

PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE  
CAMBRIDGE ANTIQUARIAN  
SOCIETY

(INCORPORATING THE CAMBS & HUNTS ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY)



VOLUMES LVI & LVII

JANUARY 1962 TO DECEMBER 1963

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DEIGHTON BELL

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# CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society, 1962-63</i>	page vi
1963-64	ix
<i>Report of the Council for the Years 1961</i>	vii
1962	x
<i>Summary of Accounts for the Years 1961</i>	viii
1962	xi
<i>Laws of the Society</i>	xii
Bronze Age Pottery and Flints from Joist Fen, Lakenheath	I
By GRACE, LADY BRISCOE, F.S.A.	
A Flat Axe from Chatteris Fen, Cambs	5
By JOHN M. COLES, PH.D., F.S.A.	
Excavations at the War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62	9
By D. A. WHITE	
Excavations at the War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51	30
By D. A. WHITE	
Wool Street, Cambridgeshire	42
By P. C. DEWHURST, M.I.C.E., M.I.MECH.E.	
Eadnoth, First Abbot of Ramsey, and the Foundation of Chatteris and St Ives	61
By CYRIL HART, M.A., F.R.HIST.S.	
Excavations on a Medieval Site at Water Newton in the County of Huntingdon, in 1958	68
By CHARLES GREEN	
King's College School in 1564	89
By SIR JOHN GRAY	
The Favells of Petty Cury: A Cambridge Family in the Napoleonic Wars	103
By BRUCE DICKINS, F.B.A.	
Drainage by Windmills in the Waterbeach Level	115
By R. L. HILLS	
Archaeological Notes	123
By GRACE BRISCOE, TIMOTHY POTTER, PATRICIA HUTCHINSON, MARTIN BIDDLE, and G. F. FINDLAY and HOWARD HART	

## KING'S COLLEGE SCHOOL IN 1564

SIR JOHN GRAY

ON 15 July 1564, the Bishop of London wrote to Andrew Perne, President of Queens' College and Vice-Chancellor of the University, announcing the intention of Queen Elizabeth to come to Cambridge on 8 August and to stay there for several days and that she wished to stay in the Provost's Lodge at King's College. A few days later word came that she would now arrive three days earlier than had previously been announced. On 4 August Sir William Cecil, the Queen's Secretary of State and Chancellor of the University, arrived in Cambridge and gave various instructions altering certain of the arrangements for her reception. There is no need to go into details, but these numerous instructions and counter-instructions must have caused considerable flutters in more than one academic dovecote. In the circumstances it is somewhat surprising that everything went more or less according to plan.<sup>1</sup>

Before describing the part played by the members of King's College School in the subsequent events, some preliminary words are necessary regarding the site of the College and the earlier history of the School itself.

First of all, it has to be remembered that in 1564 the only buildings then standing on the present site of King's College were the Chapel and a wooden belfry just outside the west door of the Chapel.<sup>2</sup> The land between the present Screen, Wilkins', Webb's and Bodley's Buildings, the River Cam and Clare College was surrounded by a wall with a number of gate-houses. One of these stood approximately where the present front entrance now is; another stood at the end of what is now Queens' Lane and as late as 1822 was still known as Friars' Gate, thus recalling the time when the adjacent site was occupied by the Carmelite Friars.<sup>3</sup> A third gate-house stood on the east bank of the Cam more or less due west of the front gate-house.<sup>4</sup> The College itself stood on the site of the West Court of the Old Schools.<sup>5</sup> To the east of the Chapel was the Provost's Lodge. To the south-east thereof was the original King's

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, the details of the Queen's visit have been taken from Harleian MS. 7037, ff. 109-28 (Baker's Collections).

<sup>2</sup> In very dry weather the foundations of this belfry can still be seen. It was removed in 1779.

<sup>3</sup> In a letter, dated 4 November 1822, and addressed by the College's solicitor to the Cambridge Paving Commissioners, it is described as 'Friar's Gate belonging to King's College' (*Reply of King's College to the Statement of the Cambridge Commissioners for Paving* (1831), p. 4).

<sup>4</sup> A wooden bridge crossed the river at this point. Two clumps of trees in the meadow on the far bank, which is now known as Scholars' Piece, are the remains of a causeway leading from that bridge to what are now the Backs.

<sup>5</sup> Purchased by the University from King's College in 1829 after the completion of the Wilkins buildings in that College. The lower portion of the west gateway of the Old Schools and part of the adjacent wall were part of the original College.

College School. This building was pulled down in 1693 and a brick building with the School occupying part of the ground floor was erected in its place. In very dry weather the foundations of this later building are still visible. Both the Provost's Lodge and the School were outside the wall and abutted close to what was then known as the High Street.

Since the days of Elizabeth I the School has more than once moved to other sites before it was finally rebuilt on its present site off West Road. As is only to be expected, in the course of over five centuries it has gone through various vicissitudes of fortune, but it can claim to be the oldest school now existing in Cambridge. King's College was founded in 1441 and endowed with the revenues of certain suppressed alien priories. According to the Statutes of 1453 there were to be sixteen choristers on the foundation. They were to be 'poor and indigent, of good condition, notoriously below the age of twelve years, knowing competently how to read and sing'. There were also to be six Priest Conducts (vicars choral) and ten lay clerks. One of the Priest Conducts was to act as Precentor and one of the Priests or lay clerks was to be competent 'jubilate in organis'. Elaborate rules were made as to the choral duties of the sixteen boys. They were also to be required to assist the other college servants in waiting upon the Fellows in hall 'humbly and honestly'. Except for a direction that they were not to be allowed to wander in the town without special leave from those in authority, nothing was said about their general conduct or their attendance for instruction in purely secular matters.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, there is evidence that in the very earliest days they were given instruction in grammar and other kindred subjects. In Statute III of the Eton Statutes the Founder gave a preference to Choristers at King's and Eton in election to King's Scholarships at Eton.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1448 Thomas Roke, one of the choristers, was granted a King's Scholarship at Eton, whence he proceeded in 1453 to King's at the age of seventeen, of which College he eventually became a Fellow. In his *Eton College Register, 1441-1596* Wasey Sterry has shown that in the latter half of the fifteenth century seventeen former King's choristers became King's Scholars at Eton, the majority of whom eventually returned as undergraduate scholars to King's. Owing to the paucity of information given in contemporary records I have not been able to trace any others, but it may well be that the number of entrants at Eton, King's and elsewhere from the ranks of the choristers was considerably larger. It is perhaps not out of place to mention that two at least of the seventeen, namely, John Bramston and Clement Perchilde, were natives of Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

In 1549 the Visitors appointed by Edward VI to reform the University received an injunction that moneys expended in any College on choristers, chantries or other ecclesiastical services or on grammar schools should be converted to the support of

<sup>1</sup> The Statutes are to be found in Harleian MS. 7323. Articles I, XV, XXII, XLI, XLII, XLIV and LVII deal with the choristers.

<sup>2</sup> Heywood and Wright, *Ancient Laws of the Fifteenth Century of King's College and Eton*, p. 479.

<sup>3</sup> The names of the choristers in question appear in alphabetical order in Wasey Sterry, *Eton College Register, 1441-1598*. Bramston was admitted at the age of 12 at Eton in 1467 and in 1470 at King's, Perchilde was admitted a year later at Eton at the age of 13 and in 1474 at King's.



scholars in literature or philosophy.<sup>1</sup> Thus, at Trinity College, where the foundation provided for a grammar school for forty 'childer grammarians', the Visitors called upon the College 'to surrender the Grammar Schole', which they accordingly did and the pupils thereat were absorbed into the college as undergraduate scholars.<sup>2</sup> But there were on the foundation of the College ten choristers with masters *pro musica* and *pro grammatica*. Possibly the Visitors were bearing in mind the words William Bingham had used in 1439 in his petition to Henry VI for the foundation of God's House, namely, that 'Gramer . . . is rote and ground of all the said other Sciences'. Whatever their reason, they decided to hold their hands in so far as the choristers at King's and Trinity were concerned.

On 16 January 1557 the Marian Visitors to the University came to King's College and inspected 'the chorusters chamber and schole', from which it may perhaps be legitimate to infer that at that date the boys' dormitory was above their classroom. The reason of this inspection was because they believed that certain prohibited books could be found there. On 15 February 'Peter G. . . with iii or iiii other boyes of the gramer schole came and made supplicayon for the bookes that were taken away'.<sup>3</sup> One would like to know something more about the offending books and also to be able to identify with greater certainty Peter G. and his companions.<sup>4</sup> What is to be noted is that their school is described as a grammar school.

Having survived the visitations of Edwardian and Marian days, the two schools were once more spared on the accession of Elizabeth. In 1569 the teaching of grammar in colleges was expressly prohibited save in the case of Jesus College and that of the choristers of King's and Trinity. In 1570 the exception in favour of Jesus College was omitted, but that in favour of the choristers at King's and Trinity was preserved.<sup>5</sup>

In all probability the strict ban on the teaching of grammar in colleges was regarded in each of the two colleges as limiting the teaching thereof to choristers on the foundation and prohibiting the introduction of non-foundationers into those schools, but as will be seen hereafter their early education at King's was quite sufficient to enable at least four (if not six) of the sixteen choristers in the year 1564 eventually to proceed to the University.

Before describing the part played by those sixteen choristers at the time of Queen Elizabeth's visit, something must be said about the Chapel and the services therein.

The building of the Chapel was completed in 1515. In the 1530's, as now, it was divided into two parts—an Ante Chapel and a Choir separated by a Rood Loft. The

<sup>1</sup> Arthur Gray, *Earliest Statutes of Jesus College, Cambridge*, pp. 52, 53.

<sup>2</sup> W. W. Rouse Ball, *Cambridge Notes* (2nd edn.), pp. 12-14; H. McLeod Innes, *Fellows of Trinity College*, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, II, 124.

<sup>4</sup> Mr John Saltmarsh informs me that the accounts for 1556-7 give only five surnames of choristers. Only one of these begins with G—'Gravet' or just possibly 'Grave'. As he says it would be hardly safe to identify him with Peter G.

<sup>5</sup> For the history of the school at Jesus College see Gray, *op. cit.* pp. 52, 53. The history of the choristers' school at Trinity has yet to be written.

present organ in this Rood Loft was not erected until much later, but parts of the organ case have incorporated fragments which seem to date from the time of Henry VIII.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the present organ a humbler type of instrument must have been encased therein. In 1512 Geoffrey Blythe, a former Fellow of the College, who was then Master of King's Hall and was later to become Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, gave to his former Collège 'a pair of great organs of the value of £40', which may well have been in use at the time of Elizabeth's visit.<sup>2</sup> At that date it in all probability stood in the position in which it is shown in the plan of the Chapel made by Smithson between 1605 and 1615, namely, where the altar might have stood in less puritanical times.<sup>3</sup>

The Choir stalls and sub-stalls bear in many places the cyphers 'HR' and 'HA', that is Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, the mother of Elizabeth I, who was beheaded in 1536. As we learn from the account of her daughter's visit in 1564, the choristers sat on benches on either side of the Choir in front of the sub-stalls. These would appear to be the benches which are still to be seen built into the desks of the sub-stalls. This arrangement must have been made at a very early date, as the Statutes of 1453 direct that at matins and prime the choristers should recite the psalms and canticles *alternatim divisi ex utraque parte chori* in accordance with the Use of Sarum.

A word or two must also be said about the music provided for Queen Elizabeth at the services in the College Chapel. Directions had been given that at her first entry into the Chapel 'all the King's Colledge must be within the Chappell in their several places and copes redie to synge some imne and so conduct the Queen's Majestie into the Chappell'.<sup>4</sup> Although the strict letter of these directions was not carried out, preparations were made to provide her with fully choral services. King's Chapel was in fact one of the first places of worship in England into which prick song was introduced.<sup>5</sup> In the fifteenth century almost all singing had been in plain song, that is to say, in a certain specific mode of chanting in unison, which was guided by definite rules and of which the Gregorian chants are one example. Prick song on the other hand was the name given in the sixteenth century to divisions or descants, which were written or pricked out and were distinguishable from plain song which could be performed extemporaneously. The term is derived from the dot or prick forming the head of the note.<sup>6</sup>

One of the fathers of English prick song was Christopher Tye, who may have

<sup>1</sup> Pevsner, *The Buildings of England—Cambridgeshire*, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> At the same time he gave to the College 'a gilt mitre for the Barne Bishop'. In 1518 he also gave 'a rochet of the best cloth for the Barne Bishop' (*D.N.B. sub tit. 'Blythe'*; Cooper, *Memorials of Cambridge*, I, 212-13). The Barne Bishop was the Boy Bishop, who was to be elected by the choristers to perform divine service on St Nicholas' Day by the Statutes of 1453, but was prohibited from so doing on Innocents' Day (Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, I, 197).

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Hussey, *King's College, Cambridge, and the College Buildings*, p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> Baker MS. Mn. 23, f. 137.

<sup>5</sup> Mr John Saltmarsh informs me that a College Inventory of 1529 contains a schedule of items of Church Music which is called a List of prick songs belonging to King's College.

<sup>6</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, sub tit. 'Prick Song'.

been the chorister with that surname appearing in the King's College Accounts between 1509 and 1512.<sup>1</sup> What, however, is certain is that Christopher Tye, clerk, appears in the Accounts for the year 1537. In the previous year, Grace Book I (p. 312) records the fact that Christopher Tye, having studied the art of Music for the past ten years with much practice in composing and teaching boys, was granted the degree of Bachelor of Music. There can be little doubt that amongst his pupils were the choristers of King's. In 1545 a Doctorate of Music was conferred upon him. As no suitable robe had been prescribed for such a doctorate, a Grace was passed empowering him to wear the robes of a Doctor of Medicine.<sup>2</sup> He left Cambridge at about the end of 1542 to become Master of the choristers at Ely. Later still he became organist at the Chapel Royal. Entering Holy Orders, he eventually was inducted into the rich living of Doddington, Cambs, where he died in 1573. During his lifetime he composed a number of forms of church services, anthems and motets and personally versified in English the words of many of his musical compositions.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, full details are lacking as to the words of the forms of service in King's College Chapel, but it is very probable that some of them were the work of Christopher Tye.

As already said, the Provost of King's was directed to surrender the greater part of his Lodge to the Queen's use during her stay at Cambridge. The Fellows and Scholars were likewise required to double up so as to provide quarters for the use of the members of her retinue. We are also told that 'the choristers schools were made the buttery', but there is no record as to the alternative accommodation provided for them.

On the night of 4 August Queen Elizabeth stayed at Haslingfield. Next day she set out on horseback by way of Grantchester for Cambridge. The Mayor and Aldermen of Cambridge met her at the town boundary a little above Newnham and escorted her to the Mill at Newnham, where she alighted and 'went into the Miller's Yard for a space'. She then mounted another horse and crossing the Small Bridges, where the Silver Street Bridge now stands, reached the north entrance to Queens' Lane. Here the Mayor handed over his duties as escort to the Vice-Chancellor. Then riding between the ranks of dons and scholars on either side, she passed through the Friars' Gate and entered the grounds belonging to King's College. Over a century and a half was to pass before Gibbs' Building was to be erected between Friars' Gate and the Chapel. In her day she passed along what had once been Milne Street, but had so far fallen into disuse that special instructions had to be issued for 'the way to be gravelled (and) strewed with rushes'.<sup>4</sup> The Provost, Fellows and Scholars were lined up in two ranks in full academic dress between the Gate and the West door of the Chapel. The Chancellor (Sir Robert Cecil), Vice-

<sup>1</sup> Richard Tye, who was a Conduct at King's until his death in 1545, may have been the chorister of 1509-12.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper, *Athenae Cantabrigienses*, I, 310.

<sup>3</sup> Grove, *op. cit.* and *D.N.B. sub. tit.* 'Tye, Christopher'.

<sup>4</sup> Baker MS. Mn. 2. 23, f. 126.

Chancellor and other principal officers of the University were waiting to receive her at the Chapel door. Here there was a ceremonial surrender of the University emblems of office to the Queen and her formal return thereof to the holders. This done, 'Mr William Masters of the King's Colledge, the (Public) Orator, making his three curtseys, kneeled down on the greese or step of the West Door, which was on the walls covered with verses, and made his oration'.

At this stage, it would appear that things did not go entirely according to plan. Directions had been issued that the Queen should be provided with a seat inside the Chapel. We were told that the Orator addressed the Queen without a copy or notes of his speech and that at the end thereof 'she much commended him and did much marvel that his memory did so well serve him'. Perhaps he was so nervous and so anxious to get his allotted task over and done, that he forgot that it had been arranged that he should deliver his speech to her when she was seated inside the Chapel. The oration was in Latin and took half an hour to deliver. It was a hot August day and the Orator was fully robed. The Queen was sitting side-saddle on a fresh mount and was wearing a long train, which the Lady Strange had to hold up when she eventually entered the Chapel. In the circumstances one wonders which we ought to admire most—the Queen, the Public Orator or the horse.

It would appear that the Queen, who had some knowledge of Latin, had received an advance copy of the oration. We are told that, 'when the Public Orator began to praise the many and singular virtues set up and planted in Her Majesty, Her Highness not acknowledging (there)of, shaked her head, bit her lips and fingers and sometimes broke forth in these passions and these words "non est veritas" and "utinam"'. But when he began to praise her virginity, 'she said to the Orator "God's Blessing of thine heart; there continue" '.

When at long last the oration ended, she alighted from her horse and, entering the Chapel, knelt down at a specially prepared desk between the north and south doors. Here, the Provost, Philip Baker, approached her and 'pointed unto the Psalm *Deus misereatur*, inquiring whether she would please Her Majesty to answer and say it with him'. But the Provost was suspected of having Romanist inclinations and the young woman had a strong will of her own—more particularly in matters of religion. She told him that she wished to 'pray privately', whereupon 'he likewise privately said the same Psalm, and after a Collect for the Queen'. Thereafter 'the whole quire began to sing in English a song of gladness' and so went in procession into the Choir. The Queen took up her station in what was called a Travis. This Travis is described as being of crimson velvet and standing 'about the middle between the communion table and the South vestry Door', and was provided with a curtain so that, if she so desired, she could listen to the service unseen. We are told that she greatly marvelled 'at the beauty of the Chapel (and) greatly praised it above all other in her realm'.

When the song of gladness was finished, 'the Provost began the *Te Deum* in English, which was solemnly sung in prick song and the organs playing. After that he began Evensong, which was also solemnly sung, every man standing in his cope; which being ended the Queen's Majesty came forth of her Travis and went to her

lodging. . . . And as she went, she thanked God that had sent her to their University, where she altogether against her expectation was so received as she thought she could not be better'.

The next day (6 August) was a Sunday. The Queen did not attend matins, which was celebrated between seven and eight o'clock in the morning. But a number of the lords and gentlemen in her retinue attended and occupied many of the upper stalls, thus crowding out the Bachelors of Arts, and Conducts, who had to sit in the sub-stalls. The ordinary scholars had to sit 'on the forms of the choristers'. Though there is no mention of the service having been choral, the choristers were certainly required to be in attendance at the service which followed almost immediately after the close of matins; one imagines they had already taken up some position in the Chapel for that purpose.

We are told that, 'when Mattins were ended, every man repaired unto the court gate to wait upon the Queen. . . . So the Queen came on foot unto the North door of the Church, which was kept with Yeoman of the Guard, and so was the Quire door also, to whom by Mr Secretary's commandment, order was given that they should suffer none to enter but the Masters of Arts coming in their habits to hear the sermon *ad clerum*.' As before, the Queen entered her Travis, opposite to which a pulpit had been erected. The Queen caused the curtain of the Travis 'to be drawn open and so at the end of the stool did sit down and was seen by the people all the time of the sermon'. The service began with a Litany and was followed by a sermon in Latin preached by the Vice-Chancellor, Andrew Perne. Directions were given that its duration was to be three-quarters of an hour.<sup>1</sup> We are told that 'about the midst of his sermon, Her Majesty sent the Lord Hunsdon [to tell Dr Perne] to put on his cap, which he did until the end, at which time, ere he got out of the Pulpit, by the Lord Chamberlain, she sent him word that it was the first which she ever heard in Latin and she thought she would never hear a better', words which make one wonder whether she was playing upon their double sense and spoke with the royal tongue in its royal cheek. When the sermon was over, we are told that 'the Quire sang in prick song a song, which done, she departed to the palace by the secret way'.<sup>2</sup>

The rest of the morning and afternoon were employed in setting up a stage in the ante-chapel for the Latin play *Aulularia* of Plautus, which was to be acted by divers members of the University, other than those of King's College.

We are told that 'at Evensong the company of King's College, being informed that the Queen's Majesty would not come to the same, began to sing'. Then word came that the Queen was coming after all. So the service was 'stayed', and, when she came into her Travis by the secret way, they did of new begin Evensong, 'which ended she departed by the same way to the play *Aulularia Plauti*'.

<sup>1</sup> Baker MS. Mn. 2.23, f. 127.

<sup>2</sup> This door gave the Provost direct access to the Chapel from his Lodge. It gave access through the wall of the north-eastern side chapel (Cooper, *Annals of Cambridge*, II, 191). The stone work of the east wall still shows where this doorway has been blocked up.

Evensong was the last service which the Queen attended in the Chapel, though she was to return there on Monday and Tuesday nights to see two more plays.<sup>1</sup>

During daytime the Queen paid a round of visits to all the then existing Colleges except Jesus 'which stood far out of the way', and Magdalene. She was also 'entertained' by interminable sermons, disputations, and loyal addresses, both in prose and in verse, and in many different languages, including Hebrew and 'Caldee'. On Wednesday she was informed that it was proposed by the members of King's College to entertain her with yet a fourth play.<sup>2</sup> In the circumstances one is not surprised to learn that 'Her Highness, as it were tired with going about to see the Colleges and hearing disputations and over watched with former plays, for it was very late nightly before she came to them and departed from them, and minding early in the morning to depart from Cambridge, could not . . . hear the said tragedy'.

So on Thursday, 10 August, she set out from the Provost's Lodge for Hinchinbrooke, where she was to stay the night at the house of Sir Henry Cromwell, grandfather of the Protector. In fact she was so tired that, when on the way she reached Magdalene College, 'she excused the heat of the day and the press of the people and therefore required that the paper of the oration', which the Master of the College had proposed to deliver, should be given to her and so rode on her way to Huntingdon.<sup>3</sup>

I now return to the sixteen choristers at King's, who had played their role in the entertainment of the Queen. It so happens that we have a complete list of them with both their surnames and their Christian names and are thereby enabled to follow the after careers of many of them in some detail. The names would appear to be given in the order of their seniority and read as follows:

Rob. Polley	Gul. Forthe	Petr. Scarlet	Tho. Rinshine <sup>4</sup>
Geo. Wylde	Tho. Jugge	Joh. Bentle	Tho. Bar
Phil. Baker	Tho. Atkinson	Adam Robins	Bab. Carlton
Will. Creeke	Alex. Kinge	Jo. Cowell	Lau. Stockes

We know for a fact that at least three of their number became King's Scholars at Eton and eventually returned thence to King's College. One other was eventually admitted a pensioner at Caius.<sup>5</sup> Two others may have been admitted at Trinity Hall and Clare Hall respectively.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On Monday night was acted the Tragedy of *Dido*, written by John Rightwise, High Master of St Paul's School and a former Fellow of King's, in hexameters without any chorus. On Tuesday was acted *Ezechias*, written by Nicholas Udall, Master of Eton, a sacred drama founded on the Second Book of Kings. Both plays were in Latin and 'played by the King's College and the charges thereof by them borne'.

<sup>2</sup> 'The tragedy of Sophocles called *Ajax Flagellifer*.'

<sup>3</sup> 'The Duke of Norfolk accompanied Her Majesty out of the Town and then returned, entered Magdalene College and gave much money in the same, promising 40 lib. by year until they had built the quadrant of their College and further promised to endow the land for the increase of the same.'

<sup>4</sup> B.M. Add. MS. 1033, f. 95.

<sup>5</sup> George Wilde, son of Robert of Felmersham, Beds, son of Robert W., was admitted a pensioner at Caius, aged 18, on 3 October 1569. For this and other information relating to members of Cambridge University I am indebted to Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.

<sup>6</sup> William Creeke may have been admitted at Trinity Hall as a scholar on 21 July 1573; LL.B. 1580, Fellow of the College 1581-90. Robert Polley may have matriculated as a sizar from Clare Hall at Michaelmas 1568.

A number of the choristers were doubtless natives of Cambridge. Three of them have the same surnames as three of the lay clerks and may have been relatives of those clerks. If so, they may have lodged with their relations in one or other of the houses allotted to the use of the lay clerks, which stood on the east side of the empty site to the south of the Chapel.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand we know for a fact that, as will be seen later, three other choristers hailed from as far away as North Devon and one other from Bedfordshire.<sup>2</sup>

There is one, whom we know with absolute certainty to have been a native of Cambridge. This was Peter Scarlett, who came of a well-known family of printers, stationers and booksellers. The first of the family to set up in business at Cambridge was John Scarlett, who came from Leominster to Cambridge in 1551 and established himself in 'a lytell house at ye west end' of Great St Mary's Church.<sup>3</sup> He died in the following year and was succeeded in the family business by his brother Philip, who is mentioned in his will. Philip died intestate in 1582, when letters of administration of his estate were granted to his widow with Peter Scarlett as one of her bondsmen. Philip's son William then took over the business, which until his death in 1617 he carried on at premises on the site of what is now No. 1 Trinity Street in the occupation of Messrs Bowes and Bowes. Between the present occupants and William Scarlett a continuous succession of booksellers have had their premises there.<sup>4</sup>

Peter Scarlett, the ex-chorister, did not go into the family business, but eventually became an apothecary. At some stage in his career, he borrowed money from his former fellow chorister, John Cowell.<sup>5</sup> Possibly Cowell lent him the money when the time came for him to set up in business. As an apothecary, he continued to live in Great St Mary's Parish, where he was chosen as one of the Church Wardens in 1583, 1584 and 1587. In 1592 he subscribed twenty shillings to the fund for the erection of the present tower of that church and another fourteen shillings in 1594.<sup>6</sup> He was married and had a son, John, who took his Degrees from Pembroke Hall in 1607 and ultimately became a fellow of that College, and a daughter, Elizabeth,

<sup>1</sup> As to the position of this Court see Willis and Clark, *Architectural History of the University of Cambridge*, I, 555. The choristers in question were Robert Polley, Thomas Bar (? Beare) and Bab (? Baptist) Carlton. The lay clerks were Richard Polley, John Beare and John Carlton (B.M. Add MS. 1033, f. 95). Of these the last named matriculated as a sizar from King's in 1554.

<sup>2</sup> See note 5, p. 95, with respect to George Wilde.

<sup>3</sup> The present tower of Great St Mary's was not completed until 1608. The cost thereof was defrayed by public subscription.

<sup>4</sup> For the history of the Scarlett family as booksellers see G. J. Gray, *The Earlier Cambridge Stationers and Binders*, Bibl. Soc. (1904), pp. 66-7; *Cambridge Bookselling* (1925), pp. 27, 28; 'The Shops at the West End of Great St Mary's Church, Cambridge', *C.A.S. Proc.* N.S. XIII, 288; and Gray and Palmer, *Wills and Testamentary Documents of Printers, Binders and Stationers of Cambridge*, Bib. Soc. (1915), pp. 33, 63, 81, 82. The original premises occupied by John Scarlett were pulled down in about 1587 or 1588 and the materials purchased by Peter Scarlett, the ex-chorister (Foster, *The Churchwardens' Accounts of Great St Mary's Cambridge*).

<sup>5</sup> In his will Cowell gave the residue of the term of the lease of a house to Scarlett 'always provided that he shall not by benefit of Lawe whatsoever challenge the extinguishment of such debt as he doth owe me, but answer it as an ordinary debtor'.

<sup>6</sup> Foster, *op. cit.* It is interesting to note that John Cowell in 1595 also contributed twenty shillings for the like purpose.

who married his partner, John Crane.<sup>1</sup> Scarlett's son-in-law, John Crane, was to acquire a great reputation in his calling and 'was in much greater practice than any physician in the University'.<sup>2</sup> But his father-in-law does not appear to have obtained any remarkable reputation in his profession. For us the interest lies in his lifelong friendship with the most distinguished of all his former fellow choristers, John Cowell.<sup>3</sup>

As already said, three of the choristers of 1564 came from North Devon. They must have owed their places to the Provost, Philip Baker, who came from Barnstaple. One of these, another Philip Baker, who was born at Ilfracombe in about 1552, was almost certainly a near relative. He eventually went to Eton as a King's Scholar in 1566 and returned as a scholar to King's in 1569. He died in College and was buried in the Chapel early in 1571.

The other two Devonians were about the same age as Philip Baker. They both went to Eton in the same year as he did, but did not return to King's until a year later. One of these, Adam Robyns, was also born at Ilfracombe and was admitted a scholar at King's on 24 August 1570.

The third Devonian was John Cowell, the son of William Cowell, who owned an estate at Landkey Newlands, a village about two miles to the south-east of Barnstaple. His name appears in the list of choristers immediately below that of Robyns. It would appear that he and Robyns first arrived in Cambridge at one and the same time, whence Cowell proceeded to Eton in the same year as Robyns. Both were admitted as Scholars at King's College on the same day and both were elected as Fellows in the same year. Thereafter their ways parted. Robyns went into the Church and died on 14 April 1613 as Rector of Everdon, Northants.

John Cowell, on the other hand, acting on the advice of Richard Bancroft, the future Archbishop of Canterbury, took up the profession of law, taking his Doctor's degree therein in 1588.<sup>4</sup> In 1594 he was appointed Regius Professor of Civil Law and in 1598 became Master of Trinity Hall. It was probably due to his ability and learning that civil law, which had in general tended to languish during the earlier part of the century, began to revive at the end of the sixteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Here is not the place to go into detail concerning his legal treatises, but mention must be made of the last of them, which was to lead to Cowell's downfall. The book in question was called *The Interpreter: or Booke containing the Signification of Words*. It was printed by John Legate of Cambridge in 1607, and was dedicated to Bancroft, who had become Archbishop of Canterbury three years before. At the time of publication it received the *nihil obstat* of the Commissioners for the oversight of

<sup>1</sup> According to *Ely Diocesan Records*, p. 174, Peter Scarlett received licence in 1578 to marry Alice Beale of Newmarket. 'Alice' may be a mistake for 'Ann', which is the name given to his wife in John Cowell's will of 1611. It is of course possible that Scarlett was married twice or that Cowell misnamed her in his will.

<sup>2</sup> *Gentleman's Magazine*, LX, part I, pp. 509-10.

<sup>3</sup> In 1590 'Jacobus' (? James) Scarlett was a chorister at King's (Austen Leigh, *College Histories—King's College*, p. 65), but I have not been able to place him in the family tree.

<sup>4</sup> For a tradition regarding Cowell in his early days at King's see Appendix II.

<sup>5</sup> Bass Mullinger, *History of Cambridge University*, II, 425.



books. Examination of the book shows that the author must have spent many years of study in the compilation thereof. His intention was to show the common elements in the civil and the common law, but in several passages he had expressed himself in favour of a very pronounced idea of the extent of the royal prerogative.

For the time being all went well and, to judge from the number of copies thereof known to be extant at the present time, it would appear that sales were good. It was not until some two years later that the storm burst. The common law judges, headed by Sir Edward Coke, who was then Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, took great exception to certain passages therein dealing with the royal prerogative. Early in 1610 the House of Commons was moved to attack 'the exorbitant position therein held' and petitioned James I for leave 'to proceed by their authority against the said Cowell'. Rumour had it that 'it is thought they will go very near to hang him'.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this was what the author himself feared, when in great trepidation he came to London to answer the matter in the Parliament House.

The book was sent to the House of Lords and was eventually referred to the King in Council, where it was found to be on certain points 'repugnant to the fundamentall Lawes of the Realm'. One imagines that in his heart of hearts James would have been very desirous of giving the author his fullest possible support, but he had been long enough on the English throne to learn that self interest required him to trim his sails to the winds of change. He accordingly promised to have the book suppressed, but gave Council and Parliament to understand that, as regards the author, 'he would not have his person to be troubled or to incur any danger for the same (as the House seemed very desirous to proceed criminally against him)', and Parliament agreed to 'relent their poursuite therein'. Cowell himself had appeared before the King in Council. By this date he must have been verging on sixty years old and, as his later career shows, a very sick man. Fresh charges had been raised respecting the contents of the book in the Council Chamber, which evidently took the author by surprise. He seems to have put up a lame defence and pleaded for time in which to prepare his answer. He was then committed to the custody of an Alderman 'till he can better prepare himself for his justification in that behalf'.<sup>2</sup>

On 25 March 1610 a proclamation went forth announcing that the *Interpreter* was to be publicly burnt, because the author, 'being only a civilian by profession . . . hath fallen in many things to mistake and to deceive himself . . . speaking irreverently of the Common Law of England, and of the works of some of the most ancient and famous judges therein; it being a thing utterly unlawfull to speak or write against the law under which he liveth'.<sup>3</sup> I am disposed to think that the draftsman of this proclamation was Sir Edward Coke, who made a point of referring to the author of the *Interpreter* as 'Dr Cowheel'. At the time of issue of the Proclamation the Commissioners for the oversight of books received an official rap over the knuckles for allowing the book to be put into circulation.<sup>4</sup>

The offending book was reprinted unexpurgated in 1637. With the lapse of time,

<sup>1</sup> *Winwood Papers*, III, 125.

<sup>3</sup> *Notes and Queries* (3rd series), I, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 131, 137.

<sup>4</sup> *C.S.P. Domestic, 1603-10*, p. 594.

like any other authoritative legal text book, it required enlargement and amendment in the light of subsequent statutory law and later judicial decisions, but, as so edited, it was reprinted no less than five times between 1672 and 1729. In the circumstances the verdict of history must be that in 1610 John Cowell got a very raw deal and that Coke's pompous and vituperative vindictiveness did not add lustre to his reputation as a judge.

Though the *Interpreter* went up in flames at the end of March 1610 its author was still detained in custody. On 30 April 1610 Archbishop Bancroft wrote to Lord Salisbury praying for his release.<sup>1</sup> On 28 May 1611 he resigned from his Regius Professorship, in all probability under strong political pressure.

Cowell eventually returned to Cambridge sick in body and broken hearted in spirit. As his will shows, he was a hypersensitive man. After his handling by the Privy Council he felt that he owed the University some sort of 'a satisfaction for certain transgressions of mine towards the University'.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of October 1611 Cowell was suffering acute agonies from the stone and was told that his life could only be preserved by undergoing a surgical operation—a dangerous enough process in the case of much younger men and extremely likely to be fatal in the case of a person of his age. He accordingly began to draw up his will, 'being sick in body, but whole in mind and memory (the Lord be thanked for it)'. The original will is now in the custody of Trinity Hall. The wording thereof is clearly that of Cowell himself. So, it would appear, is the handwriting, which is in a clear, legible and firm hand. But the signature of the testator, which is attested by three of the Fellows of Trinity Hall, is in a much more shaky hand. The will is dated 8 October 1611. Three days later Cowell died whilst undergoing the operation of being cut for the stone.<sup>3</sup>

In that will Cowell made divers bequests to relatives of property which he had inherited in Devonshire. He also made a number of pecuniary and specific legacies. One of these is

To Mrs Alice Hinde for her great care of me in my sickness divers times over and above that poor consideration that she hath had from me, fifteen pounds, and her carriage home as decently as she was brought hither.

Amongst a number of charitable legacies there are:

To the poor prisoners of the Tolbooth 20 sh.—to those in the Castle 20 sh; to other poore people that have been honest Householders in Cambridge, or true labouring men 10 lib, if mine Executors shall finde in myne estate sufficient to perform.

<sup>1</sup> *C.S.P. Domestic, 1603-10*, p. 605.

<sup>2</sup> In his will Cowell gave £30 to the University Common Chest 'Towards the discharge of Dr Mowtelowes debt, as he was Burgess of the Parliament, and to no other use, except he be first satisfy'd, wch I would not have taken for a meere legacy, but a satisfaction of certain transgressions of mine towards the University'. Earlier in his will he bequeathed to Mowtelowe, 'mine ancient and loving Friend, my scarlett gowne and hood, hoping he will accept it, how poore a remembrance soever'. Henry Mowtelowe, like Cowell, proceeded from Eton to King's and ultimately was elected a Fellow of Trinity Hall. He was M.P. for Cambridge University from 1603 to 1611 and in all probability had taken an active part in procuring Cowell's release from custody.

<sup>3</sup> *Warren's Book* (ed. A. W. W. Dale), p. 276.

He left a number of books to Trinity Hall as well as a house in Cambridge 'towards perpetuall maintenance of a Logique lecture' and gave elaborate directions as to the manner in which such lecture was to be held.<sup>1</sup>

He likewise left a silver gilt bowl and a number of law books to King's College, 'sorrowing in my heart that mine estate serves not to leave some more memorable thankfulness to that worthy College, the especiallest place and meanes of my education'. As other passages in the will show, he was in those words recalling not only his undergraduate days, but also those much earlier days when he and Peter Scarlett were fellow choristers at the School attached to the College.

Members of the Scarlett family come in for frequent remembrance in the will. Elizabeth Crane, the married daughter of Peter Scarlett, receives all his plate not otherwise disposed of. Prudence Scarlett receives his best salt cellar. William Scarlett, the bookseller, is given a legacy of forty shillings.

Peter Scarlett, his former school fellow, is given the residue of the term of a lease of a house at Grantchester, subject to certain conditions<sup>2</sup> with a remainder to his wife Ann, who is to pay therefrom £5 yearly 'to Mr John Scarlett of Pembroke' who is to succeed to the benefit of the lease after he decease.

Finally, Cowell appointed as Executors of his will 'my beloved friends Mr Peter Scarlett and his son in law John Crane'.

Peter Scarlett did not long outlive his former school fellow. He was buried at Great St Mary's on 20 February 1612-13. John Crane lived until 1652. As already said he was to be a benefactor both to the Town and University of Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

At the time of his death almost half a century had elapsed since Cowell first made the acquaintance of Peter Scarlett in the King's College Choir. One can only guess at the reasons which led to the friendship between the two being so enduring and so intimate. It may be that, as a chorister, John Cowell was boarded out with the neighbouring Scarlett family. If not, it may well be that, when from time to time he had liberty to take his walks abroad, a lonely boy, who at a very early age had been taken from his family in far off Devonshire, found a 'home from home' in the Scarlett household. The two lived in days when friction between Town and Gown was constantly recurring, but of John Cowell let it be remembered that, even though he rose to high estate in the academic world, he never forgot the kindness that he had received as a boy from a family of townsmen in a more humble station in life.

In conclusion I should like, as must any person who attempts to write about the early history of King's College, to express my indebtedness to Mr John Saltmarsh for his assistance and advice in compiling this paper. That indebtedness calls for far fuller acknowledgement than can be given in mere footnotes. It would need acknowledgement on almost every page. In particular he has prevented me from falling into a number of pitfalls and helped me generously with his vast fund of information about the College and its buildings. If there are still any errors or inaccuracies in this paper, the fault rests with me and not with him.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I to this article.

<sup>2</sup> See note 5, p. 96.

<sup>3</sup> See *D.N.B. sub tit.* 'Crane, John'.

## APPENDIX I

## DR COWELL'S HOUSE IN CAMBRIDGE

I am indebted to Mr S. E. Abbott, Bursar of Trinity Hall, for enabling me to see John Cowell's original will and other documents relating to his house in Cambridge.

In his will Cowell describes the house as being 'my house in the occupation of Henery Preist, barber', and directs that it shall be used 'towards maintenance of a logique lecture'. Thereafter elaborate directions follow as to the duties of the lecturer. Succinctly, as said in Warren's Book (edited by A. W. W. Dale at p. 276), directions were given 'for a Logick Lecturer to read four times a week at least in term time, two hours every day from six of ye clock to eight in the morning'.

In a list of the properties of Trinity Hall dated 1719 there appears the following note:

'Query, which is the House? I take it to be the tenement now Banks, for in the account of 1612 there first appears a tenement in Great St Mary's in Trumpington Street rent £4 and the same year there appears a payment of £4 as a lecture Stipend founded by Dr Cowell.'

A statement to the like effect is repeated in a MS account of the estates belonging to College, which was compiled by the then Bursar, John Hancock Hall (Fellow, 1822-41), in 1834, who described the tenement as being in Trumpington Street.

The street, which branches off to the south from Bridge Street opposite to the Round Church and eventually leads to Trumpington, has been known by different names at different dates. The plans of Lyne (1574) and Braun (1575) call it the High Street. In Fuller's plan (1634) it has become Trumpington Street. In that of Custance (1798) the sector leading past St John's College as far as Trinity College Chapel is called St John's Lane. The remainder is still Trumpington Street.

In the plan in the *New Cambridge Guide* of 1821 it is still called Trumpington Street, but mention is therein made (at pp. 29-30) of 'the superb pile of building' which was shortly to be built and to be separated from the street 'by a magnificent colonnade'.

In all the above-mentioned plans the site of the present front court of King's is masked by a row of houses abutting on the street. In 1824 the building facing the Chapel and the screen and present front gateway began to be erected in accordance with plans drawn up by William Wilkins and the buildings abutting on the street were removed.

The plan in the *New Cambridge Guide* of 1868 shows the present frontage to King's College and divides what was once Trumpington Street into its present sectors of Trinity Street, King's Parade, and Trumpington Street, the last of which begins on the south side of Bene't Street.

At the time when J. H. Hall wrote his account of the properties of his College the new name of King's Parade was apparently not yet in vogue. The site of the house which he describes as being in Trumpington Street is that now called No. 20 King's Parade and is still the property of Trinity Hall.

'Henry Prist, my barber', received a legacy under the will of Dr Stephen Perse (d. 1615) and is also mentioned in the wills of other Cambridge dons. He naturally found Dr Cowell's house a suitable headquarters for carrying on business with his University patrons.

The Logic Lecture appears to have come to a very early end. The terms of its tenure which were imposed by Cowell were distinctly onerous and the remuneration very poor even for the spartan days of the early seventeenth century.

## APPENDIX II

TRADITION REGARDING JOHN COWELL DURING HIS  
EARLY DAYS AT KING'S

I am indebted to Mr John Saltmarsh for the following extract from the Senior Scholars' Book regarding John Cowell during his early days at King's College. It should be explained that the expression 'Dor' means leave to lie abed and to cut compulsory early morning chapel. Mr Saltmarsh informs me that the passage was still being copied out by the junior scholars and that in all probability the ritual was still being observed during the early days of Queen Victoria's reign. The entry appears under the date 7 January and reads as follows:

'The Senior Scholars visit after supper . . . for a Dor the 8th in memoriam Doctoris Cowell, because then and never else he overslept himself and missed early Prayers.'



*Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*  
Etching of John Favell, died 1804.

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## CONTENTS

<i>Officers and Council of the Society, 1962-63</i>	page vi
1963-64	ix
<i>Report of the Council for the Years 1961</i>	vii
1962	x
<i>Summary of Accounts for the Years 1961</i>	viii
1962	xi
<i>Laws of the Society</i>	xii
Bronze Age Pottery and Flints from Joist Fen, Lakenheath By GRACE, LADY BRISCOE, F.S.A.	i
A Flat Axe from Chatteris Fen, Cambs By JOHN M. COLES, PH.D., F.S.A.	5
Excavations at the War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1961-62 By D. A. WHITE	9
Excavations at the War Ditches, Cherry Hinton, 1949-51 By D. A. WHITE	30
Wool Street, Cambridgeshire By P. C. DEWHURST, M.I.C.E., M.I.MECH.E.	42
Eadnoth, First Abbot of Ramsey, and the Foundation of Chatteris and St Ives By CYRIL HART, M.A., F.R.HIST.S.	61
Excavations on a Medieval Site at Water Newton, in the County of Huntingdon in 1958 By CHARLES GREEN	68
King's College School in 1564 By SIR JOHN GRAY	89
The Favells of Petty Cury. A Cambridge Family in the Napoleonic Wars By BRUCE DICKINS, F.B.	103
Drainage by Windmills in the Waterbeach Level By R. L. HILLS	115
Archaeological Notes By GRACE BRISCOE, TIMOTHY POTTER, PATRICIA HUTCHINSON, MARTIN BIDDLE, and G. F. FINDLAY and HOWARD HART	123