not inconsiderable sum of 66s. 8d. p.a. all found. Unlike his counterpart at Eton, he was not considered to be one of the chapel clerks; thus with no obligation to attend service, he probably was intended to be able to discharge in his own person pretty well all the jobs performed at Eton by the clerk of the vestry and the subclerici together.² Such an arrangement would permit only professional singing clerks to be appointed to the six regular chapel clerkships.

No fixed salaries were laid down in the statutes for the chaplains and clerks; instead each was to negotiate with the provost for a mutually agreeable sum.³ In practice the salaries agreed were somewhat lower than those decreed for Eton, though by no means ungenerous. The chaplains generally settled for between 66s. 8d. and £4.p.a. The clerks mostly settled for between 40s. and 66s. 8d. p.a.; those who commenced at the lower end of this bracket received regular increases as they gained experience. Certain of the clerks were paid above these levels.

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1. Statutes 10,16,15:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws... pp.515,532, 528. In the commons accounts on the Audit Rolls, they figure among the servientes in the category scholares, choriste et servientes. It will be recalled that at the Chapel Royal also, a distinction was observed between the gentleman-clerks and the yeoman-clerks; see above, pp.
 2. Statutes 1,44:- ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws... pp.20,119-120. Since King's College Chapel was not a parish church, there was, of course; no need for any person directly equivalent to the Eton clericus parochialis.
 3. ibid., p.120

Between 1447 and 1449 John Denham was employed at £4 p.a., the rate he had previously received as a clerk at Eton, and Hugh Smith was reckoned to be worth £5 p.a. in 1451. While they were Instructors of the Choristers, John Halywell (1450-1) and William Howard (1457-9) were paid a total of £5. 6. 8d. p.a., and in 1459 the clerk Tynghyll was paid at the rate of £6.13. 4d. p.a. as clerk and Instructor, more than his counterpart at Eton.¹

King's College Cambridge was far less well-endowed than Eton College, and it is unsafe to attempt to draw firm conclusions about the nature of the clerkships from a comparison of the salaries paid out at each institution. This evidence by itself indicates merely that the 6 chapel clerks of King's were closer in status and remuneration to the skilled polyphony clerks of Eton, than to the ancillary chapel clerks there. Moreover, the college accounts and Inventories certainly show that books of polyphonic music were used in chapel²; further, the chapel clerks of King's included amongst them men who had either been polyphony-clerks at Eton previously, or who subsequently moved on to become polyphony-clerks there. John Denham, polyphony-clerk at Eton February 1445 - Michaelmas 1447, sang at King's from Michaelmas 1447 until April 1449.³ By July 1453 no less than three of the four polyphony-clerks at Eton had actually come from King's during the previous 18 months:- Adam Roke, John Halywell and Thomas Horton (or Orton).⁴ Probably therefore, if these cases were typical, the six chapel clerks of King's (or most of them) were as competent in singing composed polyphony as the four acknowledged polyphony-clerks at Eton; and it was to them that the singing of such styles of music in the college chapel would have been committed.

A second institution equipped with a body of ten chapel clerks was Tattershall College. By contrast with Eton, these ten clerks do all seem to have been concerned essentially with the music of the chapel. There is some interest, therefore, in establishing both the date, and the manner, in which their final dimensions were achieved. For the original foundation of the college in 1439 was for a Master, six chaplains, six clerks, and six choristers⁵; and indeed, by requiring a number of clerks

1. Information drawn from CKC Mundum Book 1, ff.32v.,98r., 101r (1447/8), ff.125r.-8v.(1448/9); Mundum Book 2 ff.14r.-18r.,22r., 31r.(1449/50), ff 51v-56r., 90r.(1450/1), ff.104r-8r.(1453/4); Mundum Book 3 ff.13r-20r. (1456/7), ff.73r-78v (1457/8), ff.91r-98r.(1458/9).

2. See above, p. 5051.

3. EPF Audit Rolls 1-2; CKC Mundum Book 1, ff.98v.101r., 125r-127v.; Commons Book 1.

4. EPF Audit Roll 6; CKC Mundum Book 2 ff.51v.-56r.

5. CPR 1436-41,p.292; C.Pap.Reg., 9 Papal Letters (1431-47),pp.159-65.

equal to the number of chaplains, Tattershall was already in the very forefront of fashion. However, by the time the statutes were being drafted toward the end of Cromwell's life, c.1455, decisions had been taken which were to give its choral forces an even more novel appearance.¹

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1. No copy of the code of statutes in its definitive form has yet been found; it can however be very largely reconstructed. There now exist some five or six relevant documents. Firstly, there survives a roll preserving a number of questions on which the compilers required guidance, and Cromwell's answers to them; also a list of all the salaries and fees to be paid to the staff of the college (DLD U1475 Q 20). Next, there is an early draft of the complete body of proposed statutes, itself bearing a number of revisions and still needing a few more; it was compiled almost at the end of Cromwell's lifetime (DLD U1475 Q 21/2 and 21/3 - 21/3 is merely fo.2 of 21/2, which has become detached). This stage had been reached when Cromwell died in 1456; he charged the executors of his will with compiling the definitive code from the drafts which he left. They then compiled their own draft, reducing Cromwell's 41 statutes to 34; the executor's draft, dateable to c.1457 is now DLD U1475 Q 21/1. In all essentials this draft became the authorised code of statutes; however, it did undergo one final revision before it reached this stage. The resulting definitive code, known as the Statuta vetera, is now lost; fortunately, it can largely be reconstructed. For in 1501 the Statuta vetera underwent another revision, and this required the production of a new text. This was done in two stages, of which the first was the preparation of a Key. On this Key, wherever the old text had been altered, the new text was written out in full; but where no revision had taken place, the first few words only of the statute were copied, followed by the instruction etc. ut in statuto veteri eodem titulo (DLD U1475 Q 21/4). Then, by conflating the Key with an actual copy of the Statuta vetera, a complete copy of the revised statutes was produced (Muniments of the Earl of Ancaster:- LRO 3 Anc 2/3). By comparing the full exemplification of the 1501 statutes with the Key, therefore, it is possible to trace the text of a number of statutes which were unchanged from the Statuta vetera of c.1458. These occasionally differ - in points of detail only - from the Executors' draft, and thus represent a revision of the Executors' text effected before their statutes were authorised for use. Unfortunately, this reconstruction cannot be effected completely. One folio has been torn out of the single known full copy of the 1501 version of the statutes, whereby the texts of Statutes 5-10 and part of 11 have been lost. The Key shows that a number of revisions to the executors' draft of these items had been incorporated into the Statuta vetera, for even the very few words they quote of e.g. Statute 11 (before breaking into the formula etc. ut in statuto veteri) carry modifications to the executors' draft; here the text of the Statuta vetera cannot be reconstructed. Secondly, where the key does modify the Statuta vetera, there is no way of telling if the Statuta vetera were themselves exactly as the Executors left them, since both the Key and the complete exemplification carry the text of the 1501 revision.

It appears that at least by c.1454 the revenue from the endowments of the college was turning out to be greater than that necessary to support the existing staff, thus permitting an increase in numbers to be authorised; there was, apparently, some £40 p.a. to be disposed of. Now the royal letters patent, episcopal approval and papal confirmation obtained when the college was first projected, all related to a college consisting of a warden, 6 chaplains, 6 clerks and 6 choristers - and there was no point in invalidating all this expensive documentation by altering the declared constitution at this stage. Therefore, while the original constitution remained intact on paper, an enabling clause was incorporated into the statutes, directing the master to recruit such extra staff as the Founder considered most suitable. This was a very late development; the relevant clause does not appear in the original text of the Founder's draft, but was added in a blank space at the end by the hand that subsequently revised the draft.

In its original form, the new clause directed the Master of the College to add to the existing foundation 4 more clerks and 4 more choristers.¹ In c.1455, that is, Cromwell was enacting the establishment of a choir of 6 chaplains, 10 clerks and 10 choristers. The chosen deployment of this extra £40 p.a. is very significant. There is nothing in the statute to suggest that the 4 extra clerks were merely ancillary staff, as at Eton College; nor was Tattershall collegiate and parish church, even after Cromwell's rebuilding, of sufficient size to require ancillary staff. The new clerks and choristers were recruited simply to enhance the musical side of the college staff, on which a very high priority was clearly being placed. No longer did the clerks equal the chaplains in number - they now exceeded them.² This deliberate emphasis

1. Founder's draft, statute 41:- DLD U1475 Q 21/2 fo.10v.

2. It is only fair to add that Cromwell's executors were by no means certain that he had done the right thing in ploughing the college's extra resources into the provision of clerks rather than priests. In their own draft statutes, therefore, they introduced some flexibility into the hiring of the extra personnel. They authorised the Master to take on the 4 extra choristers, as before; and either 4 chaplains, or 4 clerks, or 2 of each - and cautiously added "if the revenues permit". (Executors' draft, statute 23:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.5v.). It was in this latter form that the statute was incorporated into the Statuta vetera, and was retained on the 1501 revision (Statute 23:- DLD U1475 Q21/4; Statute 23:- LRO 3 Anc 2/3 fo.7v.). However, it was Cromwell's original ideas which prevailed. The Receivers' A/c for 1495/6 shows that the choral staff then maintained consisted of 6 chaplains, 10 clerks (6 clerici incorporati and 4 clerici conducti) and 10 choristers (DLD U1475 Q 16/2. The names of all 6 chaplains and 10 clerks are given; 10 toge were made for the choristers).

on the enhancement of divine service with music certainly paid off - the fortunate survival of two precentor's accounts for 1496/7 and 1498/9 reveal just how lively was the musical establishment created at Tattershall¹, and it seems fair to conclude that from the beginning, all ten clerks were intended to be recruited from the class of skilled professional lay singers.

Although it is nowhere specifically stated in so many words, it seems probable that it was not expected that the chaplains of any of these institutions would normally be able to contribute to the performance of composed polyphony. This was not merely pre-eminently, but in fact solely, in the hands of the clerks. College statutes normally required that the chaplains merely be of good reputation and honest demeanour, adequately knowledgeable in reading and the chant, and possessing both voice and temperament suitable for ministering and singing in the choir.² It was never amongst their qualifications that they be competent in polyphonic music.

At Eton College, for example, it was among the clerks only, and not the chaplains, that the statute-makers expected to find the four men they required to sing polyphonic music in the chapel.³ At Tattershall College, it was specifically instructed that daily Lady Mass be performed with polyphonic settings of the ritual, and with the organ: cum cantu organico et organis;⁴ and those required to attend at Lady Mass were just one chaplain, three clerks and all the choristers.⁵ That is, when polyphonic music was required at service, it was not the chaplains who were called upon to provide it; only one chaplain turned up, and he just to celebrate. The polyphony was expected of three clerks, operating no doubt as a solo ensemble, singing either composed settings or faburden; and of the choristers, probably singing descant over the plainsong.

Certainly the provision of musical expertise in general was by this time virtually the sole prerogative of men of the rank of lay clerk. Almost

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1. DLD U1475 Q 19/3-4; discussed below, pp. 6023-5.
 2. Eton College:- Statute 10, *ibid.*, pp.513-4; King's College, Cambridge:- Statutes 1,44, *ibid.*, pp.20,119; Tattershall College, Statute 4:- DLD U1475 Q 21/1 fo.3r.
 3. Statute 10:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws...p.514, and above, pp. 5057-8
 4. Statute 11:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.4r. The 1501 revision added a clause relating that on Fridays it was permissible to replace the Lady Mass with a Mass of the Name of Jesus; this provision may also have appeared on the Statuta vetera:- Statute 11:- LRD 3 Anc 2/3 fo.5r., and cf. Statute 11, DLD U1475 Q 21/4 with Statute 11, Q21/1 fo.4r.
 5. Founder's instructions:- DLD U1475 Q 20, no.8.

without exception, it was from the clerks, not the chaplains, that organists, and Instructors of the choristers were chosen; it was clerks who were paid for copying out books of polyphonic music. Except for certain members of the Chapel Royal (all of whom had, in fact, been active as long ^{before} ~~ago~~ as c.1415) almost every single mid-century English composer for whom biographical details are known turns out to have been a lay clerk of the choir he served in, not a chaplain.

Although there is little hard fact to go on, therefore, the general tenor of the evidence seems to be that complete responsibility for the performance of composed polyphonic settings of the ritual was normally taken just by those particular clerks who were recruited for their ability to do so. Normally this meant the whole body of staff referred to as the clerici (as distinct from the capellani and the choriste). Eton College seems to have been exceptional in requiring only a proportion of its clerici to be competent in polyphonic music; and here the exceptional size of the proposed college chapel offers a perfectly satisfactory explanation for this anomalous feature of the constitution of its chapel staff. Elsewhere, the clerici, or, where a distinction was made, the clerici generosi, may be considered to be a body of singers recruited to be specially responsible for the performance of polyphonic music.

5.3.2.B. The status and rewards of the singers of polyphony.

The clerks at all these new institutions were of the new professional musician type, laymen not at all in Holy Orders. At no college for which statutes survive was there any requirement that any have entered even minor orders. Rather, both in the Letters patent whereby Tattershall College was founded in 1439, and in the draft statutes of c.1455 and c.1457, the clerks were specially described as clerici seculares; the precise intention behind this choice of term is not clear, but it seems to represent a conscious intention that the clerks should be laymen.¹ Of the ten clerks of Eton College, none was expected to be in Holy Orders of any level, major or minor, except for the clerk who was to serve as the parish clerk; for him canon law required that he have at least taken the first tonsure.² The general college ban on the presence of women within the precinct³ required that all be bachelors; though, as has been noted, if necessary to secure a competent organist even this rule could be waived and a married man admitted.⁴

1. CPR 1436-41, p.292; DLD U1475 Q 21/1, 21/2 passim. The role of the clerks in the performance of the liturgy is made plain enough by the term clerici de secunda forma applied to them twice in the course of the statutes:- Statutes 3, 24; Q 21/1 ff.2v., 5v.

2. Statute 10:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws..p.514. It was the parish clerk's position in the parish, not his position in the college, which required this.

3. Statutes 38, 48:- ibid., pp.581, 595. 4. Statute 10:- ibid., p.514

The rewards offered to these lay clerks generally amounted now at least to a respectable living wage, as befitted an accomplished craftsman. The salaries and allowances paid to the polyphony-clerks at Eton College and King's College Cambridge have been discussed above.¹ At Tattershall the clerks were paid a gross sum of £6.13. 4d. p.a.² Old-established colleges consequently found themselves obliged to offer rewards on a comparable level. At St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the increasing significance of the contribution of the clerks to the conduct of divine service was duly recognised in their steadily rising salaries; however, the implementation of this policy was possibly delayed by the college's financial difficulties. By 1415 the chapter was already finding it difficult to make ends meet, and its problems persisted throughout the 1420's and into the 1430's.³ By the late 1430's the college's finances were being sorted out, however⁴, and the chapter could address itself to the business of increasing the clerks' salaries from their basic £4. 6. 8d. p.a.⁵ In 1437 they made an agreement with the clerks whereby extra sums were added, at the rate of either 26s. 8d. or 53. 4d. p.a. to their existing salaries.⁶ Clerks of long standing were thereby put on a salary of £7 p.a.; more recent recruits received £5.13. 4d. These arrangements remained in force until the complete reorganisation of the chapel staff during the 1470's.⁷

The arrangements, or re-arrangements, made during this period to remunerate the lay clerks indicate clearly that they were contributing something of value to the conduct of divine service. They offered skills for which there was a demand; and, as professional craftsmen, certain of them can be tracked through much or most of their lives, furthering their careers and moving from job to job in pursuit of promotion and higher rewards⁸. Church music was, of course, very much an applied art; its practitioners were regarded as skilled craftsmen plying their trade, rather than as artists practising a "mystery". Society placed them on no pedestal, therefore; but it did reward them with a comfortable living wage.

1. above pp. 5057-62.

2. Statute 29:- DLD U1475 Q 21/1, fo.7r. Lodging was free, but 10s. p.a. was stopped for livery, and 14d. per week for commons; this left the clerks with pocket money of £3. 2. 8d.

3. A.K.B. Roberts, St. George's Chapel, pp.70,151. In 1429/30 it was estimated that the college was being run at an annual deficit of £171 - WndDC xv 34 27.

4. By c.1445 it was estimated that annual income was exceeding expenditure again by some £40 p.a.: - WndDC xv 3 12.

5. £4 p.a. as the statutory salary for a clerk not in major orders, plus 6s. 8d. as one-quarter of the clerks' fee for reading the Epistle at Mass (see above, pp. 4045-6).

6. WndDC xv 34 38*:- ..et solut' clericis capelle in augmentacione stipendiorum suorum ultra cotidianas per statutum eis assignatas ex convencione cum eis

7. WndDC xv 34 38* -53; xv 59 4; xv 34 56; xv 3 11. /facta de novo....

8. The careers of three professional lay clerks of the mid-15th Century are chronicled in detail in Appendix A9 below, pp.A039-44.

5.3.3. The incidence and deployment of choral polyphony.

It is with two manuscripts of the mid-15th century, BM Egerton 3307 and OBL Selden B26, that there first appear, in manuscripts of English origin, unequivocal indications that certain of their contents were intended to be sung not in the traditional way, by a team of soloists, but by a chorus of voices. This innovation has many interesting ramifications for musicologists, and three studies have now appeared in print concerning how, when and where the practice originated.¹ However, the two writers concerned both limited their investigations to the evidence provided by musical manuscripts alone; and they reached conflicting conclusions. Scope remains, therefore, for examination of the archives of the choirs themselves, to ascertain at which period there can be observed definite developments in their constitutions which are compatible with, and most successfully explicable by, the addition of this new style of performance to their existing repertoire.

5.3.3.A. The evidence provided by musical manuscripts.

From his study of the musical manuscripts, Prof. Bukofzer concluded that the practice of performing polyphonic music with a small chorus of voices emerged simultaneously, and independently, in England and Italy in about 1430.² On the limited amount of material which he considered, Bukofzer's judgements seem sober and judicious, and his conclusions deserve respect. In two more recent articles, Dr. Andrew Hughes has subjected manuscripts of English music to detailed scrutiny, and has emerged with some rather different conclusions; he considers that choral polyphony was already being practised in England before the beginning of the 15th century.³ His approach is highly speculative, however, and his conclusions strike the reader with varying degrees of conviction.

In the numerous extant compositions employing "playnesong" notation, Hughes sees a genuine choral style using simple homophonic music in usually three parts.⁴ In one instance, three-part music in this style and notation alternates with more florid sections for two parts in ordinary notation; this suggests an intended contrast between a three-part

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1. M.F. Bukofzer, "The beginnings of choral polyphony", in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Music, pp.176-189; A. Hughes, "The choir in Fifteenth-century English music:- Non-mensural polyphony", in ed. G.Reese and R.J. Snow, Musicological studies in honor of Dragan Plamenac, pp. 127-45; and A. Hughes, "Mensural polyphony for choir in 15th-century England", 19 Journal of the American Musicological Society(1966),pp.352-69.
 2. M.F.Bukofzer, "The beginnings of choral polyphony" in Studies in Medieval and Renaissance music, pp.186, 188.
 3. A. Hughes, articles quoted in note 1 above, passim.
 4. A. Hughes, "The choir in 15th-century English music" (see note 1 above)pp. 128-139.

chorus and a solo duet. It seems that settings in "playnesong" style were composed for use by less expert singers - that they were, in fact, settings of mensural music written out in a simplified form for singers not familiar with orthodox mensural notation.¹ No decisive evidence can be produced, but it seems very plausible to suggest that music in "playnesong" notation was intended to be performed by a small chorus. Surviving manuscripts suggest that this style of composition flourished from c.1450 onwards.

Hughes then proceeds to suggest that "English descant" of the 14th century may also have been a choral style, on account of its stylistic similarity to "playnesong" music.² However, he has no concrete evidence to offer in favour of this view, and it cannot realistically be accepted. There is simply too large a gap in time between 14th century English descant and the "playnesong" pieces of c.1450 and later, to permit any viable speculation that there need necessarily have been a continuity of performance style between them.

Dr. Hughes' observations concerning the possible construction of choral performances of liturgical items from single written-out faburdens and squares are even more speculative, and cannot be discussed here.³ Nor are we on any safer ground with his conclusions drawn from the occurrence of red text in the Old Hall Manuscript.⁴ Mere observation establishes that in manuscripts from Old Hall onwards, the use of red text is always associated with reduced vocal scoring. This feature alone is not enough to explain the use of an ink of a different colour; but its actual significance remains unknown. It is true that the received opinion is that the use of red text denotes the performance of the lines of music to which it relates by solo voices; the passages with black text, by implication, were performed by a chorus. I am not aware of any concrete proof that this interpretation of the incidence of red text is correct.

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1. This conclusion is strengthened by a most fortunate concordance:- the music of Hughes' "playnesong" example 3a (ibid., p.134) appears in the appropriate mensural notation in BM Add. MS. 17001, fo.175v. (It also appears, set to the word 'Amen' and in "playnesong" notation again, in BM Nero E viii, fo.55v.).
 2. ibid., pp.139-141.
 3. A. Hughes, "Mensural polyphony for choir..." (see note 1, p.5068), pp. 355-61.
 4. ibid., pp.363-7.

Selden
red for later.

It is, in fact, no more than inspired guesswork¹, and as such must be treated with greater caution than Dr. Hughes allows it. It is true that there are passages of red text in the Old Hall Manuscript, but there is not a shred of evidence to suggest that this necessarily denotes a passage to be sung by soloists in contrast to passages with black text sung by chorus. Moreover, even if this interpretation could be shown to be true and correct in respect of the Eton Choirbook of c.1500, it cannot thereby be considered as necessarily applicable to the Old Hall Manuscript as well.

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1. First proposed, I believe, by F. Ll. Harrison, The Eton Choirbook, vol.1 p.xxii. I am aware of one piece of information which certainly does seem to indicate at least that pre-Reformation settings of sacred music could be sung in a manner which contrasted passages for soloists with passages for full chorus; however, it is not the kind of evidence which inspires greatest confidence in its veracity, being written some years after the incident which it relates, by a reporter who was neither impartial nor an eye-witness.

It occurs in John Foxe's account of the life and death of the protestant martyr Robert Testwood (ed. J. Pratt, The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe vol. 5 pp.465-70). Testwood enjoyed a successful career in church music; in 1523-4 he was Instructor of the Choristers and organist at St. Mary, Warwick (PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3730), and then became clerk and Instructor of the Choristers of the very important choir maintained in the parish church of St. Botolph, Boston (Lincs.) by the Fraternity of St. Mary established there (1524-c.1530:- BM Egerton 2886, ff.295r-296r; BMC, MS 4/C/1/1 fo.24r.). In about 1530 he left Boston for London, and in 1534 moved from there to become a lay clerk of St. George's Chapel, Windsor.

Foxe's anecdote concerns the singing of a votive antiphon, Lauda vivi, in St. George's Chapel; it is conceivable that the setting of this text by Robert Fayrfax who was the one involved (ed. E.B. Warren, Robert Fayrfax, Collected Works, vol. 3 p. 30). Incidentally the anecdote records that this antiphon contained within itself passages called "counterverses" and that these "counterverses" were distinguished from the rest of the music by being sung by soloists. Foxe seems to indicate that the counterverse O redemptrix et salvatrix was sung by just two soloists, Robert Testwood and Robert Philips (a gentleman of the Chapel Royal 1524-1552:- PRO E 179 69/23, BM Stowe 571, fo.36v.). If such reduced vocal scoring can be shown to have been a normal feature of "counterverses" for soloists, then a genuine connection between the use of red text (always associated with passages with reduced vocal scoring) and performance by soloists - at least, in early 16th century MSS - could be established.

The instruction "versus - þe base counteryth now" occurring in the course of the bass part of Thomas Packe's Te Deum (BM Add. MS.5665 fo.95v) probably warned of the beginning of a "counterverse" for soloist; the passage to which it relates is indeed for a reduced number of voices, but the manuscript, unfortunately, is not one of those which ever utilises red text.

Old Hall was copied some 85 years earlier than Eton; and, in view of the total absence of any manuscripts from the intervening period utilising red text, a continuous tradition for the meaning of red text applicable to both Eton and Old Hall cannot be demonstrated, and may not be assumed.

Dr. Hughes does establish with reasonable probability a claim that individual parts in certain Old Hall compositions were performed by two singers, who sang sometimes in unison and sometimes in separate parts; this phenomenon occurs also in certain carols, including the Agincourt carol of 1415 or a little later.¹ However, the passages concerned are extremely brief, and apply to only one voice-part in any given piece; they can hardly be considered as early examples of choral polyphony, nor even as a step preparatory to its emergence.

In fact, it has not been possible to substantiate any of Dr. Hughes' claims that choral polyphony was practised in England at any date earlier than the c.1430 originally proposed by Bukofzer; the situation, therefore, remains exactly as Bukofzer left it. The earliest conclusive evidence of the use of choral polyphony in musical manuscripts of English origin is the appearance of the actual word chorus against certain three-part repeats or burdens occurring in one carol in BM Egerton 3307, and in several in OBL Selden B 26, manuscripts compiled c.1440-50.²

These carols are non-liturgical items, and the likelihood of their performance at all in church may be queried. There is no similarly conclusive evidence to be found in any of the exiguous insular sources of liturgical music still extant for this period. The carols demonstrate the practice of contrasting three-part music for chorus with two-part music for soloists, and this characteristic is not restricted to compositions in carol form; it is a feature very commonly found in English sacred music of all types at this period. However, there is no proof that the three-part passages in liturgical compositions were intended to be sung (like the carols) by a small chorus; however likely this may seem, without proof it should not be assumed. Nevertheless, the carol manuscripts do show without doubt that by the second quarter of the 15th century, music for chorus was being written in England.

1. A. Hughes, "Mensural polyphony for choir" (see note 1, p.5068), pp.353-5.
 2. ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, nos.17,18, 20, 27,30,36,51.

5.3.3.B. The evidence provided by archival Manuscripts.

The musical manuscripts themselves must remain the principal sources of evidence concerning the incidence and application of choral polyphony. Since, however, they appear to reveal very little decisive information on the subject, it seems legitimate to seek further information in the archives of the choirs which performed it. However, it is necessary to keep the emergence of this style of composition and performance in its proper context. Choral performance began as merely an addition to the traditional methods of rendering polyphonic music - a new method for use alongside the old, when and where appropriate. It never superseded older traditions; composition for the soloist ensemble continued and thrived, remaining a vigorous tradition right up until the abolition in England of the Latin rite which it existed to decorate. There are many 16th-century examples in e.g. BM Add. MSS 17802-5.

Music for small chorus first appears for certain during the second quarter of the 15th century. Possibly it was not until the last thirty years of the century that its practice became sufficiently widespread for it to be considered as part of the regular *métier* of any competent choir - a process in which the progressive simplification of notation from c.1420 onwards, bringing the reading of mensural notation within the grasp of wider circles of men (and, eventually, boys) - may well have played the single most decisive part. Even so, it flourished only alongside, and never replacing, the older tradition of composing for performance by soloist ensemble. At first polyphony for chorus was composed mostly for sections of larger movements, in the course of which it was contrasted with other passages set for soloists in reduced vocal scoring. Perhaps it was not until the 16th century that large scale compositions were written employing the chorus throughout - e.g. the Responsories of Taverner, etc.

(i) The numbers of polyphony-clerks employed in the choirs.

An investigation of this subject based mainly on archival research into the nature of the actual performing medium can only suggest certain lines of enquiry which may then be followed up, by scholars better equipped than the present writer, in the actual musical manuscripts themselves. One point, however, is immediately evident. It has been seen that choirs appear to have been constructed on the premise that the chaplains would not normally be expected to be able to participate in the singing of composed polyphony. Rather, this was solely the preserve of the clerks - and not all of them were expected necessarily to be competent in this field.¹ In fact, prior to c.1455 no permanently

1. See above, pp. 5065-6.

endowed secular college was equipped by its founder with a choir so constituted as to be able to perform composed polyphonic music with a genuine chorus of voices.

There is a striking uniformity about the number of singing clerks provided for the choirs of the major colleges established in the 1420-53 period. Four were provided at Manchester (1421), Higham Ferrers (1422), Eton (1440, number retained when choral forces revised 1445-53), Sherburn Hospital (1434) and Westbury College (c.1450); and six at King's College, Cambridge (1445-53), Tattershall (1439, until increased to 10 c.1455), St. Cross, Winchester (1445), St. Katherine London (c.1445) and St. Mary Warwick (1439).¹ Without exception, that is, the singing clerks numbered either 4 or 6; and this applied equally to the relatively humble institutions such as Sherburn Hospital, Durham, and to the most splendid foundations such as Eton College. It is, at first, strange to find the lesser foundations staffed with clerks at all; certainly prior to c.1390 they would probably not have had more than one or two at most, and they only ancillary staff. However, by 1425 an effective core of professional lay singers appears to have been a necessary requirement for any working choir; and these lesser foundations demonstrate that of professional lay-clerks, 4 or 6 was the working minimum. (Indeed, the genuine basic requirements of any effective choir of any period are best deduced from the staff of the smaller establishments; the founders of these could not afford to indulge in luxuries, and the personnel with which they were equipped must have been the minimum considered essential to the adequate performance of their duties).

However, this number of singing clerks appears to have been considered to be just as appropriate for an institution of even the splendour of Eton College. Eton was a foundation created on the principle that no expense was to be spared. It was lavishly endowed; in peak years its income nearly reached £1,500, and its average income 1446-61 exceeded £1250 p.a.² Considering Henry 6's well-known extreme piety, it seems reasonable to feel confident that in regard to provision for the chapel services, whatever was felt to be necessary for the college chapel to fulfil its duties would indeed be provided - if not provided to excess. With 10 chaplains, 10 clerks and 16 choristers, there was nothing in the Salisbury liturgy which the choir could not adequately perform in terms of both ceremony and music. Yet the statutes of 1453 make it clear that

1. See above, pp. 5005-15, *passim*. St. Anthony's Hospital, London, had 8 clerks by 1494, but it is not known whether the constitution devised during the 1440's allowed for so many.

2. EPF, *Recepta* sections of Audit Rolls 1-9a. The peak year was 1457/8, with a gross income of £1498:- EPF Audit Roll 8.

of all the chapel staff, four clerks only were expected to be able to render polyphonic music. The conclusion seems inescapable; as late as 1453, a solo ensemble of 4 voices was all that was considered to be necessary to perform composed polyphonic music, even for the choir that had everything.

However, if four professional singers was a good working number, it seems also to have been considered to be the minimum working number. This is demonstrated by the policy adopted at certain long-established colleges which had been founded before the lay clerk emerged as an indispensable constituent of any effective liturgical choir. These institutions now had to make the adjustments necessary to bring their choral forces into line with the demands of current fashion. Of the four clerks of St. George's, Windsor, for example, all benefitted by the increases of salary noted above¹, indicating that all four were now of the professional singer category. However, no change in their number was seen to be necessary; at Windsor, as elsewhere, a group of four lay-clerks was considered adequate to render any polyphony then being composed. Meanwhile, the verger and the three bell-ringers would have been able to cope with all the routine jobs around the chapel which the clerks probably had originally been intended to do.²

At St. George's twin college, St. Stephen, Westminster, it seems that a somewhat different device was adopted. There the chapter increased the college's musical strength by adapting the post of verger - indeed, modifying it out of all recognition. Normally, it did not involve much active participation in the conduct or music of the chapel services; indeed, if the duties of the verger of St. Stephen, Westminster, were similar to those of his counterpart at St. George, Windsor, then he did not have a great deal to do, and was paid a very high wage of £9. 2. 6d. p.a. for doing it. So when the chapter of St. Stephen's decided to add a highly skilled musician to the college staff, they found that there was in fact a way in which they could do so which did not involve them in finding any extra money to pay him the handsome salary that would be necessary - they appointed him as the verger, and paid him the verger's money instead. This decision appears to have been taken in the 1440's or 1450's; the earliest known beneficiary of the arrangement was the

1. above, p. 5067.

2. For the verger, see statute 54:- WndDC iv B 1 fo.80v.(Dalton p.19). The bellringers were not provided for by the statutes; for them see A.K.B. Roberts, St. George's Chapel...,p.12 and other refs.in Index,p.263.

composer John Bedyngham, who was "verger" of the chapel in January 1457.¹ Presumably one of the four existing clerkships had to be adapted so that its holder could perform the duties formerly allotted to the verger; thereby the effective number of singing clerks would have remained at the standard four.²

That four was considered to be the practical minimum number of lay clerks is further shown by the policy adopted at certain old-established colleges not originally equipped with so many. The choir of New College, Oxford, had been established c.1391 with only three clerks; an extra clerk was added in 1460, as Instructor of the Choristers³, raising the total to four. St. Mary Newarke College, Leicester, similarly had had only three clerks at its foundation in the 1350's; their total was raised to four by the addition of an extra clerk by canon Roger Fyshwyke some time between 1435 and 1453⁴. At Fotheringhay College, meanwhile, the original division of the eight chapel clerks into four deacons and subdeacons, as required by the

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1. PRO C 54 308 m.21v.(CCR 1454-61,p.283). This is a private legal document, possibly the first step in the creation of a Use in his property, executed on 15 January 1457; it was subsequently given greater security (no doubt on the insistence of the prospective beneficiaries) by engrossment on the dorse of the Roll of Letters Close in Chancery, 30 March 1458. In 1548 the 'verger' was another prominent musician and composer, Nicholas Ludford (PRO E 301 88); by then a 'subsexten' and a 'Clockekeeper' had been appointed, presumably to do between them the actual work of the verger.
 2. A speculative attempt to ascertain more accurately the nature of Bedyngham's job at St.Stephen's appears below as Appendix A8, pp.A036-8.
 3. A.H.M. Jones, "Oxford: New College" in VCH Oxfordshire vol.3, p.157. By 1545 an extra clerk (a 'Master of the songe scole') had also been added to the three existing clerks of Winchester College, but when this addition took place is not known.(A.F. Leach, English Schools at the Reformation, part 2, pp.86-7)
 4. ed. A.H.Thompson, Visitations in the diocese of Lincoln, vol.3,p.240; also Custus obituum (Roger Fyssewyke) and Stipendia Capellanorum on the account of the Provost and Receiver -General of the College 1532/3:- PRO DL 29 224/3568. In this case however the fourth clerk may not have originally been intended to fulfil the role of musician. At the visitation of 1525 (ed. A.H.Thompson, op.cit.above) it was recorded that this clerk was originally intended to be a youth proposing to take Holy Orders, attending school on ferial days, and attending choir in the college chapel only on Sundays and festivals.

statutes of c.1415, was already being abandoned, if indeed it had ever been put into practice. By 1438, the clerks were all laymen, divided into four clerici generosi and four clerici valecti.¹ This terminology duplicates exactly that applied to the two classes of chapel clerk at Eton College and the Chapel Royal². It seems very probable that at Fotheringhay the four clerici generosi were those competent in polyphony, and the four clerici valecti were the ancillary staff and routine clerks of the second form at service in chapel, exactly on the Eton College model.³

At the secular cathedrals, there may well have always been at least a small group among the vicars choral who were conspicuously competent in their jobs; a few of them, referred to as the organiste, must have been capable at least in improvised polyphony⁴, and perhaps also in mensural notation, whereby they would have been able to tackle composed polyphony as well. An entry in the chapter acts of Lincoln Cathedral for 1434 relates that daily Lady Mass was then sung with polyphony; a little earlier it had been recorded that four vicars choral were referred to as the 'singers at the daily Lady Mass of St. Mary'.⁵

(ii) The practice of choral polyphony.

Thus the accumulated evidence suggests that at the permanent endowed religious institutions the clerks - more particularly, the clerici generosi - were now the principal musicians; all major foundations were equipped with this class of singer, and to them was committed the performance of polyphonic music at divine service in chapel. With remarkable consistency they numbered either four or six; numbers from which some tentative conclusions may be drawn.

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1. ed. A.H.Thompson, Visitations of religious houses in the diocese of Lincoln, vol.2, pp.92,98,99,108,111; see also above pp. 4043-4.
 2. See above, pp. 5060-1, 3028-9, 4021-32 passim.
 3. In 1438 and 1442 the college was not being run on the most orderly lines; in 1438 it was claimed that although there should have been four clerici generosi, there were in fact only two:- ed. A.H.Thompson, Visitations of religious houses in the diocese of Lincoln, vol.2, p.99.
 4. In 1432 a priest vicar of Lichfield Cathedral was described as being "an abill mane to be in any college in Inghlande....of connyng sufficiante in redyng and sigynge of plane sange, and te syngre a tribull til faburdun"; he was considered to be a very suitable candidate for admission as a vicar-choral of Hemingborough College. T. Burton, The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hemingborough, p.383. In October 1471 the choir of Salisbury Cathedral were in attendance when the Hungerford Chantry in the nave was consecrated cum toto servicio ac choro celebrarimo cantus organicos decantante cum nota et organis bene sonantibus:- SDC Reg. Machon p.72.
 5. MMB, p.177

The texture of composed polyphony at this time did not normally exceed four voices¹; a group of four singers therefore was a useful ensemble, being able to sing anything being written at the period. Members of a group of six similarly could sing the totality of the polyphonic repertoire as a soloist ensemble; but also they had sufficient strength of numbers to allot two voices to each part in three-part settings. In respect of these particular settings, therefore, they were able to make the essential distinction between performance by soloists and performance by chorus. These groups of six lay clerks, first appearing during the 1430's, may indeed be considered as potentially available for use as a polyphonic chorus of the simplest kind. Indeed, when contemporary manuscripts call for the participation of a chorus, it may have been a chorus no bigger than this which was intended. It could be argued that manuscripts such as BM Egerton 3307 and OBL Selden B26 were actually for use exactly by groups such as these. Their leaves are of no great size, and it is scarcely possible to imagine a group of more than six singers reading from them at once. So the carols in which the three-part repeats or burdens were directed to be sung by chorus would have been performed by six singers:- two or three soloists in the normal way for the stanzas, and the entire chorus, two voices on each line, singing the burdens.²

These conclusions have purposely been restricted to those permanently endowed secular institutions of which both the foundation and the statutory composition were settled before c.1455. They plainly do not apply to Tattershall College after c.1455, when Cromwell's modifications to its original statutes added 4 more clerks to its choir, raising their number to 10; nor do they apply to the household chapels of the greater aristocracy. Here it is most unfortunate that so little has yet been discovered about the precise constitution of these household chapels. Judging by the standards set by e.g. the Chapel Royal, and the chapel of Thomas, duke of Clarence, these choirs certainly had the strength of numbers to provide a large chorus of expert voices. As early as 1418, the 16 lay-clerks of the Clarence chapel could provide a chorus of 4-5 voices per part; the Chapel Royal, where competence in mensural music was to be found among the chaplains as well as the clerks, could have managed even greater numbers.³

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1. The handful of compositions for five voices in Old Hall are the only exceptions known to me prior to c.1470.
 2. Three voices per part in the case of 'Goday, my lord' (ed. J. Stevens, Medieval Carols, no.18) which has a chorus (only a couple of measures long) in two parts.
 3. Of the seven members of the Chapel Royal 1413-61 known to have been composers, five - Damett, Sturgeon, Cook, Burell and Chirbury - were in priest's orders; only Plummer and Pyamour were clerks.

However, it would not be safe to pursue this line of argument further, and conclude that performance by large chorus first emerged in the household chapel choirs of the great aristocracy as early as c.1400-20. In the first place, it is impossible as yet to decide whether the Chapel Royal and the Clarence chapel were typical of their category, or exceptional, in this deliberate cultivation of very large numbers of lay clerks. Secondly, even if they turn out to have been typical, yet the mere availability of large numbers of skilled singers does not necessarily mean that the opportunity of using them all as a large polyphonic chorus was actually taken up. Above all, there does exist one great obstacle in the way of believing that such large forces were actually used in choral polyphony any earlier than c.1460 - and that is the total absence of any extant manuscript or fragment of one sufficiently large for a large chorus to perform from it. No surviving manuscript of the first half of the 15th century is of sufficient size for more than half-a-dozen singers to sing from it at once - and that includes the Old Hall MS, which may well have originally been destined for use by a large household chapel choir, and was certainly in use at the Chapel Royal c.1415-20. That is, even an institution with perhaps over 20 singers able to read mensural notation was content to use a book from which no more than six could sing at once.

It is not possible to feel certain of the participation of a large chorus in composed polyphony until there first appear manuscripts deliberately written out so large that their use by a large chorus must have been the intention behind their production. The earliest such manuscript known to me was being written in England c.1450-60. Only a single mutilated leaf is known to survive¹; but its dimensions and contents adequately indicate its purpose. The leaf measures 26 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 18 $\frac{1}{4}$ "; it carries fifteen large, well-written staves of music. Standing on a lectern, it could probably be read by a group of a dozen or 15 singers at once. The leaf preserves three settings of Kyrie for Lady Mass, all in three parts in score. One is unidentified; of the others, the setting on the recto utilises the square attributed in BM Lansdowne 462 to Lyonel [Power], and the first setting on the verso

1. PRO E 163 22/1/3 (Safe room no.21 13 2); judging by its contents, and its magnificent and sumptuous illumination, it may well have been the first leaf of the manuscript.

that attributed to Dunstable. Each seems early enough in style to be the original composition from which the square was first derived.¹ These attributions, together with the notation (black full and red full) and the style of handwriting of the text, suggest the date of c.1450-60 for the compilation of the manuscript. There are unfortunately no means for identifying the institution by which it was used; and by c.1510 it was already considered to be redundant, and fit only for use as waste.²

The production of this manuscript in about the decade 1450-60 seems to be good evidence for the use by then of a genuine largish chorus of up to 12-15 voices in composed polyphony - in some quarters at least. During the 40-50 years following its compilation, the practice of composing for large chorus steadily became fully assimilated in all quarters. Its finest memorials are the three colossal choirbooks which survive complete, or tolerably so, in the libraries at Eton College, Lambeth Palace and Caius College, Cambridge, and the many remaining fragments of choir books otherwise utterly lost. By c.1500 probably any choir of importance would have been expected to be able to produce a chorus of 12-15 voices capable of singing as a group the complex five-part polyphony of the period.

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1. The manuscript was discovered by the present writer; Dr. Margaret Bent made these identifications, and I am grateful to her for communicating them to me.
 2. The provenance of the manuscript is unknown. It is now stored in the Public Record Office as a separate item; however, it owes its preservation to its having been fabricated into an outer cover for another document, as is shown by an inscription on its outside^{er} (the present verso):- 'A bok Conteynyng the Rentills of the Man^{er} of Wy'. This is written in a cursive hand of the first half of the 16th century. The verso bears two other extraneous inscriptions:- the words Ex' Bev^{er}ly followed by a notarial device, repeated twice. This handwriting is very early 16th century. Ex' stands for Examinatus; this is an auditor's mark, and indicates that the choirbook leaf was already serving as a cover for a rental of some manor named Wye as early as c.1510. This rental appears to have been the present PRO SC 12 40/51. This item is of early 16th century date, and bears the endorsement:- Rentale domini Regis Regalis manerii sui de Wye in Comitatu Kantie. The hand that wrote this endorsement is certainly similar to the hand that wrote Ex' Bev^{er}ly on the choirbook leaf; moreover, the endorsement on the rental is followed by a notarial mark identical to that written by Beverly on the leaf. It seems probable, therefore, that c.1510 the choirbook was written off as redundant, made its way to some department of the royal administration, and there was used as waste, and turned into covers for other documents.

It seems safe to draw the following conclusions concerning the performance of polyphonic music in England in the period 1425-60. At any time in that period, a group of four soloists was considered entirely adequate to sing any polyphony then being composed; that is, all contemporary music could be perfectly validly rendered by being sung one voice to a part throughout. Consequently, prior to c.1455 no permanent secular institution, not even the very greatest, was provided with a choir containing anything more than just a soloist ensemble of voices able to sing polyphony; or at the most, enough voices to sing three-part polyphony with two voices to each part.

However, by c.1440 composers were writing music the performance of which they considered could be enhanced by the rendering of certain sections by a chorus of voices. Indeed, in the household chapels of the great, choirs with sufficient numbers of skilled singers to provide a chorus of pretty large dimensions had in fact existed since the first two decades of the 15th century. Nevertheless, prior to c.1450-60, what evidence there is indicates that whenever a chorus was used, it was only a very small chorus, consisting of not more than two voices to a part at most, no matter how large the overall size of the choir.

By the 1450's, however, in those quarters where a much larger chorus of up to 15 voices actually was available, the practice was beginning to emerge of using all of them in the performance of choral polyphony - a practice marked by the appearance of its own distinct and remarkable form of manuscript. In c.1455 the founder and patron of one collegiate church, Ralph baron Cromwell, founder of Tattershall College, increased the existing choir of clerks from 6 to 10, thus converting a group of soloists into a genuine polyphonic chorus of modest dimensions.¹

1. It is possible that the internal organisation of Tattershall College had deliberately been organised by its founder from the beginning in such a way as to emulate the atmosphere of a household chapel, and to lay particular stress on the music of the chapel. In particular, in household chapels the concentration of all available musical resources on the performance of just the musically most important services was facilitated by the practice of not observing the lesser Canonical Hours at all. In the Chapel Royal, only Matins and Lauds, High Mass, Lady Mass and Vespers with Compline were observed each day (ed. W.Ullman, Liber Regie Capelle, pp.57-8,60). At Tattershall also, these were the only services to be sung; the lesser Hours (prime, terce, sext and none) were simply recited sine nota by a minimum of two chaplains and two clerks (Executors' draft, statute 8:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.3v. The founder's draft had recommended 4 priests and 2 clerks:- Q21/2 fo.3v.) This most unusual provision must have had a definite motive; emulation of both the practices and the priorities and values of the household chapels seems a very plausible motive.

By c.1460, therefore, a new style of performance was well on the way towards its eventual recognition as a necessary part of the routine achievements of any competent choir - a process which over the ensuing 40 years would cause a new series of adjustments to take place in contemporaries' concepts of the composition of the idealliturgical choir.

5.4. The contribution of the choristers and their Instructor.

It has been observed above that during the period of the Lollards' attacks on the church, there emerged an enhanced awareness of the contribution which boys' voices could make to the performance of divine service; the choristers consequently came to take a more conspicuous part in certain services, especially votive services addressed to the Virgin Mary. As early as c.1415 this was resulting in a higher value being laid on the job of the Instructor of the Choristers; in certain quarters it also resulted in an explosion in the number of boys considered necessary for a liturgical choir to contain, though this phenomenon was only short-lived.

5.4.1. The optimum number of choristers.

With the exception of the academic colleges, the extravagant numbers of choristers employed at the height of the reaction were not retained once more sober judgements returned; 6-10 was the number considered adequate at all foundations and refoundations of the 1425-60 period and at the Chapel Royal.¹ Non-academic establishments provided with more than this now began to find numbers in excess merely superfluous. Fotheringhay College, for instance, had been provided with 13 choristers c.1415; but it appears that by 1438 the chapter had concluded that 10 was the most they really needed. Of their 13, one was cantans in voce virili, another was acting as the Warden's secretary (clericus magistri), and a third was a student at Oxford². 10 choristers was the most that the college felt it required; and by 1442, 10 was all it had.³

1. For details, see above, pp. 5005-15 passim, 5026.

2. ed. A.H. Thompson, Visitations of religious houses in the diocese of Lincoln,

3. ibid., p.108

/ vol.2, p.99.

5.4.2. The expansion of the choristers' contribution to the conduct of the services.

5.4.2.A. The Lady Mass and votive antiphon.

The boys' contribution to the routine Opus Dei was that prescribed by whichever Use the institution was directed to observe - by this period, Salisbury Use almost without exception.¹ This, of course, was the choristers' staple work, as it had been ever since the liturgies first evolved. In addition, the device of using boys' voices to observe devotions votive to the Virgin Mary, first regularly adopted during the anti-Lollard period, now became established as a standard practice. The maintenance of Lady Chapel choirs of boys' voices to sing Lady Mass in monastic churches was one very conspicuous example of this practice. At St. Anthony's Hospital, London, the Instructor and his boys sang Lady Mass every Saturday.² At the Chapel Royal, Lady Mass was sung daily following High Mass. Twice a week at least, each Wednesday and Saturday, it was sung by boys' voices alone, under the supervision of their Instructor; on these occasions the King himself was frequently present, and the Queen very rarely absent.³ At St. Mary Warwick, Lady Mass had long been performed by the choristers⁴; and an Inventory of 1465 lists "iiij thynne bokes ordeyned for the chorestours to sey and syng on matyns masse and evesong of oure Lady alle of one proporcion".⁵

At institutions where care was taken to have Lady Mass sung in polyphony, the clerks joined the choristers at the service. This applied at Tattershall, where Lady Mass was enhanced with singing in polyphony and organ-playing:- cum cantu organico et organis.⁶ One of the chaplains was present to celebrate; in attendance were also three of the clerks and all the choristers.⁷ At Eton College similarly, Lady Mass was celebrated cum nota and was attended by all the clerks, and certain of the scholars and choristers.⁸ The attendance of the clerici generosi makes it possible that polyphonic music and organ-playing regularly distinguished the performance of Lady Mass at Eton also.

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1. At the Chapel Royal Salisbury Use was observed, though modified partly by the limitations necessarily imposed on an establishment that was largely peripatetic, and partly by the incorporation of certain improvements to the chant and to the ceremony, in keeping with the eminence and dignity of the Chapel:- ed. W.Ullmann, Liber Regie Capelle, p.58
 2. This is mentioned incidentally in documents not basically concerned at all with the details of the choristers' attendance in church:- UndDC xi F 32, iG 10.
 3. ed. W.Ullmann, Liber Regie Capelle, p.60
 4. See above, p. 4017.
 5. PRO E 154 1/46.
 6. Statute 11:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.4r., LRO 3 Anc 2/3 fo.5r.
 7. Founder's instructions:- DLD U1475 Q20.
 8. Statute 31:- ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws... pp.562-3, 564. The statutes of King's College Cambridge required the daily celebration of Lady Mass, but did not indicate which of the chapel staff were expected to attend. Statute 42 *ibid.* pp. 117-4.

As well as singing Lady Mass, the choristers were regularly deputed also to recite daily the Hours of the Virgin; these were performed in two sections, one immediately before or after Matins, the other before Vespers¹. However, the most characteristic expression of the manner in which the use of boys' voices seemed to contemporaries to be particularly appropriate to rendering services votive to the Virgin Mary, was the way in which boys were now regularly required to sing the by now standard evening offering of a votive antiphon to the Virgin, usually followed by De profundis and appropriate prayers. At Eton all 16 choristers and their Instructor gathered each evening at the principal image of the Virgin (which stood in the ante-chapel²) to sing 'in the best manner they know' the antiphon Salve Regina during Lent, and other Marian antiphons during the rest of the year.³ The same direction appeared in the statutes of King's College, Cambridge, except that no particular antiphon was specified for any time of year.⁴ At Tattershall, the last devotion of each day was the evening antiphon to the Virgin, sung after Vespers by all the choristers at an image of the Virgin in the Lady Chapel.⁵

At Wells Cathedral, the singing of the evening antiphon to the Virgin had long been committed to the boys, and this practice continued unaltered.⁶ There were other foundations of pre-1400 origin, however, for which no statutory provision for the singing of a votive antiphon had been made, since they had been created before this devotion became universally popular.

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1. Eton College:- Statute 30, ibid., pp.553-4; King's College, Cambridge, Statute 41, ibid., p.107. The Inventory of c.1452 listed two Primers for the choristers' use:- these were the books which contained the texts of the Hours of the Virgin. (CKC Register no.ref., containing Inventories etc.fo.8v.) Tattershall, Statutes 10,13:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 ff.3v.,4r. For St. Mary Warwick, see above. p. 5082 and fn. 5.
 2. H. Maxwell-Lyte, A History of Eton College, pp.91-2; in 1528, William Ketyll, one of the clerks, made his will bequeathing wax 'to be burnyd befor our lady at morow masse alter when the late antyme is singing':-EPF Register 1457-1536, p.161.
 3. Statute 30, ed.J.Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws.. p.555. The statutes made no provision for the attendance of the clerks, or for the singing of the antiphon in polyphony; when these practices began is not known.
 4. Statute 41, ibid., pp.107-8.
 5. Added in the margin of the Founder's draft by the revising hand:- Statute 20, DLD U1475 Q 21/2 fo.5v.; Executors' draft statute 13, Q21/1 fo.4r.
 6. WlsDC Communar's A/cs passim, sub 'Barlynch'; and see above, p. 4061.

New College, Oxford, was in this category, and it duly updated its choral arrangements at this time in deference to the prevailing fashion. On the accounts from 1442/3 onwards, the payment to the Informator Choristarum appears accompanied by a supplement for teaching the boys the Antiphona beate Marie Virginis, and supervising the singing of it.¹

Some 20 years later St. George's Chapel, Windsor, also for the first time introduced the singing of an evening votive antiphon; by then, however, the character of religious devotion was changing slightly, and the antiphon was addressed not to the Virgin as intercessor, but to the Crucified as judge. Some time between 1463 and 1468 the college began the daily observance of a Jesus antiphon, Nunc Christe te petimus; this was sung by the choristers under the supervision of their Instructor² each evening after Vespers before the Crucifix in the chapel³, and was known as "the Antem of the Crosse"⁴. At Salisbury, canon John Caryter had granted property to the cathedral as early as 1443, to endow the singing each evening by the choristers of this same antiphon, Nunc christe te petimus, before the great Cross of the cathedral⁵. It appears that at some point thereafter the singing of canon Caryter's Nunc Christe and bishop Waltham's Sancta Maria virgo intercede were amalgamated; the tradition of the singing of a daily antiphon by the choristers continued, but both were replaced by the Jesus antiphon Sancte Deus.⁶

1. MMB, p.158 and fn.1; also A.H.M. Jones, "Oxford: New College", in VCH Oxfordshire vol3, p.157, fn.34.

2. Treasurer's A/cs 1468/9 onwards:- WndDC xv 34 51 et seq., sub Stipendia vadia et regarda officiariorum.

3. WndDC iv B 1 fo.156v.

4. CUL MS Dd.2.26 fo.14r.

5. SDC Reg. Hutchins, p.67.

6. Nunc Christe was one part of the text of the complete Jesus antiphon Sancte Deus:- MMB pp.61,174, 338 fn.1; SDC, A/cs of collector of choristers' rents 1529/30 and 1540/1; and see above, pp. 4061, 4063-4.

5.4.2.B. The teaching and performance of descant.

Awareness of the greater contribution which the boys were now making to the conduct of divine service was reflected in continuation of the practice, first observed in the Statutes of Stoke-by-Clare college (1423) of specifying with greater precision the various skills in which they were to be trained.¹ In particular, the technique of improvising a line of melody over a given plainsong now appeared regularly among their required repertory of skills. The term used for this could be either the precise technical term discantus (descant), or the generic term for any polyphonic music cantus organicus². However, although the English term 'pricksong' and some of its Latin equivalents were already in current use specifically to denote composed polyphony,

1. See above, pp. 4056-9.

2. Cantus organicus had formerly denoted any polyphonic music, improvised or composed, and indeed, in such unequivocal contexts as liber de cantu organico, it long continued to refer to composed polyphony. However, the term 'pricksong' had been in existence since 1430 at least, and was used to denote specifically composed polyphony, in distinction from the various techniques of improvised polyphony:- see e.g. the indenture of appointment of John Stele as Cantor of Durham Cathedral Priory (1430) where 'deschaunt', 'ffaburdon' and 'counter' (all techniques of improvised polyphony) were clearly distinguished alike from 'Pryktenote' ('pricksong', composed polyphony) and 'playnsange' (plainsong):- Durham, Manuscripts of the Dean and Chapter, Priory Register III fo.137v. The term 'pricksong' soon generated a number of Latin equivalents:- cantus fractus, cantus precatus, cantus divisus, cantus crispus, cantus intortus etc; the first of these was certainly already in use by 1450. These terms increasingly came to be used whenever composed polyphony was meant; cantus organicus, therefore, used by itself, came increasingly to refer just to improvised polyphony. Indeed, in the Liber Regie Capelle (ed. W.Ullmann, pp.57,66) of 1449 the terms cantus organicus and discantus could already be used interchangeably without apparent risk of ambiguity or contradiction. For most of this 1425-60 period it is likely that use of the term cantus organicus was in a transitional stage, and may be found in both its meanings - in some documents still referring to any polyphonic music, composed or improvised; in others, already restricted to improvised polyphony.

they never occur among the skills directed to be taught to choristers at this period, and there is no reason to believe that boys were yet instructed in mensural notation, or took part in the performance of composed polyphony.

At Eton College, a particularly high priority was placed on the provision of skilful instruction for the choristers by one of the clerici generosi. The statutes required that on his admission, the Provost should swear to undertake always to exercise all due diligence to secure for the scholars and choristers together a master and usher to teach Grammar, and for the choristers alone a clerk 'well and sufficiently instructed in polyphonic and other styles of music' (in cantu organico et aliis bene et sufficienter instructus)¹ by whom the boys were to be taught these techniques of singing. The statutes of King's College, Cambridge, inexplicably made no specific provision for an Instructor; it is clear however that it was always intended that such a post should exist, since the Informator Choristarum is mentioned in passing three times in the statutes, in a variety of contexts.² Payments to one of the clerks for filling this job can be traced on all the early accounts³; his fee was £2 p.a. as at Eton, and it is likely that his duties and necessary qualifications were of the same order as those of his counterpart there.

A brief reference to the duties of the Instructor of the Choristers of the Chapel Royal, written in 1449, records that he taught them both plainsong and descant (cantus et discantus, alternatively expressed as cantus planus et organicus)⁴. By a will dated July 1449 property was bequeathed to St. Anthony's Hospital, London, to support the maintenance of the Hospital's Instructor; he was to be a "clerk, well and sufficiently instructed and learned both in polyphonic music and in plainsong (tam in Cantico organico quam in plano cantico), and was daily to instruct the six

1. Statute 7:- ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws... p.501. The text of the Provost's oath reads clericus vel presbyter as Instructor of the Choristers, but the body of the statutes contemplated and provided for the appointment to this post only of one of the clerici generosi (eg. Statute 10, p.514); none but clerks ever were appointed to it.
2. Statutes 15,41,44:- ibid., pp.69,107,121.
3. CKC Mundum Book 2, ff.22r., 31r., 90r.; thenceforth on the pensiones et stipendia section of each bursar's account in the Mundum Books. All but one of the names recoverable are those of clerks; Robert Wodemanstone (1453/4) was a chaplain, and later chaplain of the Chapel Royal 1465-7 (PRO E 101 411/15 fo.17r., 412/2 fo.36v.).
4. ed. W. Ullmann, Liber Regie Capelle, pp.66,57, compiled while John Plummer was Instructor.

choristers in both these styles of singing (in canticis predictis tam uno quam altero) in the best manner he knew¹. At Wells Cathedral, Robert Cator's rules for the regulation of the Choristers' boarding house, given formal approval in 1460 but probably in evolution since the 1430's, required the Instructor to teach the boys both plainsong and (improvised) polyphony (in plano cantu ac etiam in organico)². For this purpose, the precentor was to appoint as Instructor a man who was "knowledgeable in grammar, and adequately learned in both plainsong and polyphonic music - lest, if the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit"³.

One by-product of the increasing incidence of the practice of teaching descant to choristers was the production of practical treatises advising Instructors how best to impart the necessary training. One such treatise, described as a "treatise....upon the gamme" was attributed to Lionel Power⁴, who himself had had the job of instructing choristers, those both of the chapel of Thomas, Duke of Clarence (1418-21) and of the Lady Chapel choir of Canterbury Cathedral (1439-45).⁵ In one important respect, Lionel's advice coincided exactly with the actual practice of one Instructor active in the period 1435-60. Lionel mentioned that descant could be improvised at three distinct pitches or 'sights':- quatreble, treble and mean, quatreble being the highest, and mean the lowest⁶. The treatise following his in the manuscript records that descant in the mean sight was sung by a man's voice⁷; Lionel's treatise however was addressed specifically to a teacher who would 'enforme a childe in his counterpoynt'⁸, and being thus restricted to boys' voices only, dealt only with the two highest 'sights', quatreble and treble. Of these, quatreble appears to have been pitched generally about a perfect fourth or a perfect fifth higher than treble. It was probably with this practice in mind that Robert Cator recommended that

1. WndDC i G 10; the will was proved in 1454. The then Instructor was John Benet.

2. Rules drawn up by the then Instructor, Robert Cator:- WlsDC, Dean Cosyn's MS, pp.347-55, @ p.352.

3. Sit etiam in grammatica scientificus et in cantu tam plano quam organico sufficienter edoctus, ne, si cecus cecum ducat, ambo in foveam cadant:- ibid., p.347.

4. BM Lansdowne 763, fo.105v. Printed edition by S.B. Meech, "Three Musical Treatises in English", 10 Speculum (1935), @ pp.242-58.

5. See above, pp. 4033, 5039-44.

6. BM Lansdowne 763 fo.104v.; S.B. Meech, "Three Musical Treatises..", p.242

7. ibid., fo.113v., p.260. It also confirms that descant in the quatreble sight was sung by a boy's voice.

8. ibid., fo.104v., p.242

when teaching improvised polyphony (cantus organicus), the Instructor should divide his boys' voices into those of two distinct ranges, "high" and "low" according to their pitch.¹ The boys with the higher-pitched voices sang descant in the quatreble sight, while boys with voices in a lower timbre sang in the treble sight. The treatises make it clear that descant was only ever sung by a solo boy, and that descant was never sung in both sights at once to create three-part harmony.

5.4.3. The role and status of the post of Instructor of the Choristers.

This evidence indicates that with the growing awareness of the contribution which choristers could make to the conduct of divine service, the technique of improvising descant over a given plainsong, which in the 14th century may only sporadically have been among choirboys' achievements, had by the middle of the 15th become a standard part of their repertoire of skills. This necessarily produced a rise in the status of their Instructor, and in the value placed on the efficient performance of his duties. At all new institutions, statutory provision was made for one of the chapel staff to act as Instructor, and his job was considered to be of sufficient importance for a generous supplement to be added to his basic salary. At Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, the supplement was £2 p.a.², a sum first considered appropriate in c.1415 for Fotheringhay College³; Tattershall College allowed for

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1. WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS p.352:- Qui quidem magister....ipsos pueros aperte et distincte doceat in plano cantu ac etiam in organico, ipsorum voces in alto et in basso secundum dispositionem vocum suarum sagaciter moderando.
 2. Eton, Statute 10 - J. Heywood and T.Wright, The Ancient Laws...p.514; King's College, Cambridge, refs. as above p. 5062, fn.1.
 3. See above, p. 4057.

the same amount¹, and so, apparently, did St. Mary Warwick.²

Old established institutions, at which no proper arrangements for the instruction of the choristers had been made, now had to come into line. At the Chapel Royal, the importance now being laid on the provision of skilful instruction for the choristers caused the post of Instructor for the first time to be recognised as a distinct post within the royal household. As long as there had been choristers of the chapel - i.e. ever since the reign of Edward 2 - some provision must have been made for their instruction; but whatever provision it was, it appears to have made no mark on the archives of the household, and so far has eluded detection. In 1440, however, a considerable alteration took place in the whole arrangements made for the maintenance and education of the choristers. At the same time as their numbers were increased from 6 to 8³, provision for their maintenance in clothing etc. was taken from the Keeper of the Great Wardrobe⁴, and transferred to the Instructor; thenceforth an annual grant of money was made to him to meet this expense, and from this time onwards, he bore full responsibility for both the education and the maintenance of the choristers.

Apparently there was more to this than mere administrative convenience; the text of a document known to E.S.Roper suggests that this development took place in recognition of the greater importance now being attached

1. Cromwell c.1455 allowed £2 p.a. to the Instructor:- Founder's Instructions, DLD U1475 Q20, Founder's draft statute 31:- DLD U1475 Q21/2 fo.7v. His executors thought the job of less value, and proposed to reduce the fee to 26s. 8d. (executors' draft, statute 30:- Q21/1 fo.7r.) but had second thoughts and restored the original sum to the Statuta Vetera (compare Key to Revision, Statute 30:- DLD U1475 Q21/4, with the full text of 1501 statute 31:- LRO 3 Anc 2/3 fo.11r.)
2. In 1454/5 Walter Plesaunce received £5. 6. 8d. p.a. total salary (D.Styles, Ministers' Accounts of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, Warwick, p.47); this possibly was compounded of a basic salary of £3. 6. 8d. (the sum allowed by the will of Richard Beauchamp for the two singing clerks of his foundation:- see above, p. 5014) plus £2 p.a. as Instructor. In 1443, John Benet was receiving £5. 6.8d. p.a. as Instructor at St. Anthony's Hospital, London:- WndOC xi F 32.
3. See above, p. 5026.
4. Until 1438/9 this official had always accounted for the boys' routine maintenance in clothing etc.:- see e.g. Account of Keeper of Great Wardrobe 1422/3 (PRO E 101 407/13 fo.29v.), and 1438/9 (409/2 fo.40r.); also Warrants for Issue from Great Wardrobe, e.g. PRO E 101 407/20 No.5 (1425), and 408/8 no.71 (1429). The account of the Keeper of the Great Wardrobe for 1440/1 carries no comparable entry (PRO E 101 409/6), nor does it ever appear on his accounts again.

to the provision of efficient instruction for the choristers in their more demanding duties at service in the chapel. According to this document, this grant of an annual income to the Instructor to enable him to "find (maintain), govern and teach the eight boys of our chapel" was specifically made "with a view to his adequately supervising the musical arrangements of daily Mass of our Lady and Divine Service in our Chapel of the Household".¹ At much the same time, the very existence of the post of Instructor of the Choristers was recognised for the first time; it was officially recognised and formally conferred on John Plummer, one of the lay clerks, by letters patent issued in February 1445.² Just previously, he had been granted a regular annual income of £26.13. 4d. p.a. for the maintenance and teaching of the eight boys.³ The maintenance allowance per boy was 53s. 4d. p.a.⁴, leaving the Instructor with a balance of £5. 6. 8d. p.a. for his labour in maintaining and teaching them.⁵

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1. E.S. Roper, "Music at the English Chapels Royal"⁵⁴ Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association (1927/8) p.22. Roper says that this document is in PRO, but he gives no reference for it, and so far it has not proved possible to trace it.
 2. PRO C 66 459 m.3 (CPR 1441-46, p.333); "considerantes grandes labores ac diurnas occupaciones quos dilectus serviens noster Johannes Plummer circa doctrinam et regimen puerorum nostrorum Capelle nostre a diu sustinuit", the king formally granted to Plummer the teaching discipline and governance of the choristers. In the Liber Regie Capelle of 1449 (ed. W.Ullmann, p.56) his position was called magister cantus; and on a warrant of 1449 he was described as 'John Plomer maister of oure Children of oure Chapell' (PRO E 404 66/94). It was probably the attachment of a special income to the post of Instructor which required that the official existence of the post now be recognised; royal officials could not be expected to pay large sums of money to the holder of a post not formally known to exist. Plummer had been a clerk of the chapel since at least 1438 (PRO E 101 408/25 fo.2r.); he had been granted a sum of £10 in 1441 (CPR 1436-41, p.519), and from 1444 onwards a regular income of 40 marks p.a. for the maintenance and teaching of the boys (PRO C 66 459 m.20; CPR 1441-6, p.311). He may have already been Instructor of the Choristers in 1440, when these rearrangements were first introduced.
 3. Starting at Michaelmas 1444:- PRO C 66 459 m.20 (CPR 1441-6, p.311); owing to some irregularity, these letters patent were cancelled and reissued in 1446 (C 66 462 m.10:- CPR 1441-6, p.455). For Plummer's successors, the grant of the office of Instructor, and the grant of the income necessary to sustain it, were always made together; see e.g. the appointment of Henry Abyndon, 1455 (PRO C 66 481 m.18:- CPR 1452-61, p.279).
 4. ed. W.Ullmann, Liber Regie Capelle, p.66. In deference to its Portuguese destination, sums of money in this book were given in ducats; 16 ducats were allowed per boy; four ducats roughly equalled one mark (13s.4d.).
 5. Plummer's successor, Henry Abyndon, received £6.13. 4d. p.a. as Instructor:- PRO E 404 75/2/40.

One institution which began the 15th century without the benefit of the undivided services of an Instructor of the Choristers was St. Mary Warwick; but this position was rectified as the century progressed. It has been seen how, owing to the odd history of the college, the post to which William Witteneby was appointed in 1409 involved teaching the "song school of the town of Warwick" as well as instructing the choristers of the college; consequently his, and his successor's duties of attendance at service in church were only light, and their salaries (£3 and £3. 6. 8d. respectively) were less than generous.¹ However, by the time of their next known successor in this post, Walter Plesaunce (1454/5), all the anomalies had been removed. From the college itself, he received a full living wage of £5. 6. 8d. p.a., and gone was any reference to his attending in choir only on festivals.² Evidently, he had become fully assimilated into the college as a clerk of the choir, putting in full attendance at service, and bearing the responsibility of teaching only the choristers. Of the public elementary "song school" of the town of Warwick no more is heard, and presumably it had been allowed to lapse. The importance now being placed on the adequate instruction of the choristers had caused the college to restore to its service the services of a full-time Instructor; Plesaunce's successors were only ever referred to as 'organist' or 'Master of the Chylder and organplear'.³

Developments at the Chapel Royal and St. Mary Warwick added up to an appreciation that any foundation now needed a recognised, full-time member of its staff to instruct the choristers; the founders of new collegiate institutions also made all due provision for this. The necessity that he be a man able to teach descant also had important consequences. It ended for good the possibility that the job could be carried out simply by some priest or chaplain whose talents extended only to a capacity to teach plainsong, the ceremony of the liturgy, reading and Latin grammar. In effect, it restricted the post to the singers of polyphony, the clerici generosi, or organiste, or their equivalents under other titles. From this period onwards, at all the

1. See above, pp. 4016-8.

2. D.Styles, Ministers' Accounts of the Collegiate Church of St. Mary Warwick, p.47.

3. PRO SC 6 Henry VIII 3729 (1520/1), PRO E 36 154 p.235 (c.1539).

major institutions, all - or virtually all - the men known to have acted as Instructors came from this class of chapel staff. This applies to St. George's Windsor from 1441 onwards (the first year since 1407/8 for which the name of the Instructor can be recovered)¹; to the Chapel Royal from 1444 onwards, when the name of the Instructor first becomes recoverable²; to Eton College and to King's College Cambridge, from their beginnings in the 1440's; and to such churches as St. Anthony's Hospital, and St. Mary Warwick. Indeed, at Eton College, the statutes of 1453 allowed only for a situation in which it was one of the clerici generosi who was acting as Instructor.³

In effect, therefore, it had now become the established practice that the Instructor of the Choristers should be one of the skilled musicians of the institution. For the first time, that is, members of the class of musician from which were drawn the composers of polyphonic music, were being brought into intimate daily contact with the business of training and performing with boys' voices. This contact was soon to have fruitful results, for it was the necessary pre-requisite for the creation of circumstances in which the use of boys' voices in composed polyphony could begin to be contemplated.

Now that the job of instructing the choristers had become one of some skill and distinction, carrying both substantial rewards and esteem, it ceased to be the mere chore it had been in the 14th century.⁴ Far from being a job which each man got rid of as soon as he could, it became one which its holder might be pleased to retain for many years.

1. WndDC xv 34 41 (Thomas Churchman 1441-50); in 1407/8 one of the three instructors in office that year had been a clerk (WndDC xv 34 25, 26).

2. John Plummer:- see above, p. 5089-90.

3. Statute 10:- J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws.... p.514. The Master of the Lady Chapel choirs at the greater monasteries were also drawn virtually exclusively from this class of musician. The statutes of Tattershall College allowed for either a clerk or chaplain to take this job (statute 30:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.7r), but the only known Instructors were all clerks.

4. See above, p. 3014-6.

John Plummer was Instructor at the Chapel Royal from 1444 until 1455; his successor Henry Abyndon from 1455 until 1478¹. At St. George's Windsor, Thomas Churchman held the post from 1441 until 1450²; at St. Mary Warwick, John Soursby from 1432 until 1449³. John Halywell was Instructor at King's College, Cambridge March 1450 - September 1451, and at Eton College from 1454 until 1461⁴. At Ely Cathedral, Thomas Penrich was Master of the Lady Chapel Choir 1415-37⁵, and his successor Walter Syngere from 1439 until 1453⁶. Indeed, the job could now attract a very distinguished musician indeed, if he were interested in boys' voices; Lionel Power was sufficiently interested in the business of training boys to write his 'Tretis upon þe Gamme', and to serve as Instructor of the Choristers of the chapel of Thomas Duke of Clarence (1418-21)⁷.

5.4.4. The rationale of the employment of boys in choir.

All the foregoing material should not, however, be taken to indicate that the basic nature of the contribution of choristers to the conduct of divine service had altered in any way. They were simply being called upon to do more of the kind of work they had always done, though perhaps with a greater degree of skill, and with a greater value being placed on its being well done. There was no change in the basic rationale of their actual presence in the conduct of the church's liturgy. They were still, as they had always been, essentially schoolboys whose education had been committed to the institution of which they were members; they ministered in the church at divine service as choristers, and in return their employers saw that they were given, free,

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1. see above, p. 5090, and PRO C 66 481 m.18, C 66 543 m.15 (CPR 1452-61 p.279; CPR 1476-85, p.133)
 2. WndDC xv 34 41,44.
 3. D. Styles, Ministers' Accounts...pp.6,22.
 4. CKC Mundum Book 2 ff.22r., 90r.; EPF Audit Rolls 7-9, 9a, sub Stipendia capellanorum et clericorum. His name appears variously as Halywell, Helywell, Helewell, Hellwell, Elwell and Ewell.
 5. EDC Granator 26, 28-31, Hostillar 6, Treasurer 12; PRO SC 6 1257/4-6.
 6. PRO SC 6 1257/8; EDC Custos Capelle 9-10, Hostillar 7-8, Cellarer 31,35, Almoner 13. His full name (Walter Syngere, cantor) appears on PRO SC 6 1257/8; there is no real evidence for considering that he may have been Walter Frye, as suggested by S. Kenney, Walter Frye and the Contenance Angloise, pp.19-27.
 7. Wst DC WAM 12163 fo.14r.

the standard education of the day. Any reputable college expected to lay on education in Latin grammar for its choristers, so that for the older boys who had learnt their expected repertoire of skills - the ceremony and plainsong of the liturgy, reading, and the techniques of descant - their time out of choir would be devoted to the standard grammar education of any schoolboy.

Various institutions made various arrangements to secure this. In the royal household a grammar-master was employed to teach Latin grammar to various groups of youths and boys at court, including the choristers of the Chapel Royal "after they can ther descaunt"¹. At Wells Cathedral, it was directed that the Instructor of the Choristers should himself be in grammatica scientificus; he taught the boys grammar as well as music, and it was anticipated that the subject could be pursued to a level sufficiently advanced for a chorister to be able to proceed straight to University without intermediate attendance at the grammar school.²

At Tattershall there was a grammar school attached to the college; its master was to teach Latin freely to the choristers of the college, and to the sons of the tenants of college properties, and of the Lordship of Tattershall. The choristers were specifically directed to attend the school each day.³ At Eton College, of course, grammar education was readily available; choristers who had been sufficiently instructed in music were expected to join the scholars of the college at their grammar lessons⁴. The choristers of both Eton and King's College Cambridge were

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1. The Black Book of the Household of Edward 4 (1471):- PRO E 36 230 p.71; A.R. Myers, The Household of Edward IV, pp.137-8, According to the Liber Regie Capelle of 1449 (ed. W.Ullmann, p.57) the choristers attended grammar lessons cum senuerint.
 2. Robert Cator's rules for the conduct of the Choristers' House, c.1435-60:- WlsDC Dean Cosyn's MS., pp.347,348.
 3. Statutes 10,22:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 ff.3v., 5v. The statute concerning the Instructor of the Choristers defined his duty as being the teaching of singing (only), no doubt in the expectation that all the necessary instruction in reading (for the younger boys) and Latin (for the older ones) would be available in the college's grammar school. Statute 30, Q21/1 fo.7r.:- Item Capellano seu clerico doctenti choristas cantare....
 4. A document of June 1446 refers to the "sexdecim pueros choristas qui similiter, cum in cantu sufficienter instructi fuerint, grammaticam addiscere debebunt" (A.F.Leach, Educational Charters and Documents, p.412); and the statutes of 1453 distinguished between a 'chorista grammaticam addiscens' and a 'chorista grammaticam non addiscens' - Statute 19, ed. J. Heywood and T.Wright, The Ancient Laws..., p.356; also Statutes 14, 30, ibid., pp.524-6, 554.

given preference over other candidates of equal ability in election to scholarships at Eton; for this at least a basic working knowledge of Latin grammar was required, and progressively more than that in the case of candidates over 12 years old.¹ At King's, one of the college chaplains might oblige by teaching the choristers their grammar², or one of the clerks³; alternatively, they could be sent to the grammar school on Milne Street, conveniently situated only a few yards from the College gate.⁴ For the boys of monastery Lady Chapel choirs, grammar teaching was available in the Almonry school, from the scholars of which the singing-boys were chosen; in the case of choirs founded at monasteries with no Almonry School, the Master of the choir was expected to teach grammar as well as music.⁵

Despite their increasing contribution to the music of the services, therefore, choristers and singing-boys of all types of institution continued to be considered as they had always been. Basically, they remained ordinary schoolboys; as such their educational needs were in no way different from those of any other boys, their work in church and their status as members of liturgical choirs notwithstanding. They were, therefore, entitled to expect to leave their choristerhood as well taught in the standard grammar education of the day as any secular boy who had merely attended grammar school in the ordinary way. It was the musical demands of the composers of the succeeding period that began to make necessary the exclusion of choristers from the mainstream of education, and to transform them from ordinary schoolboys to accomplished musicians and full-time servants of the church.

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1. Eton, Statutes 3, 4:- ibid., pp.479, 485; King's, Statute 3:- ibid., p.28.
 2. e.g. John Wodehouse 1448/9:- CKC Mundum Book 1, fo.143r.
 3. Item solut' Willelmo howard pro doctrina gramaticali choristarum anno predicto xiiij s.iiij d.:- CKC Mundum Book 2 fo.113v. (1453/4).
 4. e.g. 1465-9:- CKC Mundum Book 4, ff.3r., 12., 38r., 39r., 59r., 60v.; Mundum Book 5, fo.11v. etc.
 5. e.g. Bridlington Priory (1447):- "xij Quaresters and a Maister to teche hem both gramer and song":- ed. J. Strachey, Rotuli Parliamentorum, vol.5, p.188.

5.5. The organist.

5.5.1. The introduction of the post of organist.

A further symptom of the increasingly specialist and professional approach to the performance of the music of the liturgy at this period is the general recognition for the first time of the distinct position of organist. It is known from many references that one or more organs regularly formed part of the equipment of all great churches, at least from the 14th century onwards. On the whole, however, it was not until the mid-15th century that statutes at new colleges, and policy decisions at old ones, began to recognise a distinct place in the hierarchy for the organist, and to allot him an extra allowance for his efforts.

Prior to this, no special arrangements had been made for the provision of an organist. It seems likely that it was common for several members of the choral staff to have sufficient keyboard skill, and that the duty of playing at service was discharged by them in turn. Apparently no very significant degree of expertise was required, and consequently no special payment was offered or expected; the clerk responsible for playing simply discharged his duty of attending at service by playing keyboard when required instead of singing, and there was no more to it than that.¹

By the mid-15th century, however, greater attention was being paid to the recruitment of just one capable keyboard player to be the recognised organist. There appears to be no evident reason for thinking that the contribution of the organ to the conduct of the services was becoming of greater significance at this time - if anything, the evidence suggests just the reverse. What in fact was happening was a steady and continuous rise in the value placed on the competent performance of the music of the liturgy as a whole, in which the contribution made to it by the organ necessarily shared; even if there were no reason other than this, therefore, it would anyway have begun to seem appropriate at this time that playing the organ should be committed to one man specially skilled in it.

The statutes of Eton College and King's College, Cambridge, were the earliest which required special attention to be paid to the appointment

1. But also see above, p. 4067, for the different practice observed at Wells Cathedral.

of a specialist organist. Of the four clerici generosi at Eton, at least one was to know how to play the organ, and in order to secure a competent organist, the college was even prepared to relax its rules and permit the appointment of a married man.¹ At King's College, Cambridge, it was expressly required that one of either the clerks or chaplains should be able to play the organ.² Having thus ensured the appointment of a recognised organist, however, the compilers of the statutes for neither college yet considered his contribution to the services to be worth an extra fee.³ At King's, a distinct payment for playing the organ was made only when the organist was, for some reason, not one of the fully-admitted members of the chapel staff. The account for 1453/4 records that the 6s. 8d. paid to Nicholas Middleton, one of the clerks, was paid for his playing at Lady Mass during the period prior to his being admitted as a clerk;⁴ thereafter, he received no specific payment.

Tattershall College recognised a distinct organist among its choral staff, and placed a precise value on his services; by statute 40s. p.a. was added to the salary of the clerk or chaplain who played at service⁵. In thus recognising the organist's position, Tattershall was copying the example already set by St. George's Windsor, and perhaps other old-established colleges as well. At Windsor, the rehabilitation of the college's finances towards the end of the 1430's was partly utilised to set aside an annual fee for one of the clerks as organist. This apparently was inaugurated in 1439; for scribbled on the verso of an abortive attempt to compile the Treasurer's Account for 1439/40 is a memorandum noting the payment of 20s. to John Wetherby⁶ for playing

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1. Statute 10:- ed. J. Heywood and T. Wright, The Ancient Laws...p.514
 2. Statute 1:- ibid., pp.20-1
 3. At King's no fixed salaries for the clerks were laid down; at Eton, the salaries paid to the clerici generosi were sometimes in excess of the statutory provision (see above, p.5061-2, and p. 5060, fn. 3). It is very possible that at both places, one clerk had an allowance added to his basic salary in return for playing the organ, without its being specially noted as such on the accounts.
 4. CKC Mundum Book 2, fo.121r.:- Item in riguardo dato Nicholao Middylton per prepositum et bursarios pro servacione organorum tempore misse beate marie et ceteris serviciis per ipsum in choro factis antequam in clerico Collegii admissus fuerat vj s. viij d.
 5. Founder's draft state 31:- DLD 1475 Q21/2 fo.7v. Cromwell's executors at first intended reducing this to 26s. 8d. p.a., but restored the original sum on the Statuta Vetera:- refs. as note 1, p.5089 above.
 6. John Wetherby:- clerk and organist, St. George Windsor, 1439-42 (WndDC xv 34 40-1); member of Fraternity of St. Nicholas, London (the London gild of parish clerks), admitted 1455/6, (LGL MS 4889 fo.4v.); recruited from London 1466 to be Master of the Lady Chapel Choir at Ely Cathedral 1466-7 (PRO SC 6 1257/9; EDC Custos Capelle 11).

the organ that year.¹ He was again in receipt of this sum in 1441/2² and the payment of a fee to one of the clerks as organist appears on every subsequent Treasurer's account which remains sufficiently complete and legible.³ St. George's may not have been the only oldestablished college to modify its choral arrangements at this time to accommodate the appointment of a recognised organist. There is circumstantial evidence to suggest that the transformation of the post of verger at St. Stephen's Westminster at about this time was effected to enable it to recruit a musician who was, in particular, an organist.⁴

5.5.2. The use of the organ at service.

The exact nature of the use of the organ at service remains very obscure. Certainly, it was the regular practice at all major institutions to keep an instrument in the Lady Chapel, for use at Lady Mass. At Tattershall the statutes expressly directed that daily Lady Mass be celebrated cum cantu organico et organis⁵. At St. George's, Windsor, 3s. 4d. p.a. was added to the organist's fee, for playing at Lady Mass; this practice began between 1450 and 1459, and continued thereafter.⁶ There was an organ in the Lady Chapel behind the High Altar at Wells Cathedral in 1417/18⁷; and the payment made in 1453 for playing the organ at Lady Mass at King's College Cambridge has already been mentioned.⁸ An organ was a regular part of the furniture of monastery Lady Chapels also. At Ely Cathedral an organ had been made for the Lady Chapel as early as 1367⁹, and an instrument there was repaired in 1452/3.¹⁰ As soon as the new Lady Chapel

1. Nota pro modulacione in organis Johanni Wethirby xx s.:- WndDC xv 34 40.
2. WndDC xv 34 41.
3. A summary of the college's annual income and expenditure compiled c.1445 assumed that only a clerk would ever fill this post:- Uni Clericorum pro modulacione in organis per annum xiiij s. iiij d. WndDC xv 3 12.
4. See above, pp. 5074-5, and below, Appendix A8, p. A036.
5. Statute 11:- DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.4r.
6. WndDC xv 34 47 (1459/60):- et solut' Thome Rolfe...pro modulacione in organis de toto tempore huius compoti xiiij s. iiij d. et solut' eidem Thome pro modulacione in organis ad missam beate marie iij s. iiij d.
7. WlsDC Communar's A/c 1417/8:- Item solut' Johanni Organiste de Glaucestr' pro magnis Organis in choro camsis cum Organis in Capella Beate Marie xxxiiij s. iiij d.
8. Above, p. 5097 and fn. 4.
9. According to an extract from an account of the Custos Capelle for 1367 now no longer extant, printed in W. Stevenson, A Supplement..p.67 fn.2.
10. EDC Custos Capelle 10.

by the Martyrdom in Canterbury Cathedral was ready for use (late 1455)¹ an organ builder was employed and paid for making an instrument for use there.² At Worcester Cathedral, an organ in the Lady Chapel was sold for 33s. 4d. during 1434/5³; in 1395 the warden of the Lady Chapel at the abbey of St. Benet at Hulme sold one organ for 26s. 8d. and bought a new instrument for £5.⁴ Despite its ubiquitous nature, however, in no instance is it known precisely how the Lady Chapel organ was used at Lady Mass.

The organ in the Lady Chapel was a small instrument used just at Lady Mass. For High Mass and the Office observed in choir, a larger instrument, the organa in choro or organa maiora was supplied; its usual place was on the pulpitum on top of the choir screen.⁵ Its function during service is not at all clear. Use of the organ appears to have been considered principally as just one of the numerous devices which could be deployed to add extra distinction and devotion to services which were festal and seemed worthy of special treatment. At Tattershall, the organist's allowance was paid to him "for playing the organ on Sundays, on greater and double feasts, and at Lady Mass"⁶, indicating clearly enough the occasions on which a statute-maker of c.1455 considered the playing of the organs could most fittingly be undertaken. In 1498/9 the organist was given an

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1. ed. W.G. Searle, Christ Church, Canterbury..., p.65.
 2. CDC A/c Prior 15 (1456/7):- Et solut' Johanni Roose Organiste pro factura Organorum infra Capellam beate marie hoc anno lxxvj s. x d.
 3. WorDC C279, (entered at end after final balance).
 4. A/c of John Ersham, Custos Altaris Sancte Marie:- NNRO Dioc. Arch. EST/13.
 5. MMB, pp.202-7.
 6. Item Capellano seu clerico ludenti ad orgona [sic] in diebus dominicis festis maioribus et principalibus ac ad missam beate marie virginis:- Founder's draft statute 30, DLD U1475 Q21/1 fo.7r. On the Statuta Vetera, however, Cromwell's executors replaced these precise directions with the vague "temporibus necessariis et consuetis":- cf. 1501 text of Statute 31, LRO 3 Anc 2/3 fo.11r., with Key to Revision, Statute 30 DLD U1475 Q21/4.

extra penny a time for playing during the Offertory at Mass on three principal feasts¹ - a practice which may offer an explanation for the popularity of Offertory chants as the basis for organ compositions during the 16th century.² How the organ was used at service in the middle of the 15th century, however, is not known for certain; there is no evidence to suggest that (in England) it had yet developed a solo repertory of its own, and it seems that its principal use was to bolster up the singing of the plainsong chants on festivals.³

In fact, there is slight circumstantial evidence to suggest that, if anything, use of the organ was declining at this period, rather than increasing. It has been noted already that Wells Cathedral was one institution where, exceptionally, the practice of deputing the playing of the organ to a single member of the choral staff as the recognised organist (custos organorum) had emerged as early as the 14th century.⁴ When the overhaul of the cathedral's organs, beginning in 1414, permitted the playing of the organ at service to be resumed after a break, the annual fee to the organist was 10s.⁵ This, however, fell to 6s. 8d. in 1430/1, and then to a mere 3s. 4d. in 1446/7 and 1448/9.⁶ The following year the organ-builder was sent for, and a considerable repair job put in hand; thereupon the organist's fee returned to 6s. 8d. p.a.⁷ but it rose no higher for the rest of the century.

Similarly, at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, the fee initially paid to the organist when the post was created in 1439 was 20s. p.a.⁸ by c.1445, however, the chapter were considering this to be too much, and reduced it to 13s. 4d.⁹ By 1459 they were adding 3s. 4d. p.a. for playing at Lady Mass¹⁰, but the fee did not return to its original level until 1474¹¹.

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1. Et solut' Thome Benett ludenti ad organa iij festis principalibus tempore offertorii iij d.:— Precentor's A/C 1498/9, DLD U1475 Q19/4. Thomas Benett was organist and held one of the four clerkships additional to the six of the original foundation.
 2. MMB, p.365
 3. Books designated as pro organis occasionally occur on Inventories of chapel goods; they are invariably ordinary plainsong service books (most commonly Antiphoners), and are always listed with the routine service books, never with the books of polyphonic music for voices. For further observations on the use of the organ at this time, see Introduction to ed. D.Stevens, Early Tudor Organ Music II, 8 Early English Church Music, pp.viii-x; and F.LL.Harrison, "Tradition and Innovation in Instrumental usage"; in ed.J.Larue, Aspects of Medieval and Renaissance Music, pp.321-2.
 4. See above, p. 4067. 5. WlsDC Communar's A/cs 1416/7,1417/8,1428/9.
 6. ibid., years specified.
 7. ibid. 1449/50:— Et Willelmo Walby misso ad Cerne pro expensis suis ad querendum Organistam ibidem cum conduccione equi sui et labore suo per ij dies et dimidiam xxij d....Et solut' Michaeli Glowceter pro emendacione organorum in choro xlviij s. vj d....Et solut' domino Roberto Cator pro ludo suo in organis vj s. viij d.
 8. see above, pp. 5097-8. 9. WndDC xv 3 12, xv 34 44. 10. See above, p.5098.
 11. WndDC xv 34 52.

One very speculative guess at the reason for the apparent retreat of the organ at this time would link it with the decline of the isorhythmic style of composition. It is not improbable that isorhythmic motets, and possibly the movements of isorhythmic masses also, were sung by a small group of soloists standing on the pulpitum, where the organa in choro was also generally to be found¹; it is not improbable that the very slow-moving tenor parts of these compositions were not sung or vocalised, but played on the organ. The declining frequency with which this method of composition was employed from c.1440 onwards might perhaps explain the decreasing use of the organ at this time, as reflected in the decreasing fee paid to the men who played it. By 1460-70, indeed, the composition of vocal music requiring organ accompaniment had disappeared altogether, perhaps threatening almost to leave the organ out of church music altogether; but presumably there began to develop at that time, out of its other functions at service, a solo repertoire wherewith it kept its place in church music despite being no longer needed to accompany voices. If this speculative reconstruction of events is correct, then there emerges a particularly telling example of the increasingly professional and specialist approach to the music of the church at this time - in the way in which it seemed to be appropriate to create a distinct post for the organist, at a time when there was, in fact, a decreasing amount of work for him to do.

1. see MMB, pp.202-14, esp. pp.207-9. At Llanelwy Cathedral the anthem was still being sung from the organ loft as late as 1768:- D.R.Thomas, The History of the Diocese of St. Asaph, p.373.