NEW COLLEGE SCHOOL, OXFORD

A HISTORY

Matthew Jenkinson

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COVER IMAGE

The Grammar School at New College, nineteenth-century engraving showing the location of the School, 1386–1587 and 1780–*c.*1860.

TITLE PAGE IMAGE

Entrance to the area occupied by the School 1587–*c.* 1642.

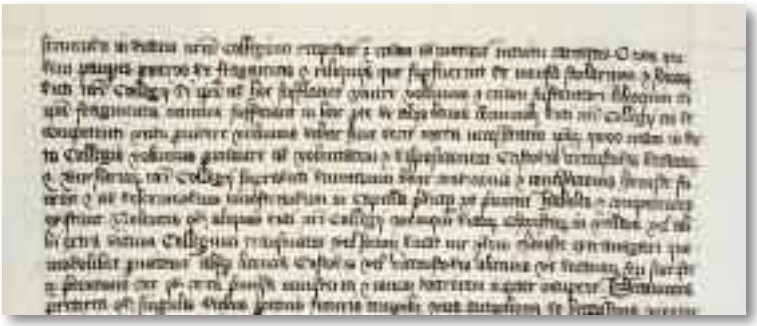
CONTENTS PAGE IMAGE

Founder's statutes relating to choristers, 1379–1400. (NC 9431)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the Warden and Fellows of New College for permission to use College archives and to reproduce material from them. Thanks are due to Robert Gullifer for his encouragement in getting this project started and, more importantly, completed. Jennifer Thorp, New College Archivist, has been invaluable in sourcing material and making it available. Jemma Kilkenny aided with the scanning of archives and designing a map of the School's wanderings. Elizabeth Hess has been assiduous in digitising some key archives and providing extra information about the medieval history of the School. I am also grateful to the many old boys who reminisced on paper, providing much valuable information and many useful and witty anecdotes.

A generous anonymous donation has supported the publication of this history.



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FOREWORD

To introduce a history of the oldest school in Oxford is a humbling task. I am at once conscious of the immense privilege and pride of leading such an institution but also of the sense that we are all 'passing through', hoping to leave the place in a better state than we found it and in good heart for the next generation to carry on the essential remit of the founder's intentions.

It is a dictum beloved of astute politicians that a nation which does not understand its past cannot chart its present nor future course. So, in a similar way, I hope this very readable history of the School will help us to understand the School we know and love today and how we got here. And, in the sense that history can repeat itself for good and for ill, it is perhaps a guide as to how we might plan for the future. It's a book not only for those in our immediate community, but also for all those interested in the story of education in England, in which New College School has played its small, but significant, part. Here you can find a medieval founder recognising that education transforms young lives; or read how places of learning had to cope with reformation, civil war and world war; or see how a choral foundation has evolved and adapted to take its place on the world stage and inspired high aspirations for all pupils.

These events have been played out in the context of the individual and collective personalities of pupils, teachers and Fellows who stretch out in the long line of the School's and College's history, many of whom are recalled in these pages in their own words and in this lively account. In a short history which seeks to give the reader a sense of the overall momentum of the School, it is impossible to include all the details that College and School archives reveal or others, that those who have lived through events chronicled here might wish had been included. But I believe you will appreciate the professional historian's eye for apt summary and analysis, supported by some telling verbal and pictorial examples. I am very grateful to Dr Jenkinson for his enthusiasm for this project and to all who have shown their interest and support in so many ways.

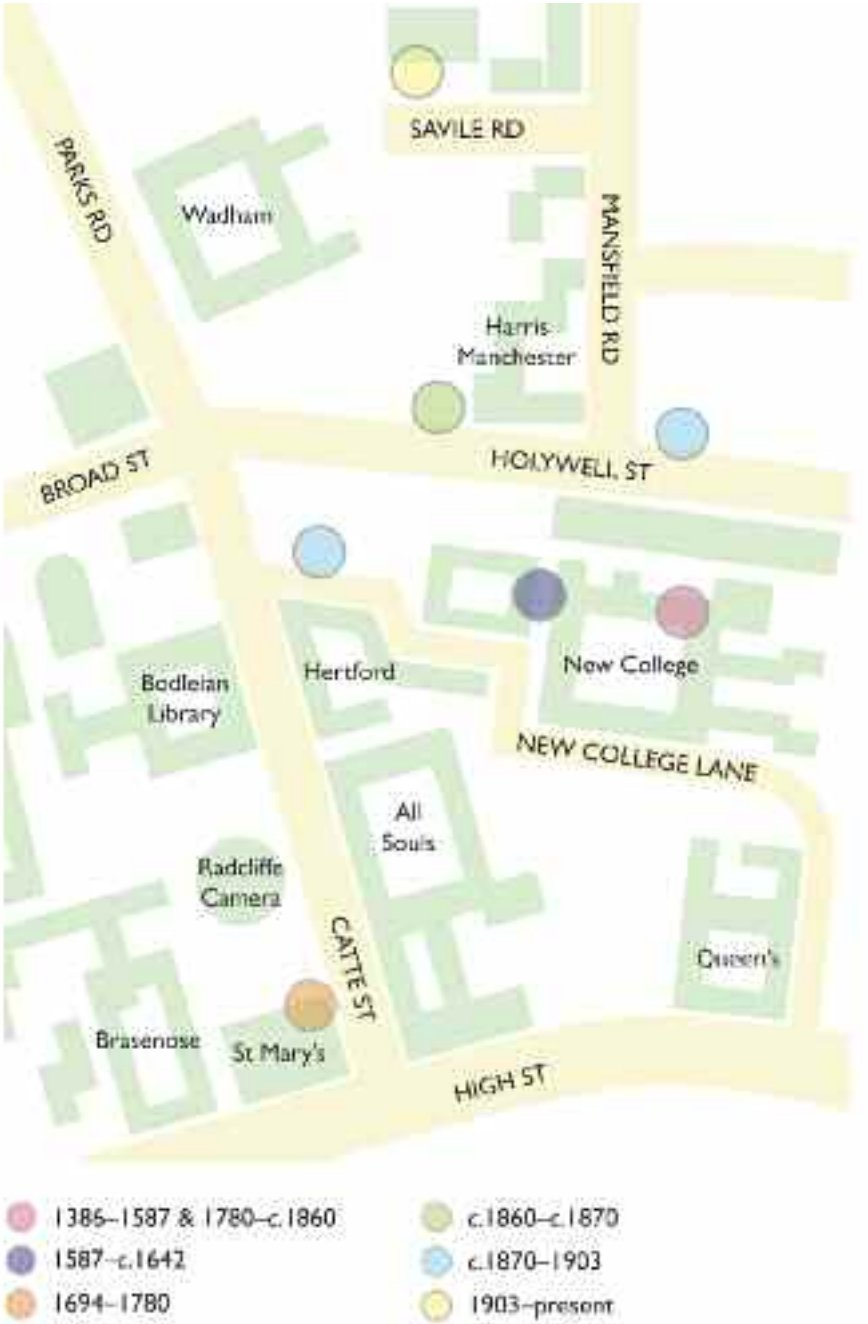
Opposite: The New College School chapel service, held weekly in New College.

And, of course, all of us who have passed through NCS, and those yet to come, will contribute to the ongoing history of the School in ways which can only be quantified in friendships made, interests developed and lives well-lived. Warden Fisher, at a school prizegiving in 1935, perhaps encapsulated the best of what NCS will always stand for when he observed that pupils came to school to learn to fit themselves for the service of their generation. It was not so much the actual things they learnt in school that were important but the way in which they addressed themselves to their duties and the spirit of interest and sympathy they showed with intellectual things.

Despite the inevitable ups and downs of many centuries of history, William of Wykeham would surely still endorse these sentiments and, I dare hope, recognise them in the NCS of the twenty-first century.

Robert Gullifer
Headmaster 2008–

Opposite: Map illustrating the different locations of New College School. During the civil war the School was moved to an unspecified 'common hall' in New College. It is unknown whether it returned to the cloisters after the war, before moving to St Mary's in 1694.


SAVILE RD
PARKS RD
Wadham
MANSFIELD RD
Harris Manchester
BROAD ST
HOLYWELL ST
Hertford
New College
Bodleian Library
NEW COLLEGE LANE
All Souls
Radcliffe Camera
CATTE ST
Queen's
Brasenose
St Mary's
HIGH ST
1385–1587 & 1780–c.1860
1587–c.1642
1694–1780
c.1860–c.1870
c.1870–1903
1903–present

FOUNDATIONS

> … there shall be sixteen poor and needy boys less than twelve years of age, of good standing and honest conversation, who are sufficiently competent in reading and singing to assist with serving, reading and singing in the … Chapel, to assist the Priests and Fellows in Holy Orders who celebrate in the Chapel, to serve at the other Divine Offices there, to prepare and arrange the readings for the Scholars and Fellows of the College, and also assist the College servants in Hall by attending the Fellows at table in a humble and honest manner as befits those who have been received and admitted to our College out of charity. We also ordain that these poor boys be fed from the leftovers of the food they have served to the scholars and fellows, if that be enough; otherwise, if there is not enough, we ordain that they be provided with sufficient food for their needs, paid for out of our College Chest.
>
> *Statutes of New College, Oxford*

New College School has long been seen as the 'little brother' among William of Wykeham's educational foundations. This may be because it is indeed full of little brothers. Winchester College, teaching boys between thirteen and eighteen, has become nationally famous for its academic prowess. New College, Oxford, has for centuries retained its high position in one of the world's finest universities, with common rooms containing bright undergraduates, postgraduates and eminent professors. In effect, New College School has existed as long as New College itself, only its focus has been on those at the beginning of their educational journey.

It is possible, if rather unlikely, for someone to enjoy the protection of William of Wykeham's educational patronage from the age of four to 104: joining Pre-Prep at New College School, entering the Prep School at seven, leaving to join Winchester College at thirteen, entering New College at eighteen, reading for a Master's at twenty-one, taking a doctorate, becoming a Junior Research Fellow, then full Fellow, before retiring as Emeritus Professor. But as with all educational journeys, the foundation years would

Opposite: The Warden of New College surrounded by members of the College, including early pupils of the School, from a manuscript compiled by Thomas Chaundler *c.* 1461–5. (NC MS 288, fol. 3v)

be crucial. It is those foundation years on which New College School has been focusing for the past six or seven centuries.

In the process, it has moved seven or eight times, and it has occupied some prime educational real estate at the heart of one of the most beautiful cities in Britain. Because of the boys' presence and role in New College, they have experienced first-hand the effects of some of the most dramatic moments in British history. They have also encountered some of the world's finest minds, met a few monarchs, and done their part in elevating the Choir of New College to a world-class position. Sadly, it is only relatively recently that schools in Britain have taken requisite care of their young charges; New College School was not always as comfortable an environment as it might have been. This history does not excuse that; quite the opposite. Suffice it to say that the experience of a New College School boy in the twenty-first century is a thousand times happier than that of his medieval forebears.

The statutes of New College, Oxford, demonstrate clearly the position of the earliest boys of what would become known as New College School. The College's founder, William of Wykeham, began his own education at a grammar school in Winchester, where his devotion to the cult of the Virgin Mary was inspired. He began his career working for William Edington, Bishop of Winchester, working his way into royal service by the mid-1350s.

The founder, William of Wykeham, Bishop of Winchester.

Wykeham had a talent for pursuing a dual path: a devotional one which culminated in his appointment as Bishop of Winchester in 1367, and a secular one which climaxed in his promotion to the chancellorship in the same year. While he later suffered a decline in his political fortunes, Wykeham retained sufficient royal favour to receive a royal patent for a college in Oxford, as well as plentiful wealth to pay for it. It is thought that in the decade before New College's foundation, William of Wykeham's income was the third highest in the country, behind those of Edward III and John of Gaunt, respectively.

'St Mary's College commonly the college of St Mary of Winchester' soon became known as 'New College', to distinguish it from Oriel

The chapel of New College.

College, another foundation dedicated to the Virgin Mary. New College was in essence to be a chantry, staffed by those who would pray for Wykeham's soul, and for the souls of other benefactors, expediting their route through purgatory. It would also provide an education to those who would go on to defend the faith. If the project failed, and Wykeham's college folded, the last remaining figures were to be the ten chaplains, three clerks and sixteen choristers praying for his soul.

The College's foundation stone was laid in March 1380 and its inhabitants, including the choristers, moved in six years later. These sixteen choristers were 'rescued' from some of the miseries of late-medieval poverty. They came from families who would not normally have access to formal education, and this first stage could conceivably lead to exposure to training in Latin, perhaps directing them towards a career in the Church or the civil service. Yet their experience was evidently not a happy one. New College was the first college that decreed that its scholars should attend Mass daily; there were seven canonical 'hours' and seven masses each day. As an integral part of the choir singing in these services, the choristers were required for a significant proportion of this worship. Originally, the music they sang would have been relatively simple plainsong, but it became more demanding within about a century of the College's foundation, with the introduction of polyphony. The choir also stood throughout the services – it was not until the early seventeenth century that the chapel was fully stalled.

In addition to their chapel duties, the boys also served in Hall – apparently in austere silence while a Junior Fellow read aloud – and made the

Fellows' beds. They also engaged in whichever studies they were offered. Initially chaplains taught the boys. Their first recorded 'Master' was Thomas Norys in 1390. An *informator choristarum* was appointed in 1394–5 to teach them singing and grammar, though it was not until 1461 that he became a permanent member of College staff. The boys were fed the leftovers of the food they had served to the Fellows. It was probably little consolation, but

New College from the tower.

The undercroft in New College: the location of the School 1386–1587 and 1780–*c.* 1860.

some of the figures to whom they were in servitude would go on to become major national figures: for example, Thomas Beckington went on to become Secretary to Henry VI (who visited the College in 1442–3), while Henry Chichele and William Warham became archbishops of Canterbury.

It is possible that on at least one day of the year, the boys' lot would have improved considerably. In 1400 William of Wykeham decreed that a boy bishop should be chosen in both his Winchester and Oxford foundations. It is unclear exactly how this was played out in New College. The boy bishop would probably have been a chorister, and this inversion of authority would have occurred on 28 December, the Feast of the Holy Innocents. He would have been bedecked in a cope and a mitre, possibly made of baudekin – ornate embroidered material featuring gold webbing and silk. Other better-documented examples of boy bishops feature them preaching from the pulpit, carrying out services in full, and looking forward to a feast with their peers.

A more certain tradition was that of the visit to St Bartholomew's Hospital near Oxford on Holy Thursday. The boys would get up in the middle of the night, singing an anthem on the College tower, before proceeding to St Bartholomew's Hospital chapel, where they would sing prayers and anthems. After giving money and receiving refreshment, the choir would process to a well in a nearby grove, their way being strewn with flowers, where they would sing again. Antony Wood, writing about the ceremony in the seventeenth century, noted that 'New College men made a choice of Holy Thursday every year because Magdalene men and the rabble of the town came on May Day to their disturbance.' This tradition had died out by the eighteenth century, though it was revived on Ascension Day 2009.

New Colledge June 22. 1649

Brent / Standby jun } Fell

Wannerton / Read / Okeley } Chap

Colman, Organist
Clark Sexton
Knollis Clerk
Popper und Butler

Smith Manciple
Smith Porter
Shaw Groome

This is a true Copie
Ra: Austen Register

Non-submitters expelled by the Comittee for non submission.

Robert Grent
John Lamphire
James Ashbourne
John Gerrett
Rich. Shatt
Thomas Buckridge [redacted]
Henry Beeston
Nich. Standby
George Clarke
John Coles
Tho. Grent
Robert Mathew
John Hutton
Will. Brown Absent.

Harrison travellinge ye absent
Harrismede
Lowe } for not giving in Answer to ye Visitt. expelled by ye Comittee
Jo. Grent
Tho. Harris
Jones

Edmund Harmes
Edw: Standby } Expelled for non submission
Rich. Wills

Chaplains expeld
Longman
Shirlocke
Williamson
Eyeat

Remaining of ye old Chap.
Gadsby
Wannerton
Brooke
Okley
Bettam
Read

Chap. put in
Swinocke
Newton
Brunswick
Hitchcocke

Servants expelled ...
Holloway Steward
Jon. Noble ... Butler
William ...
Tho. Toms ...
Barth. Finch ...
Edw. Stubs Gardner

Choristers
Pond
Kinnier
Hall
Stevens
Stubs
Finch
Spinser
Mallard
Drury
Whitfield
Wanlett
Spooner

New Colledge men removed by the visitors

Goodman / Buckley } Theol Bac.

Bibye / Beesly } Mr Art

Hobbs / Bisset } Art Mr

Ashworth L. Bac.

Rowlandson / Lamphire / Alexander / Baynham / Durrow / Hawkins / Robinson / Marshall } Art Bac.

Gillingham Art Bac.

Holloway Civ

Turpin / Blake / Withers jun. / Bowman } Soc. ...

REFORMATION, CIVIL WAR AND RESTORATION

> AD 1605.
> [King James I and his entourage] went to New College where they were entertained with a royal feast, and incomparable music.
>
> *Anthony Wood*

The boys of New College School were peculiarly well placed to encounter the deep fissures that emerged in British society in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The choristers' role in daily public devotion ensured that they could not remain immune to the seismic changes wrought by the Reformation. Then, in the following century, Charles I's decision to make Oxford his capital meant that NCS boys got to witness first-hand the results of the English Civil War.

Henry VIII's decision to break the English Church away from Rome necessitated the first fundamental changes to the way New College worshipped since its foundation. The Reformation process was by no means straightforward and the nation's religious life changed course according to the will of successive monarchs. Visitations sent by these monarchs aimed to ensure that the chapel of New College, at the heart of one of England's most influential educational establishments, was abiding by the necessary devotional changes. The Fellows skilfully navigated a course between adherence to their personal consciences and outward displays of obedience to royal will.

In 1535 Henry VIII's commissioner, Richard Layton, visited the university. He was accompanied by one of Thomas Cromwell's agents, John ap Rice. They told Cromwell that the works of the medieval philosopher-theologian John Duns Scotus had been thrown away, and that they blew in the wind in New College. Under Edward VI, the 1549 and 1552 Books of Common Prayer were purchased for use in the chapel, images were removed and the high altar was replaced with a simple table, but the Fellows insisted they could not afford to replace stained glass with plain. With the removal of purgatory from the official national theology, masses for the dead were

Opposite: The Great Register Book (1649), including the names of pupils in the mid-seventeenth century. (NC 9655)

A 1530s woodcarving of an NCS pupil above the buttery door in College.

redundant. During the visitation of 1549, the boys were still being taught in the undercroft, which was divided into 'small miserable chambers'. This visitation even recommended that the School be closed down. It was not, and the boys would have witnessed New College's reversion to something akin to a Catholic powerhouse during the reign of 'Bloody' Queen Mary between 1553 and 1558.

Another visitation in 1566, eight years into Elizabeth I's reign, examined the choristers' ability to sing. Only three of the sixteen could, and it was clear that no one had really attempted to teach them. The boys' Master, John Serrel, decided to run away, instead of explaining why his charges could not really carry out the duty expected of them. This damning indictment of the boys' education might have inspired the College to provide them in succeeding decades with Masters of greater stability and higher quality: Anthony Gudgeon BCL between 1571 and 1577, Edmund Hackluyt BA between 1578 and 1587 and Simon Vincent MA between 1588 and 1592. However, it is not entirely clear whether the Fellows appointed as Masters of the School had that much of an interest in educating children. If the evidence of the early Masters (who would later be called 'Headmasters') is accurate and complete, we can ascertain that the tenures of the early incumbents of that office varied wildly, reflecting different levels of interest in, and capacity for, the role. The average length of tenure of those between the School's foundation and the civil war was about six and a half years. Thirteen of the thirty-five pre-civil war Masters only stayed for a year or two.

Robert Horne, Bishop of Winchester, who directed the Elizabethan visitation through his commissary, George Ackworth, was a leading reforming Protestant who had been in exile in Zurich, Frankfurt and Strasburg during the reign of Mary I. He decreed that the psalms in New College were to be sung before and after sermons, and that the choristers

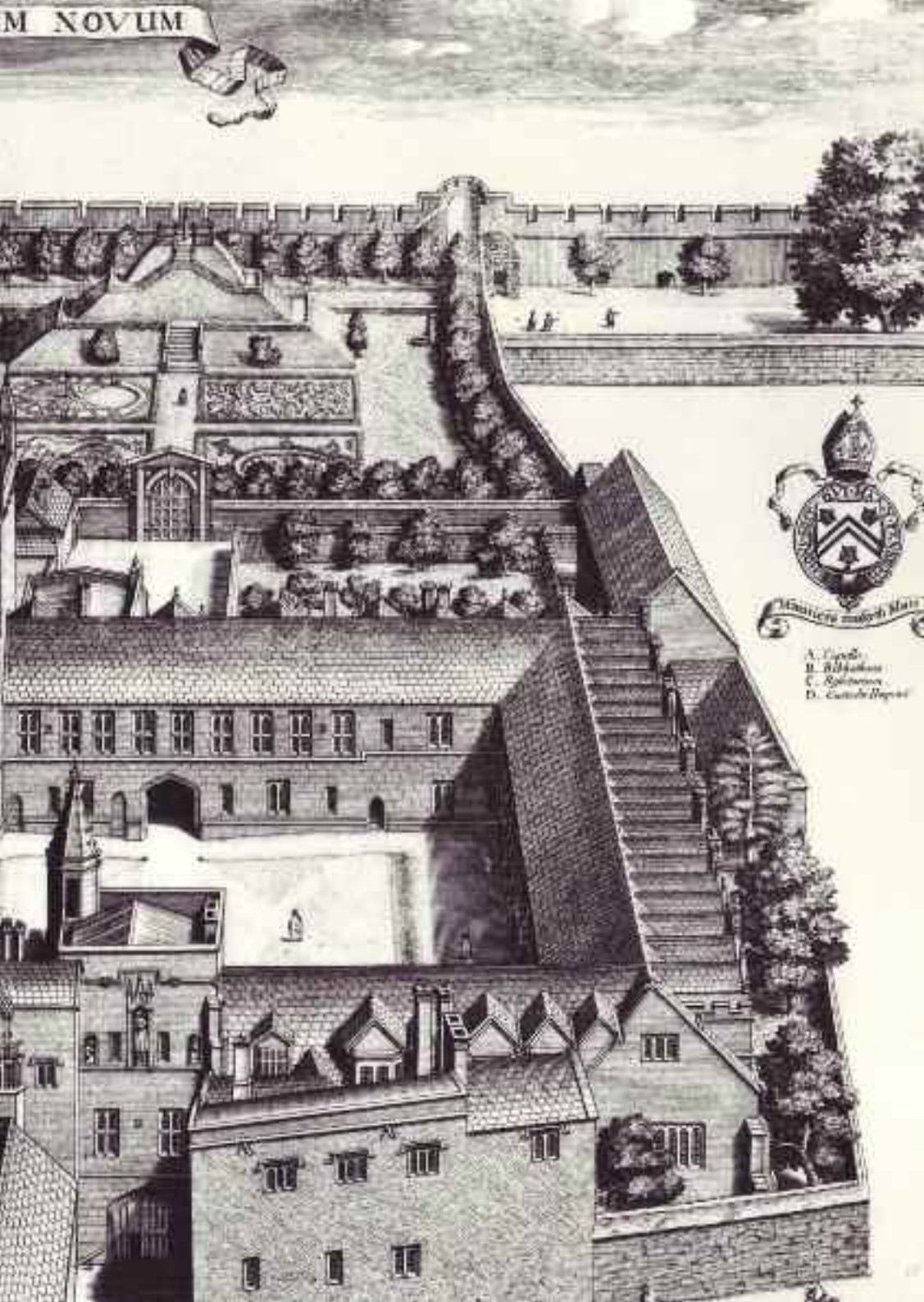
should spend most of their studies learning to sing plainsong, so they could hold the plainchant-like melodies characteristic of contemporary Protestant music. It was in the final quarter of Elizabeth's reign, around 1587, that the School was moved from the undercroft to a space between the antechapel and the cloisters.

The boys sang for Elizabeth's successor, James I, when he visited the College in 1605. Also during James's reign the choristers were given new sleeping quarters in attics in the roof behind the College hall and kitchen, and they came under the tutelage of a talented young Master who would go on to contribute to debates on the future of the nation's religion at an increasingly tumultuous time. Christopher Tesdale was Master of New College School (1617–8) before going on to become Canon of Wells and a member of the Westminster Assembly of Divines (1643–9), the body that sat during the civil wars of the 1640s to discuss the restructuring of the Church of England.

Charles I arrived in Oxford on 29 October 1642, making the city his headquarters and affording it a suddenly heightened importance in the military strategy of the king's parliamentarian enemies. The boys of New College School got to witness the effects of war, as their education was disrupted by the university's trained bands carrying out drill in the College's front quadrangle, and the royalists' decision to turn the cloisters and tower into a powder magazine. Firstly, this necessitated the School's removal away

The location of the School 1587–*c.* 1642.


COLLEGIU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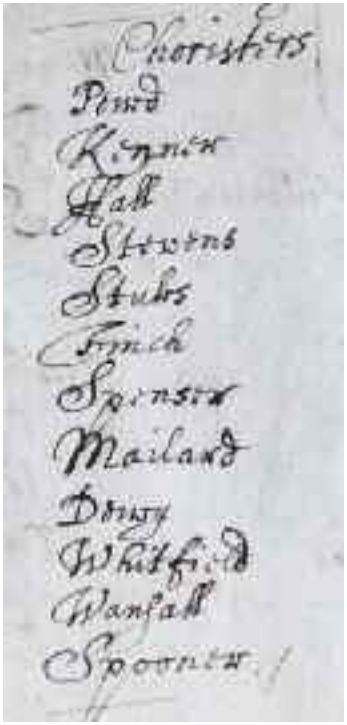


The choristers expelled by Parliamentary Commissioners in 1649 after the civil war. (NC 9655)

from the cloisters and into the dark and unpleasant east end of the 'common hall' of the College, which had previously been used for other College servants.

Secondly, and rather predictably, the boys were distracted. Anthony Wood noted that 'some of them were so besotted with the training and activities and gayities therein of some young scholars, as being a longing condition to be one of the traine, that they could never be brought to their books again'. It is possible that the number of boys in the School increased at this time, because families resident in Oxford would not have been inclined to send their children to schools outside the city during a civil war. The city walls were kept fairly watertight anyway, with the impending threat of Parliamentary forces, most notably those of the Earl of Essex and Edmund Waller in 1644 and Thomas Fairfax in 1645.

Oxford surrendered to these forces in June 1646. On 29 May the following year the boys, along with the choir's clerks, cocked a snook at the Parliamentary soldiers guarding the king's powder magazine in College by lighting a bonfire on the garden mound to celebrate the birthday of the Prince of Wales. In this very same month, however, Parliament appointed Visitors to the University of Oxford, for the 'Better Regulating and Reformation' of that institution. Self-governing Oxford colleges have never liked their autonomy being infringed by outside forces, not least by those with such a potentially sinister brief. The Fellows of New College would not agree to the stipulation that the Visitors had to approve any new Warden of the College. They provoked the ire of the Visitors, six months after the bonfire party, when they elected Henry Stringer as Warden without the Visitors' approval. In June 1648, then, the Visitors began to expel members of the College who would not yield to their authority. The boys of NCS were not spared the punishment: twelve were expelled exactly a year later.

Following the execution of Charles I on 30 January 1649, a series of constitutional experiments were put in place in an attempt to fill the void left by the abolished monarchy. None of these experiments proved satisfactory. Oliver Cromwell died in 1658; his son and successor as Lord Protector, Richard, showed little interest in (or capacity for) the role. Negotiations began to bring Charles II back to England and to restore the monarchy. Also restored in 1660 was the Church of England in its pre-eminent position in the religious life of the nation. The chapel of New College had not totally succumbed to the Puritan tenor of the nation's leaders in the 1650s, but now the full choral service could be properly reinstated. We know that the

Previous pages: Seventeenth-century engraving of New College by Loggan. The School was located between the chapel and the cloisters until the civil war.

choristers had not totally disappeared during this period, despite the 1649 expulsions, because tragically one of them died falling from a mulberry tree in the College gardens in August 1655.

While the choristers still served on Fellows in Hall, the late seventeenth century witnessed some real improvements in the lot of NCS boys and their School. Previously, choristers had been fed leftovers from Hall. This had changed by 1670, when the bursar's accounts demonstrate that they were now given a kitchen allowance, even if this did involve working most – if not all – days of the year.

The Choristers' Allowances

15 Choristers	…	094 – 05 – 00
ye 16th Chorister	…	002 – 16 – 04

The Choristers are in Number Sixteen. Fifteen of them have a weekly allowance from ye Kitchen. The Sixteenth Chorister as waiting up ye Bursars, hath no Commons from ye Kitchen, hee hath only – 01 – 09 as other Choristers upon ye Butterie Booke.

Each Chorister of ye ffifteen is allowed weekly

In ye Kitchen	…	00 – 01 – 04
In ye Butterie Booke	…	00 – 01 – 09
In ye whole	…	00 – 03 – 01

Out of wch Sume vis 03s-1d is a deduction bee made of ye ffounder's Allowance, viz 8d by ye weeke unto Each Chorister. Ye remaining Sume, by only ye Statute of Provision, will bee … 00 – 02 – 05.

A large donation from Dame Francis Freake of Hannington, Wiltshire, also underlined that choristerships were a way into education for children who would not normally have had such an opportunity. She gave £100 in 1663 for the College to build a new organ. But the Warden, in return, promised Dame Francis that he would admit to New College 'six children of any poor men, such as in charity she would please to choose to be Choristers of the College'.

Two years later, when the philosopher Thomas Hobbes told John Aubrey that he was considering endowing a 'free school' in Malmesbury, New College School was a model that was brought up by Aubrey as one of the 'great schooles' founded before the Reformation, attached to a cloistered community. This was noted in Aubrey's *Brief Lives*, but sadly Hobbes's desired project never came to fruition; allegedly the philosopher's enemies among Queen Catherine of Braganza's chaplains undermined it. The reputation of the School was clearly improving and it would do so even further – and rapidly – within a couple of decades, when the boys came under the stewardship of one of the most notable figures in early modern English schooling.

6)   For Choristers Places ——

× Wallond for a place for his Son, has a great many Children &c —— × a very bad Boy

Good Son of Wm Good of Buckingham, Applyed to at the late Progress in Bucks —— × gone away

Coxeds Son Brewer in St Tolls ×

× Townsend of Elkerton for a Place &c × Dr. Piesty of Trinity Coll. Sollicits &c Octob. the 1st 1761. ——

Starks keeps a Coffee house the Corner of the Turl &c for his Nephew a well behaved & has a pretty Voice &c ×

Dr Harrison of C.C.C. for a Place learnt his Name &c.–

For a Choristers Place —— ~~[illegible]~~ Q. Mr Subb.

Stratford of Cheltnam Glost. Com. for a Chor Place for ye. year as he is 11 years old. ——

Digby Smith for a Place aetat 11 ——

Mrs West of Lechlade for a Place for her Son aet. 9.

Bennet aet. 9 [illegible] on of Mrs Tonque &c. ——

J. Parsons of Slinden Com. Sussex Aet 8 for a Place —— Mr. Peckham Sollicitor —— [illegible]

Corbet, recommended by Mr J. Banks, admitted

Smith recommended by Mr Priest admitted

Booth recommended by Mr Gauntlet [illegible]

Walters —— —— Admitted.

Collins recommended by Mr Loggen [illegible]

Ray —— —— [illegible]

Humfrey —— [illegible]

[illegible] Jeffrey aged 10. by Dr. Bearcr [illegible]

BADGER AND ST MARY'S

> He [James Badger] had an excellent Memory and good Judgement and a compleat Method of Teaching.
>
> *Bodleian MS Rawl. J Vol. 4 (fol. 234)*

By the end of the seventeenth century, the recipients of Dame Francis's patronage were not the only ones interested in pursuing an education at New College School. This period marked a boom in numbers, almost all because of one man. James Badger was Master of NCS between 1684 and 1717. He was an extraordinary teacher and parents were clearly desperate to send their sons to him. Badger used his own funds – aided, no doubt, by the fees he could charge the new cohort of parents – to have a Song Room, in which the boys could practise, and a vestry refitted. With this new accommodation, the School could take in more pupils. Before long, Badger had over a hundred

Opposite: Warden Purnell's notebook (1740–64) including notes on potential pupils in the 1760s. (NC 976, p. 6)

Left: The Congregation House of St Mary's (left), the location of NCS 1694–1780. The boys would have witnessed the construction of the Radcliffe Camera (centre), one of England's iconic eighteenth-century buildings.

Great Register Book: list of choristers 1725–7. (NC 9655)

boys under his aegis; well over the sixteen originally stipulated at the School's foundation. According to a manuscript in the Bodleian Library, he became 'one of ye most famous Schoolmasters in England. Several Heads and Fellows of Colleges in this University had been his Scholars'.

Badger was calm, tireless, and apparently had a talent for spotting a boy's temperament and adapting his teaching to their particular needs. He also published his own work, for example *Synopsis communium locorum praecipiae ad Mores spectantium ex Patris Latinis* (1709). Despite the improvements made to the vestry and Song Room, though, the School was soon pressed for space. On 18 April 1694, then, it was once again on the move. Pupils were taught in the Old Congregation House at St Mary's Church, High Street, also known as the University Church. The boys were now in close proximity to the spot where Thomas Cranmer prayed prior to his execution and martyrdom on nearby Broad Street in 1556. They would also have witnessed first-hand, between 1737 and 1747, the construction of

Graffiti engraved in the cloisters by chorister William Hicks in 1738.

James Gibbs's spectacular Radcliffe Camera, and around this time they might have overheard John Wesley preaching next door. It was also at the Old Congregation House that Badger was reminded daily of a personal tragedy. His wife, Sara, died in 1702, just seven years into their marriage. She was buried at St Mary's, and for fifteen years Badger taught his pupils just feet away from the tomb of his loved one.

One pupil who was taught at the Old Congregation House has left us clear visual evidence of his time at New College. William Hicks engraved his name in one of the window arches in the north-east corner of the College cloisters. This Hicks character was also kind enough to engrave the date on which he was carrying out his graffiti: 10 December 1738 – a Sunday! The College minute books include a note by Warden Coxed, written in 1732, that a William Hicks had been 'made Chorister *loco* Edwards'. We know, also, that he was one of the 117 boys recorded on the School roll of 1737–8. Hicks remained in the choir, eventually becoming Head Chorister, until 1739. This was despite the fact that he had quite literally and obviously left his mark on the College the previous year, and on a day when he should have been thinking more about his contributions to divine service rather than scratching his name into the cloisters.

Thirty years after Hicks left the choir, we have perhaps the first evidence that the College was becoming more concerned that potential choristers were only admitted if they were suited to the role. Warden Purnell insisted in 1769 that a potential chorister, Robins, would only be accepted 'provided it can be well certified to me he is

Above: The vaulted ceiling of the Old Congregation House of St Mary's.

Right: List of NCS pupils in the 1730s. (NC 2709)

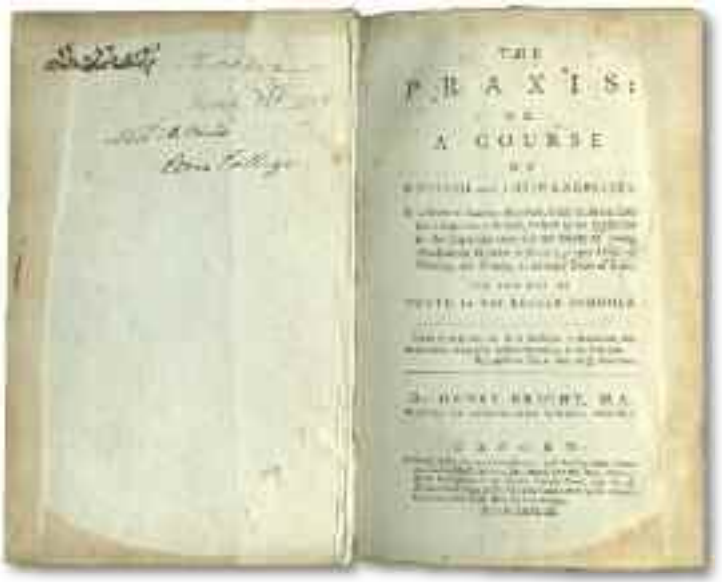
Greek verse, published in Oxford in 1773, probably by Henry Bright for use in lessons at New College School. (NC 9485)

likely to be useful in the Choir'. There is some confusion, however, as to the fate of NCS in the 1770s. It has been suggested that the School closed in 1771, because the choristers moved to be educated in New College. In actuality, it was in 1780 that the School returned from the Old Congregation House, back to the College undercroft, where it had previously been located until the sixteenth century. (The remnants of the old schoolroom in the cloisters had been removed the previous year.) 'Closed' would be an inappropriate term, though, as so long as there were choristers, and a Master to teach them, there was a School.

It is possible that this move occurred at the behest of the organist, Philip Hayes, who made other changes to the boys' accommodation arrangements. When the NCS boys moved to the Old Congregation House at St Mary's,

the room which had been provided for them by James Badger was taken over by the chaplains as their common room. Hayes reclaimed this room – the Song Room – and it was refitted to make it suitable for the College Organist to teach the boys how to sing. Organist from 1776 to 1797, Hayes was notable for two things. The first was his size – he is thought to have been

'Sede's Busbiana': a satire on classical grammar in the NCS archives, dating from *c.* 1802, just after the tenure of Henry Bright, NCS Headmaster and prominent classical pedagogue.


THE
PRAXIS:
OR,
A COURSE

Frontispiece of Henry Bright's *The Praxis: Or, A Course of English and Latin Exercises* (1783), a textbook for use in schools around the country.

around twenty stone – which prompted comparisons to Shakespeare's Sir John Falstaff. The second was his considerable musical talent, which led to him also becoming a Gentleman of the Chapel Royal, St James's, as well as accruing a number of other musical posts in Oxford.

Hayes's time as Organist coincided almost exactly with Henry Bright's tenure as Headmaster. At NCS between 1774 and 1794, Bright published *Praxis* in 1783; it went on to become one of the most widely used Latin and English textbooks in schools. The copy in the NCS archives, for example, was used at Eton College. In addition to music and Latin, the boys were also taught Greek, grammar, writing and arithmetic. This was clearly a high-point in the School's history, with the boys' academic and musical education being delivered by good-quality teachers. The reputation of the choristers – or at least one chorister – was also high at this time. John Byng, a visitor to Oxford in 1781, sought out New College evensong because he had heard great things about 'a famous singing boy' among the choristers. His hopes were dashed, though, by a 'very ill sung' anthem, and a service 'idly perform'd, by such persons as I should suppose had never learnt to sing or read'. We might dwell on the reputation rather than the perceived actuality here.

Eighteenth-century pupils clearly had a penchant for leaving their mark, because William Hicks was not the only one to have left us evidence of his presence in College. James Philip Hewlett, a chorister from Hayes's penultimate year as Organist, left the following note stuffed into one of the carved angels in Chapel:

> When this you find, recall me to your mind. James Philip Hewlett, Subwarden's chorister, April 26 1796 … Yeats just gone out of chapel, making as if he was ill, to go to Botleigh with Miss Watson. Mr Pritchett reads prayers. Mr Lardner is now reading the second lesson. Mr Jenks read the first. Slatter shams a bad Eye because he did not know the English of the theme and could not do it. A whole holiday yesterday being St Mark. Only the Subwarden of the Seniors at Prayers.

It is unclear quite how Hicks and Hewlett were able to leave their notes without someone noticing, but it is reassuring to see that their relatively

A carved angel in the stalls in New College Chapel, similar to the one into which James Philip Hewlett stuffed his note on 26 April 1796.

Left: New College Chapel in the nineteenth century, looking west.

Right: New College Chapel in the nineteenth century, looking east.

uncomfortable living conditions had not dampened their mischievous spirits. We might wonder what satirical responses they made to their Organist between 1830 and 1860, the one-legged Stephen Elvey.

In a curious coincidence, Philip Hayes auditioned a very young George Valentine Cox, who would go on to become Headmaster of NCS between

New College Hall (1858).

The range of buildings on Holywell Street, including numbers 26 and 28, where the School resided c.1860–*c.* 1870.

1807 and 1857. At this time an extra duty was given to two of the younger choristers. They would call the College to dinner, walking between the College gateway and the kitchen, all the time chanting – with prolonged vowels – 'Temp … us … est … vo … can … di … man … ger, … O … seign … eurs'. This tradition went into abeyance before long, and it was deemed more suitable to call Fellows to dinner with a bell. The choristers had another duty in College, though: scurrying around the staircases dropping off programmes of the day's music in Chapel, so the Fellows knew what was coming up and, presumably, so they could decide whether they would attend.

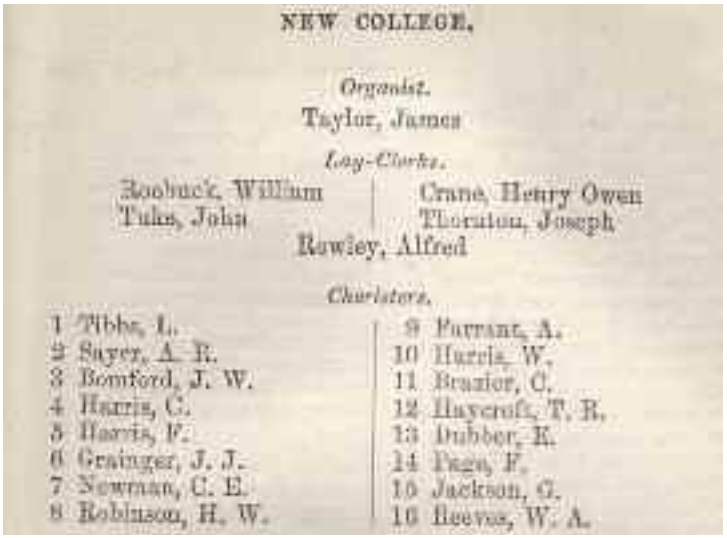
The School remained in the undercroft until after G.V. Cox's tenure, the early 1860s, when it moved to occupy the premises of 26 and 28 Holywell Street, a stone's throw from the Holywell Music Room, the oldest custom-built concert hall in Europe. E.W. Reeves, who was a boarder in 26 and 28 Holywell between 1861 and 1863, noted that there was a playground behind the two houses, where the boys could play hockey, while they were taken to play cricket at a ground in the University Parks. Reeves would have been a boarder under Headmaster Reverend William Tuckwell. Tuckwell, later known as the 'radical parson', became an enthusiastic Christian Socialist and a keen advocate of the redistribution of wealth and land.

THE CARTERS

What a paradise it seemed to us who first stained its pristine walls!

Philip Hilton

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, the boarders moved down the road into 19 Holywell Street, while 6 New College Lane became the schoolhouse. There can have been few more stunning and intellectually stimulating locations for a school: nestled next to the Bodleian Library, the Radcliffe Camera and Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre. At this time, and indeed for seventy-six years, the Carter family dominated the School. George Carter was Headmaster between 1866 and March 1912, before passing on the role to his son, Francis ('Frannie'), who was Head between 1912 and 1932. Between them they navigated some dramatic changes in the



NEW COLLEGE.

Organist.

Taylor, James

Lay-Clerks.

Boobuck, William
Tuke, John
Crane, Henry Owen
Thornton, Joseph
Rowley, Alfred

Choristers.

1 Tibbs, L.
2 Sayer, A. R.
3 Bomford, J. W.
4 Harris, C.
5 Harris, F.
6 Grainger, J. J.
7 Newman, C. E.
8 Robinson, H. W.
9 Farrant, A.
10 Harris, W.
11 Brazier, C.
12 Haycroft, T. R.
13 Dubber, K.
14 Page, F.
15 Jackson, G.
16 Reeves, W. A.

Opposite:
Francis Carter, Headmaster 1912–32.

Left: Chorister list in the Oxford University Calendar (1866).

Left: 19 Holywell Street: the boarding house *c.* 1870–1903, while the boys were taught at 6 New College Lane.
Right: 6 New College Lane: the schoolhouse built *c.* 1870 and the location of the School until 1903.
Below: NCS has occupied some prime educational real estate. 6 New College Lane is on the right, a short distance from the Bodleian Library and Christopher Wren's Sheldonian Theatre.

A view of New College Lane, looking towards the chapel, c. 1912, before the construction of the Bridge of Sighs. (NC 9297)

educational world, as New College School became less a preserve at the strategic whim of an individual Headmaster, and more cognizant of fitting in with other educational institutions. Put simply, the School and College had to consider far more carefully what happened to the boys after they left NCS. The Carters would also experience the pain of seeing twenty-one of the boys they had taught dying all too young in the First World War.

George Carter always wore clerical grey, which matched his hair, moustache and beard. He was apparently an excellent teacher, and he wrote books on Greek, Latin, Euclid, history and geography to help his charges. The choristers' duties were eased slightly in the first year of his headship, when the canticles were removed from the chapel's choral matins; this also meant that the choristers' timetable could be made to fit more comfortably with that of their peers. Francis Carter was taller than his father, spoke with a resonant voice, and was a talented sportsman.

The ground plan of 6 New College Lane. (NC 623)

Memoirs from this period tell us a great deal about life at the School. Philip Hilton was at NCS between 1900 and 1906, during which time the School finally found a permanent home. He recalls that the boarders lived in a tall painted house, which had beyond it a one-storey building divided into

The cover of the earliest extant programme of an 'Entertainment' at NCS, dating from 1870.

three sections: one for day-to-day existence (homework, music practice, leisure time), a dormitory for senior boys, and a 'stable' for storing trunks and cleaning shoes. There were about twenty-four pupils resident with the Carter family, with whom dining and bathroom facilities were shared.

In 1903, land on Savile Road was purchased from Merton College and a proper school was built. This offered relative, though not complete, comfort for the boys. Life was made simpler by the fact that they now lived and studied under one roof. The bathrooms provided hot and cold water, sanitation was better, and there was simply more room for everyone. There were now about fifty-five to sixty-five pupils: twenty-two New College choristers; three or four extra boarders; and thirty to forty day boys, who included the choristers of Queen's College. The creation of a playground allowed the boys to run around outside and to indulge their passion for hockey.

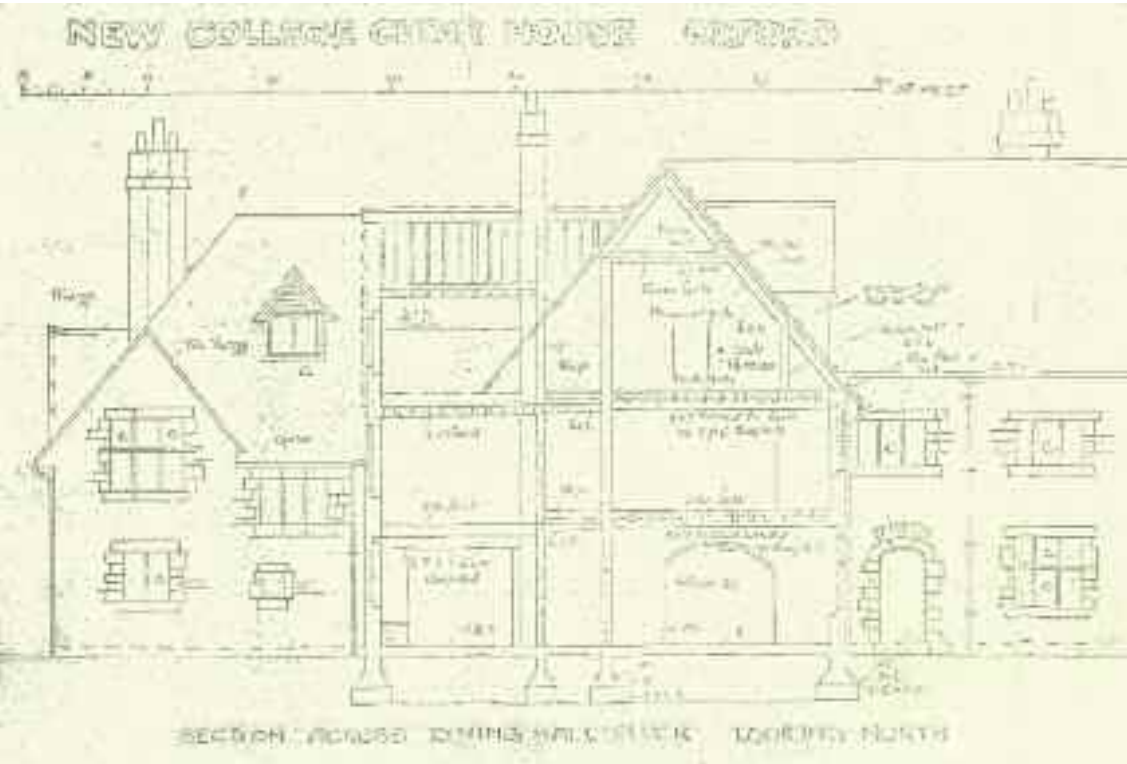
Nonetheless, life was still strenuous. The day started at 7.15 a.m. and boys had to be in Chapel for an 8 a.m. service. The Wednesday and Friday litany was so demanding, and the boys' stomachs so empty, that it was not unknown for one or two pupils to pass out. After a small breakfast, lessons began at 9 a.m., finishing at 11.50 (the teaching was described as 'not at all bad'). Then choristers would return to College for a forty-five-minute

The earliest surviving school photograph, taken in 1887.

practice, followed by lunch and then there was sport until 3 p.m. After this, academic lessons resumed, finishing at 4.30 p.m., in time for evensong at 5. Tea at 6 p.m. would be followed by two hours of homework and piano practice, then games until 8.30. It was 'lights out' at 9.

The boys still dined with the Carter family, though the experience does not appear to have been a pleasant one. George Carter would march up and down the rows of boys, discussing their work and making sure that they were eating their meal. The fundamental problem was that the food was virtually inedible, including Mrs Carter's infamous salt beef, and soup made from the water in which the beef was boiled. On one occasion George Carter tried to stab a piece of over-cooked liver, only for it to fly across the room, while the boys watched with howls of laughter. Hilton worked out a way of surreptitiously flicking his food off his plate, into his handkerchief, before disposing of it in the River Cherwell at a later opportunity. Breakfast and tea were not much better: bread with rancid margarine or dripping. W. D. Barker, a pupil between 1894 and 1899, divulges that the boys used to place an empty envelope in their breast-pocket of their 'Eton' coat, into which they would slip inedible food. They would then dispose of it in a gulley outside. This worked fine until Francis Carter discovered a large pile of rotting food while carrying out some repairs near the said gulley.

As with most teachers, George Carter had certain favoured sayings that



Elevation of the Savile Road building (architects Nicholson and Corlette), the location of the School from 1903.

George Carter (seated left) with his family outside the Savile Road building.

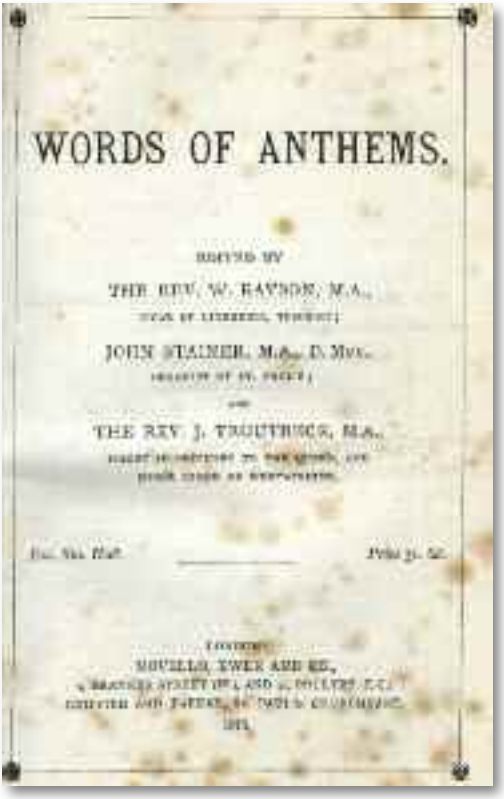
were quickly picked up by the boys. He often delivered these while putting the ends of his moustache into his mouth. 'Every night my prayer to God is that He will give me some good boys, and this is the stuff He gives me to work upon', he would say at points of particular exasperation. If somebody addressed him as 'Mr Carter', he would retort that 'Mr Carter is the fishmonger in the High Street'. If a boy were caught sitting on his hands (the only way to keep them warm), Carter would rejoinder, 'Take your hands from that undignified position, guv'nor.' If they laughed at his jokes, Carter would reply 'That'll do; I want no more exhibition of feeling, guv'nors.' If someone were caught with a pen or pencil in his mouth, the response would come, 'when pigs go about with straws in their mouths, it's a sign of rain.' Those boys who were misbehaving would be told, 'I'll go and tell Mrs Carter about you.' He would walk towards his study, enter it, take a swig of whisky, return to his class and say, 'Mrs Carter is justly indignant with you.'

Indeed, George Carter's methods of punishment were, unusually for the time, verbal and somewhat whimsical. If he set lines, the boys knew they could get away without doing them. While he walked around his class with a cane, it is unclear how often he used it. One recorded instance of the cane being used came as a result of a boy calling the Headmaster a 'damn fool'. Francis Carter was more of a disciplinarian, making up for his father's relative benevolence. It has been argued that Francis was fair in his punishments, some of which were constructive. Hilton ended up writing out a dozen French irregular verbs and their parts sixty-four times, for example, becoming something of an expert on the subject. However, Francis wielded the cane more readily than his father. Indeed, after his retirement, Carter Junior was presented with a silver bowl, paid for by subscriptions from old boys. One of them sent in a shilling 'for each of the whackings' he had received from his old Headmaster (the total number of shillings is unknown). It might be considered bad historical practice to transfer our contemporary values to our forebears. But there are some immutable rights and values that we should uphold, and which should have been upheld a century ago. Sometimes they were not.

J. H. Alden recalls in his memoirs what life was like as a New College chorister in 1910. He remembers Hugh (later Sir Hugh) Allen 'playfully chasing' the boys around the Song Room, causing a riot as he flourished a cane. As College Organist between 1901 and 1918, Allen straddled both Carter tenures. He was an energetic and enthusiastic perfectionist, with a wicked sense of humour. Alden's audition was sufficient to demonstrate Allen's eye for choristers with a bit of chutzpah and his ability to greet situations with the requisite level of drollness. Alden sang a hymn tune in one key, while Allen played it on the piano in a different key. As Allen played the last chord, he played the incorrect note that Alden was singing. Allen told Alden he was wrong. Alden told Allen he was wrong. Alden was in. On another occasion, it is reported, the choir was singing Purcell's 'Thy Word is a Lantern', when a not particularly talented alto sang the line, 'The ungodly have laid a snare for me'. Allen barked from the organ loft, 'Wish to hell he'd got you!' The choristers got their own back, though, pointing out the piquancy of the hymn 'Dark and cheerless is the morn unaccompanied by Thee', when Allen once again failed to appear at an 8 a.m. matins service.

The School was inspected towards the end of 1912, at the transition point between Carters Senior and Junior. The report, written by an E. T. Campagnac, made for mixed reading. It began well enough, with the observation that the new building was in 'a quiet and pleasant place', the food was 'simple and wholesome' (perhaps the inspector was less discerning than the boys), and the pupils were 'well mannered and happy'. The inspector was also impressed by the 'affectionate care' the Headmaster gave to NCS.

Yet the organisation of the boys' education left something – many things – to be desired. Forms I and II were taught together, as were Forms IV and V. Form III itself was divided for some subjects. So, in effect, each master was teaching two lessons at once – which was fine as long as the half of the cohort he was not teaching got on with their work without making any demands. More fundamentally, the quality of the teaching was not particularly good.


WORDS OF ANTHEMS.

THE REV. W. HAYDN, M.A.,

JOHN STAINER, M.A., D. Mus.,

THE REV. J. TROUTBECK, M.A.,

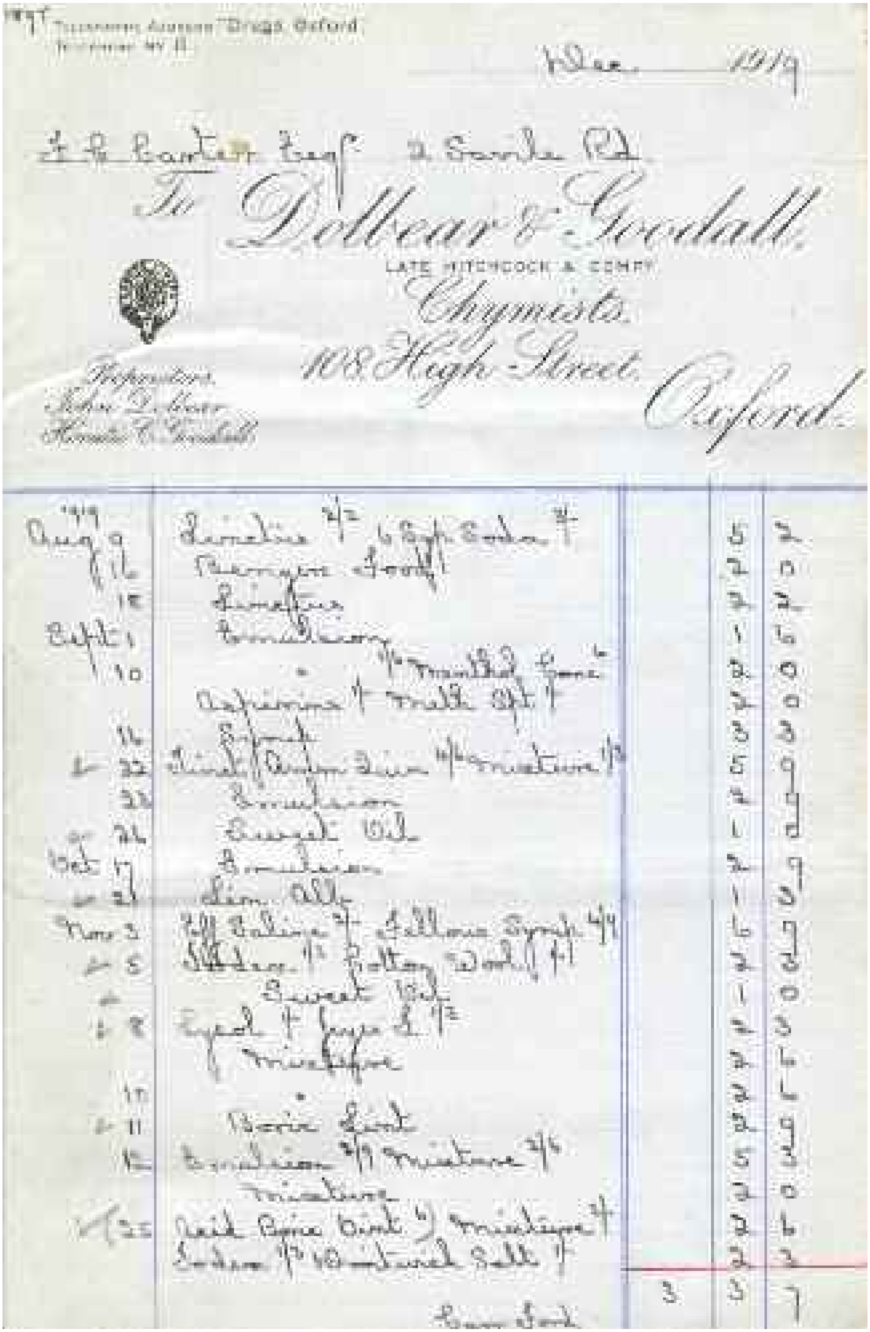
The frontispiece of *Words of Anthems* (1875) used by the boys in New College Chapel in the late nineteenth century.

Above: Francis Carter with the school.

Right: The cricket team in the early twentieth century.

This was, in part, because the pay was not particularly good and it was difficult to attract talented staff. The inspector pointed out, somewhat sniffily, that the Headmaster had received only a 'pass' degree. The Second Master, who was about to leave anyway, did not possess the patience requisite for teaching small boys. The Junior Master was an undergraduate who, while not without teaching talent, lacked experience and passed some of his work on to another student. The inspector's overall assessment of the teaching and learning was damning: 'I heard no lessons which I could call good', while the boys' work 'reached at best a very moderate standard'.

The stained glass in the Savile Road dining hall includes the School motto, shared with William of Wykeham himself and his other educational foundations, 'Manners Makyth Man'. It is unusual in that it is in the vernacular, when such mottoes in the fourteenth century usually would have been in French or Latin.


Dec. 1919

To Dolbear & Goodall.

LATE HITCHCOCK & COMPY

Chymists.

108 High Street, Oxford.

Proprietors.
John Dolbear
Horatio C. Goodall

3 3 7

Aside from the inherent quality of the personnel, Campagnac pointed out a number of fundamental problems that would need to be solved if the School were to improve. Too much importance was placed, he claimed, on preparing the boys for external examinations. Choir aside, the School lacked any clear guiding principles for its work, aside from these examinations. The teaching staff had no free periods in which they could prepare for future lessons, while the Headmaster had no time to supervise his staff. The latter's time was also taken up dealing with a byzantine financial system.

Furthermore, the age range of boys in the School was too great to be dealt with effectively, at least by second-division teachers. The youngest boys were about eight, but many of the oldest stayed on beyond the point at which their voices changed, reaching sixteen and even older. For these older boys, or for bright younger boys, the School's curriculum did not reach beyond 'Vth Form' work. So these pupils merely marked time or went backwards. At sixty-three pupils, it was eleven over the Governors' desired maximum limit, and the accommodation simply was not large enough.

The School was trying to fuse two disparate educational systems, and it was impairing both. It was trying to be both a grammar school – minus a VIth Form, but with some boys of that age – and a choir school. The choristers had to sing morning and evening services, attend an extra hour of practice each day, as well as learn piano and theory. They simply could not combine these demands with a satisfactory 'grammar school' education. Overall, Campagnac noted, 'The work of the choir takes precedence of the school without dominating it, the work of the school is subordinated to that of the choir without being fully adjusted to it'. The Headmaster was, therefore, submitting himself to a job 'which no man could fulfil'.

The inspector had some suggestions. Firstly, the teaching staff should be improved, ideally both in quality and numbers. Secondly, external examinations should no longer be the sole end of the School, but rather things towards which to be worked in a more imaginative curriculum. Thirdly, no boys should stay in the School beyond the age of sixteen – scholarships might be offered to talented pupils, so they could study at another institution for two years before heading to university. Fourthly, the curriculum should be tied more closely to the boys' musical education, bringing together the two previously divergent educational demands. Fifthly, the boys should do more dancing.

A chemists' receipt from 1919, demonstrating the methods used to keep the boys healthy.

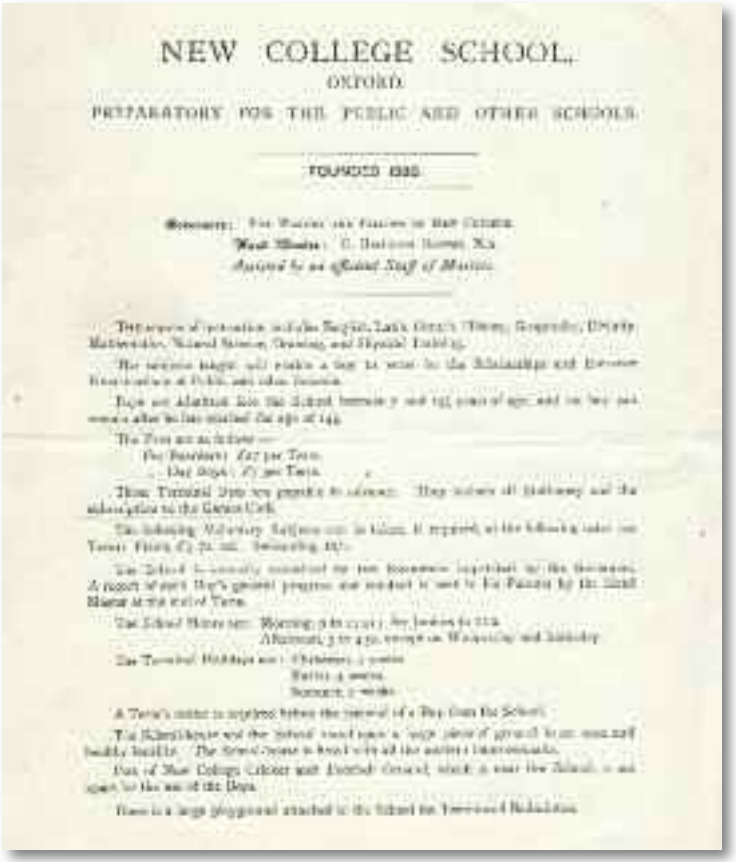
HAMILTON BAYNES AND WAR

> The only thing that really matters is the individual advance made by each boy in intellectual things, in character and soul. Those things are probably beyond our assessment and certainly beyond our expression.
>
> *C. Hamilton Baynes*

There were 131 applications for the post of Headmaster when Francis Carter stood down. The Carter family had faced some very real challenges and they had managed to navigate many of them by treating the School as an extension of their domestic unit. In essence, the School had become proprietorial. A fresh set of eyes was required, though, to start hauling the School out of the nineteenth century. Colin Hamilton Baynes, a placid and urbane administrator, was chosen to give this new perspective. He arrived in 1932 and he had four years to implement his vision before the School was once again inspected. Despite – or perhaps because of – Francis Carter's rigid system of punishment, Hamilton Baynes inherited a School where discipline was lax. Or, rather, where the boys talked after lights out, which was perceived as being lax discipline. The new Headmaster began his tenure by following the methods of his predecessor, though it is reassuring to read that instances of corporal punishment diminished rather rapidly as Hamilton Baynes's headship progressed.

Some changes had been made to the School in the wake of the 1912 report, but not all of the suggestions were adopted. Furthermore, by the time of the 1936 inspection, even more problems were identified. The number of pupils had been reduced to fifty-nine, which should have slightly eased the pressure on the 1903 building. (Though by 1938 the roll had gone up again to seventy-seven – 'Too many!' as the Headmaster put it – then to ninety-two in 1943.) There were no NCS boys over the age of fifteen. The inspector also seemed impressed by New College's governance of the School. 'There is nothing suggestive of Olympian remoteness or inaccessibility', he said – though it might be noted that few inspectors would have felt confident

Opposite: Colin Hamilton Baynes, Headmaster 1932–55.



NEW COLLEGE SCHOOL,

OXFORD.

PREPARATORY FOR THE PUBLIC AND OTHER SCHOOLS.

FOUNDED 1895.

The NCS prospectus issued during the headship of Colin Hamilton Baynes. The foundation date is incorrect: the College foundation stone was laid in 1380, subsequent to the founding statues of 1379.

taking on the intellectual and social might of an early- to mid-twentieth-century Senior Common Room.

The inspector reserved his criticisms for the internal organisation of the School itself. It was, he claimed, 'deranged'. Despite Campagnac's observations in 1912, the Headmaster was still distracted by unnecessarily complex financial arrangements; he still had no time to scrutinise the contributions of his colleagues. Also each class still contained boys of a variety of ages. Boys in a single class were sometimes three or four years apart. Such an arrangement compromised the masters' ability to teach effectively, and to maintain morale and discipline.

Matters were not helped by the physical arrangement of the School, which was odd considering that the building was only thirty-three years old, and it had been purpose-built. Rooms had been arranged such that supervision was difficult, while the top floor was being used as a hostel for

A postcard showing the Savile Road dining hall.

'adolescent boys' from Magdalen College School, who had previously been pupils at NCS and were kept on domestically for their boarding fees. This disrupted NCS's daily routines, because the MCS boys would follow their own timetable, with little regard for the space or peace of their younger peers. Furthermore, there was little the Headmaster could do about this, because the MCS boys no longer held allegiance to their Prep School or its leader. This situation also made it virtually impossible for the Headmaster to employ young female staff. Even if they were employed, they could not occupy the staff accommodation on the top floor, in such close proximity to the wayward influences of the MCS boarders.

A postcard showing a dormitory in the Savile Road building.

A Slight Misunderstanding: a programme from a school play prior to the Second World War. Five of the actors would sacrifice their lives in that war.

Yet the inspector was enthusiastic about other areas of the School. Colin Hamilton Baynes possessed 'great technical skill as a teacher', alongside 'considerable administrative and business capacity'. He had himself before the inspection expressed reservations about the MCS boarders who had 'passed beyond his control' living in the Savile Road building. Hamilton Baynes was, for his time, progressive, 'cutting himself adrift from traditional practice and looking at problems with a fresh, untrammelled, unbiased and independent mind'. The inspector was clearly enthusiastic about Hamilton Baynes's approach to English teaching, the aim of which was to 'cultivate in the boys the power of expression and some love of literature'. The music was 'magnificent' and in this respect NCS stood 'supreme and unique amongst contemporary institutions'. The inspector concluded that the School was 'efficient', but there was clearly a hint that NCS had the location and resources to be much more – it just needed recalibration of the internal organisation such that it was not 'deranged', and such that the Headmaster and his wife got a day off once in a while.

Within two to three years, the inspection paled into relative insignificance as the spectre of another world war loomed. In June 1938 the boys were shown around the RAF station at Bicester. On 29 September 1938 the School closed for the day, so day boys could go into the city with their parents to be fitted for gas respirators. The School issued gas masks to boarders. The cellar of the Principal of Mansfield College's lodgings was designated as the School's air-raid shelter. In 1940 a lady from Aberystwyth wrote to Hamilton Baynes, offering two places for boys during the summer, who would otherwise be residing in a more dangerous location. It seems that a good number of boys were sent by their parents to be evacuated abroad, as the Headmaster issued a rather exasperated circular in July 1940, pointing out that it was 'a little disconcerting' when boys disappeared from the School without notice.

The teaching staff was also affected, as young men were called up for service. J. H. Hall became a captain in the York and Lancaster Regiment, while J. A. Austin and E. C. Fry became captains in the Royal Artillery. They were replaced, however, and school life went on with some attempts at stability – the continuation of the Holiday Reading Prizes, a trip to John

Gielgud's production of *Macbeth*, daily evensong (at a slightly earlier time due to the blackout) and Common Entrance examinations. *The NCS Front*, written by Fry before he left for the war and published in 1939, put the war in the context of the School's history:

> The very earth which Messrs. Birchall, Godwin, Loxley, Mallett & Co. Ltd. so patriotically shoveled into sandbags in September to shield the windows of the air-raid shelter in Mansfield College was originally piled there to strengthen the Royalist lines round the city during the civil war. It may once have stood the shock of a cavalry charge by Cromwell's Ironsides. Now the same soil might have to serve as a protection against a very different kind of raid, but in her time Oxford has endured many sieges, and she is ready to endure many more. New College was founded in the middle of a war with France that lasted for a hundred years: no wonder that it is not disturbed when the Government says that it is prepared for the present conflict to last for three. This School has lived on through six centuries of intermittent fighting. Old Boys of ours have served in battles from Agincourt to Ypres. The Wykehamist Foundations have seen too much of History to get excited about headlines an inch high.
>
> Perhaps this atmosphere of ordered tradition helps to explain why NCS has taken all this unpleasantness on the Continent so very calmly. Other schools may have been hastily transplanted to the Outer Hebrides or Land's End: NCS is still firmly anchored to its normal moorings in Savile Road. The Choir of St Paul's has been transplanted 200 miles to the West of Cornwall: syrens or no syrens, the Choir of New College is still at its post singing daily Evensong without fail. Other Seats of Learning may have been commandeered by the Ministry for Co-ordinating the Correlation of Co-operation or the Women's Auxiliary Earthquake Service, but at this establishment it is still 'Business as usual.' Here in Oxford every other educational institution seems to be playing a confused game of General Post, in which College A moves into College B, and College B moves into College C, and College C moves into College A, and everybody congratulates themselves on the efficiency of democratic organisation. Everywhere far-sighted officials are busily converting Schools and Colleges into Hospitals and Offices, and Hospitals and Offices into Schools and Colleges. Meanwhile, uncommandeered, unevacuated,

Hamilton Baynes kept a logbook during his headship. This page, 13 May 1942, outlines how school life went on as normally as possible, with a visit to John Gielgud's *Macbeth*, bicycle rides, swimming and fundraising for the Overseas League Empire Day Tobacco Fund!

uncamouflaged, unbarraged, unsandbagged, unhonoured and unsung, New College School pursues the even tenor of its way.

Of course we have had our troubles. If Germany had not invaded Poland, there would have been no black-out, and then Chapel would still be at 6.15, and then the Choir could still get plenty of football, and then we might win a few matches. Such is the grim chain of Cause and Effect in History. Perhaps if Adolf Hitler were still a harmless house-painter, Mr Hall would still be with us, and so we should all feel very much happier. But on the whole we have, like the rival High Commands on the West Front, nothing whatever to report. It is a case of All Quiet On This Front Too. If we were to issue our own War Communique it would read something like this:-

Our numbers are still at full strength. Our general routine is exactly the same as usual. We have had one or two air-raid drills, the Day Boys come to School with their gasmasks, and the Boarders have to black the house out every evening, but these are the only signs you would notice that there is any important difference between last term and this one. We shall be carrying on straight with work, games, and Choir duties, and with all other regular activities.'

That is all. Nothing dramatic, nothing sensational, nothing heroic. We in this minute sector of a very safe area of the Home Front cannot do very much towards winning the War. But all we can do is go on functioning smoothly and steadily as a School, which, after all, is what we are designed to be. War or no war, somebody has got to go on teaching, and somebody has got to go on learning. In his first message to the public early in September, the Prime Minister said, 'Whatever happens, the work of the nation must go on.' It may not be a pleasing thought in Form IIIb, but that stern command applies not only to factories, mines, farms and dockyards, it even applies to Mental Arithmetic and Latin Grammar.

'The Position of Schools in the Event of an Invasion' (1941), issued to Hamilton Baynes and preserved in his logbook.

Nonetheless, the School could not ignore the dangerous international situation, not least when Hamilton Baynes received, towards the end of 1941, a missive from the Board of Education about 'The Position of Schools in the Event of an Invasion'. The Magdalen boarders were put in charge of blacking out the windows at night; they also mounted guard over Magdalen Bridge and joined the Headmaster and his wife in some farm-

work. The boys would also have noticed a few chorister refugees from Westminster Abbey, who arrived at New College in 1941 when their own school temporarily closed. Indeed, it was the Choir of New College that was selected to broadcast services regularly (alternating with that of King's College, Cambridge) throughout the war. It was also at this time that the choristers got to meet Ralph Vaughan Williams who, in earlier days, had once brought the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius to visit New College.

Every little helped. The School magazine was reduced in size because of the need 'for national economy in paper'; the prizegiving prizes were Savings Stamps. In 1943, the choristers performed in a concert to help raise money for university students suffering from war conditions abroad, while the School pavilion was used for RAF signal training. Hamilton Baynes offered the boys some other practical advice about how they could, in their own small way, help the war effort. They were expected to clean their accommodation themselves, for a start, but it was also suggested that the boys did not wear socks in summer. 'I wondered how my going sockless was going to bring the Third Reich crashing to its knees', remembers John Platts, 'but was too timid to ask.' In October 1945, NCS boys got to mark the conclusion to the war in a particularly special way. The choristers sang for General Eisenhower and Field Marshal Montgomery at the university's Encaenia reception in Hall, while the school community watched from the quad outside.

Another threat to the way NCS operated was posed during the war years, but this time from Whitehall and Westminster. In July 1942, the President of the Board of Education appointed a twenty-man Committee on Public Schools to advise the government on the role of private schools in the British educational system. Lord Fleming, formerly Scotland's Solicitor-General, chaired the committee. Their report was completed in June 1944, the same

NCS during the Second World War. Note the girl in the front row: Hamilton Baynes's niece who stayed in Oxford during the war. NCS went co-educational – albeit briefly.

A School clothing list from the 1940s.

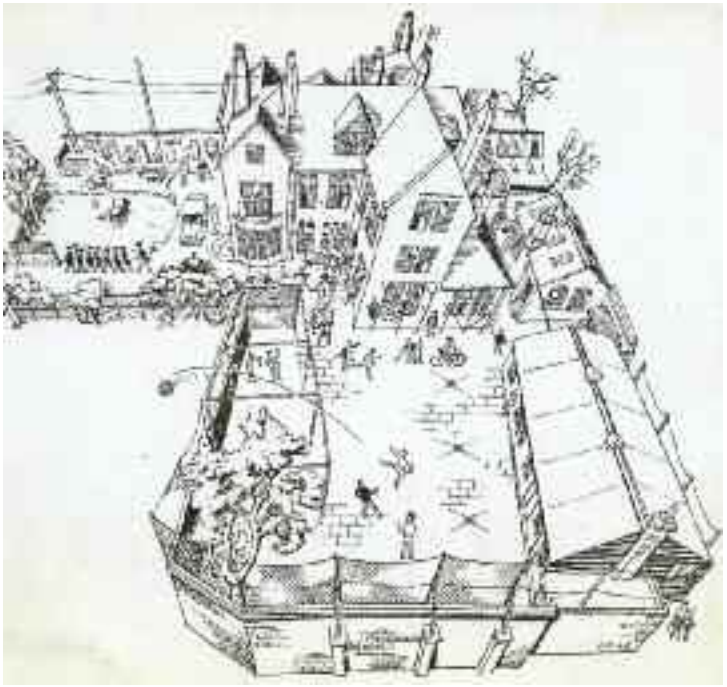
LIST OF CLOTHES.

time that the bill that would become the 1944 Education Act was going through Parliament. There are two responses to it deposited in the NCS archives. In essence, there were concerns that boys in a school like NCS would be 'required to comply in all respects with an ordinary School curriculum', which potentially would lead to the lowering of musical standards or the abandonment of the musical tradition altogether. The benefits for all bestowed by its particular ethos were outlined: concentration, accuracy, an aesthetic sensibility 'directed to the best standards', stimulation of the imagination, being part of a common enterprise, working towards excellence, responsibility and leadership.

The Fleming Report recommended that bursaries to Public Schools should only be offered to pupils who had been educated for at least two years

in a maintained primary school. This clearly discriminated against boys in a school like NCS, many of whom came from families in need of bursaries, and who wished to be at the School for the majority of their primary schooling. Also, a very real problem arose from the fact that many choristers gave their best contributions to the choir between the ages of thirteen and fourteen-and-a-half, or even slightly older. The transition of these boys into other educational systems at this middling age was a clear difficulty for all concerned. It was hoped that the educational system as a whole would remain sufficiently flexible to take account of boys transitioning between its different schools and/or sectors at an unusual age.

It was not long before a test case arose concerning the transition from New College School to a senior school. In 1948 a fourteen-year-old pupil at NCS won a place and music exhibition at Repton. It was suggested to the Headmaster of Repton that, since this boy's voice had not yet 'changed' and he was still very useful musically, he should stay at NCS for another year. The Headmaster of Repton was having none of this and insisted that the boy's education would be disrupted if this postponement were to occur. New College backed down, but it would be a while before the leaving-point of a school like NCS was fixed at the end of 'Year 8'.



A cartoon of the Savile Road site. The 'hut' to the right of the playground would disappear during the headship of Alan Butterworth.

BUTTERWORTH AND *THE HOBBIT*

> I ring C.B. with the news that he has scored an 'A' in every Common Entrance paper. 'Only an 'A', Sir?' is his reply.
>
> *Alan Butterworth*

In 1947 it was decided that Hamilton Baynes and his wife would no longer live in the School. Both wartime duties and peacetime changes had proved too burdensome; administering a not fully rationalized school in a not fully rationalized education system was taking its toll. At this time, there were 106 boys in the School (of whom twenty-seven were called John). A housemaster was appointed, then, to be resident and to take on what had been the domestic duties of the Headmaster and his wife. The first was the wonderfully eloquent E. C. Fry, now comfortably back from his wartime duties.

His successor, Alan Butterworth, went on to become Headmaster for one hundred terms. During Butterworth's headship, seismic innovations and developments occurred which helped move the School away from the 'deranged' organisation that had been identified in 1936. Hamilton Baynes would no doubt have remedied this more satisfactorily if he had not inherited such a complex and creaky machine, and if his progress had not been hampered by the exigencies of wartime. His headship had lasted twenty-three years. He had not been a dramatic showman, but a good-natured, good-humoured, dignified, suave, efficient, civilized administrator – just the kind of man to keep a school on an even keel during war.

Butterworth became Headmaster in 1955. The innovations began almost immediately. First, it was decided that entry to the School would be competitive; all candidates now had to sit tests in 'General Intelligence', reading, writing and arithmetic. Butterworth publicly defended this new policy at prizegiving two years later, insisting that 'connections with the School cannot count in the final assessment'. His desire was that NCS would produce boys who were 'disciplined, mannered, helpful and with an interest in a lot of things and a burning interest in perhaps one thing'. The increase

Opposite: Alan Butterworth, Headmaster 1955–88.

Butterworth changed much about the School, including the appearance of the boys, as these suggested uniform changes show.

in academic standards led to a greater number of NCS boys going on to William of Wykeham's other school foundation in Winchester, quite often with music and/or academic scholarships. Then, in 1958, it was decided that the auxiliary 'hut' (which had been erected next to the main 1903 building) would be demolished, and replaced by a new extension with a proper assembly hall and extra classrooms. Butterworth brought this project home, in 1959, under £20,000. With these extra facilities, even more pupils could be accommodated. When the new building was dedicated by the Bishop of Winchester, the School roll stood at 110.

Butterworth clearly increased in confidence as his Headship progressed. He was so sure that his School provided a decent education that he publicly told parents 'not to give the boys lessons at home', as it was 'bad policy for parents to bully their children into working'. In the late 1950s, he was one of the first Headmasters to emphasise the importance of Science in the curriculum, especially for younger children. Butterworth also took on the might of the Minister of Education, Sir David Eccles, who argued that all parents should send their children to

Lessons in progress during Butterworth's tenure.

A piano lesson in progress during the 1960s.

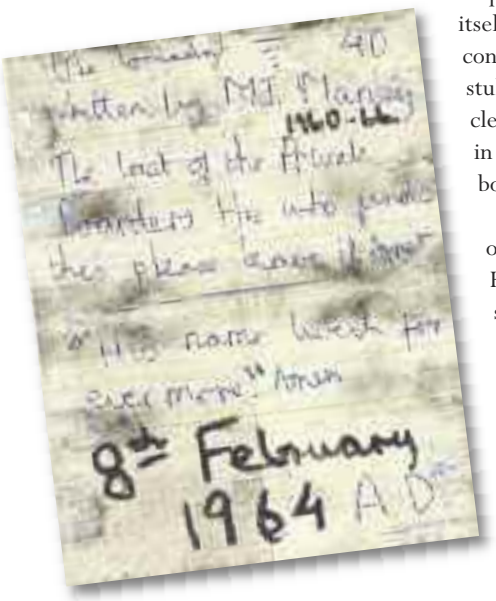
maintained primary schools. Butterworth's public response was dry and cutting. Sir David's proposals were, he said, 'equivalent to the Minister of Health announcing that all babies must be fed on National Dried Milk'.

While sparring with the Minister of Education, Butterworth also made further fundamental organizational changes to NCS. He added a new form

Sports day in action during the 1960s.

Choristers in 'crocodile' formation, ready to walk to College.

of seven-year-olds, whose 'youth and lack of inhibition' had what he called a 'humanising effect' on the School. Then in 1962 Butterworth announced that he would no longer be accepting non-chorister boarders. His desired aim was to provide a day-school education to the children of city and university parents. This education was also to look beyond the academic and the passing of examinations. 'A School which confines itself – or a parent who wishes his child to be confined to – academic studies', he declared, 'is stultifying growth'. Butterworth's policies were clearly striking a chord with these parents, because in 1962 a new record was set for the number of boys in the School: 130.



Following in the tradition of Hicks and Hewlett, another NCS boy left his mark in 1964, during a bout of illness.

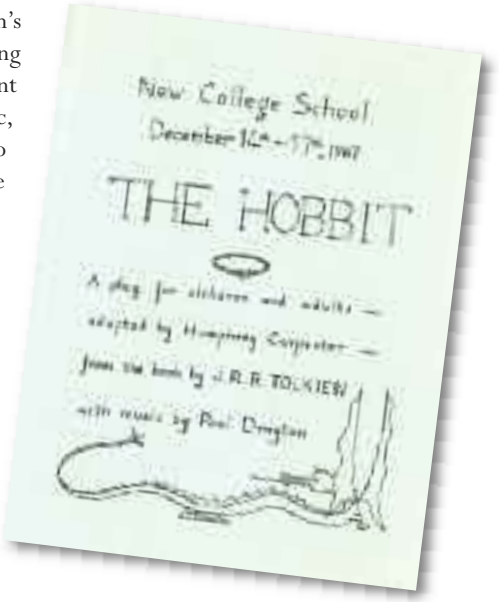
So now the School had some of the organisational recalibration it needed and a Headmaster who tenaciously and publicly stuck to a declared set of educational beliefs. It was as if Butterworth had read the 1912 and 1936 inspection reports, combining their suggestions with his vision for the kind of School that would prosper in the middle of a university, in the middle of a city. In essence, it made more sense to educate dons' seven-year-old sons, then send most of them home at the end of the day, than to provide a hostel

for the adolescent boys of other schools. Butterworth also had the personality requisite for getting changes made, hence perhaps his nickname 'Butch'.

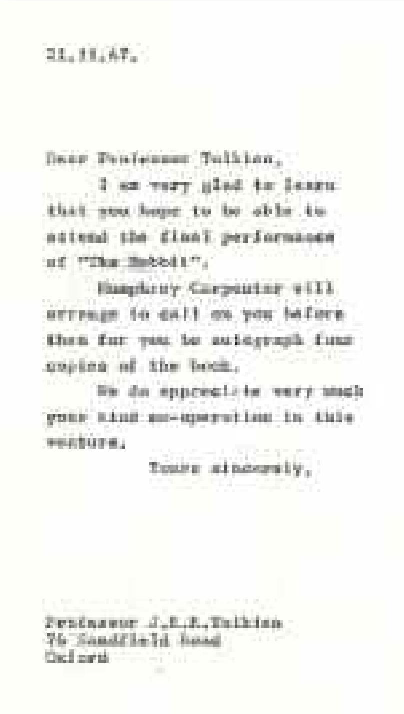
The comedian David Mitchell, in his autobiography *Back Story* (Harper Collins, 2012), recalls Butterworth as a man who combined firmness with intelligence, wit, charisma and a touch of glamour. He was always well turned out in pinstripe suits and he drove an MG. Butterworth's playful sense of humour came across in his response to school inspectors ('I find them reassuring, like Father Christmas') and his self-declared 'pointless' censuses. These garnered such information as, for example, how many boys knew the registration number of their parents' car, how many felt embarrassed by their Christian names, or how many wore a watch. Yet his temper was intimidating, he had a self-confidence that could border on the arrogant, and, like many Heads, he could not abide litter. From the perspective of running an efficient, creative and academically excellent school, the combination worked, though we might wish that he had not wielded 'Charlie' the slipper, nor reputedly walked around corners with his fist out, to catch any boy running down the corridors.

Butterworth's tenure was also notable for the high quality of drama that was produced. A particularly fruitful period was that between 1966 and 1970, during which time the School's inspirational Director of Music, Paul Drayton, collaborated with Humphrey Carpenter in producing five works for the NCS stage. The first was *Aladdin*, the last was *Arthur's Magic Engine*, but by far the most notable was their December 1967 dramatisation of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. Drayton and Carpenter were aiming to create what they called 'a new idiom' to present the book on the stage, combining narration, music, and cinematic projection. Carpenter's lyrics to 'Far Over the Misty Mountains' capture something of the spirit of the play:

Far over the misty mountains cold
To dungeons deep and caverns old
We must away ere break of day
To seek the pale enchanted gold
The dwarves of yore made might spells
While hammers fell like ringing bells
In places deep where dark things sleep
In hollow halls beneath the fells
For ancient king and elvish lord
There many a gleaming golden horde



A poster advertising NCS's production of *The Hobbit* in December 1967. J. R. R. Tolkien attended a performance; this was the first time he had given permission for his novel to be adapted for the stage.



21.11.67.

Dear Professor Tolkien,

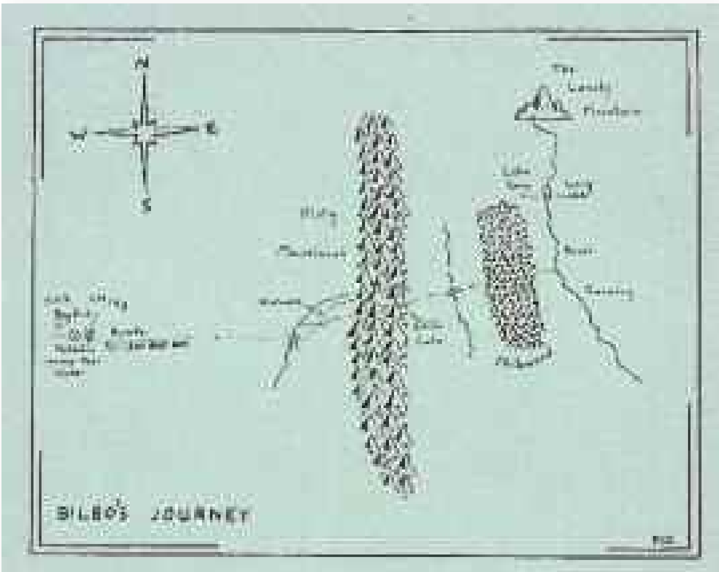
I am very glad to learn that you hope to be able to attend the final performance of "The Hobbit".

Humphrey Carpenter will arrange to call on you before then for you to autograph four copies of the book.

We do appreciate very much your kind co-operation in this venture.

Yours sincerely,

Professor J.R.R.Tolkien
76 Sandfield Road
Oxford



Above: A letter from Butterworth to Tolkien (1967) during the run-up to the production of *The Hobbit*.

Above, right: The cast list of the 1967 production of *The Hobbit*.

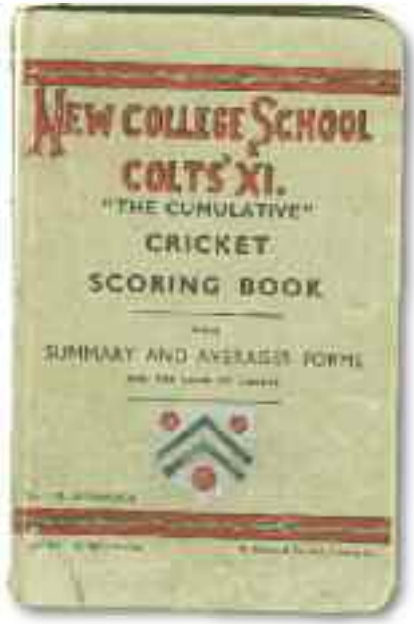
Right: Map of Bilbo Baggins's journey from *The Hobbit* programme (1967).

They shaped and wrought
And light they caught
To hide in gems on hilt of sword.

This was the first time Tolkien had given permission for his novel to be adapted for the stage and the author himself attended one of the performances, signing the boys' programmes. Tolkien also signed four copies of *The Hobbit* to be raffled. The music critics who attended the performances were duly impressed. There was 'little sacrifice of character or plot', 'textures were transparent and direct, the lines for voices as simple and evocative as Tolkien's lyrics, and unfailingly at the service of word and mood'. George Halliday apparently played Bilbo Baggins 'with insight and sensitivity'; Stephen Groser 'exactly caught the slimy truculence of Gollum'; while the narrator, Henry Howarth, 'was superbly articulate'. Martin Pickard, who played Gandalf, notes that 'the experience set me on a career path in music and theatre and was a major influence in my life'. The NCS *Hobbit* was the subject of a BBC Radio 4 documentary that aired in 2012.

The decade after *The Hobbit* featured even more building work on the increasingly tight Savile Road site. In 1972 old boy Sir Keith Falkner opened the 'New Block' that included a music school, science laboratory, woodwork room and art room. The mid-1970s included some particular

Watercolour of NCS by Eric Read (1978).



Top leftt: The Colts' XI cricket scoring book from the 1970s.

Top right: A scorecard from the boys' cricket match against the Fellows of New College (July 1988). Richard Dawkins scored two runs before being caught out. Robin Lane Fox was out for a duck.

Bottom: NCS cap and scarf from the 1980s. (Courtesy of the Lea family)

excitement for the choristers, when they got to provide the music for Trevor Nunn's production of *Macbeth* in Stratford, before singing for the Queen and Prince Philip in Chapel. They sang William Byrd's 'O Lord, Make Thy Servant Elizabeth Our Queen', which had been sung to Elizabeth I when she visited College 410 years previously. The Queen asked about the School, while Prince Philip exercised his characteristic diplomacy by asking if those who didn't sing in the choir were all 'croakers'. Rather less excitingly for the boys, in 1979 the School's sescentenary was marked by an extension to the staff room. They were probably more enthused when, in 1981, a new pavilion was built on the field and a new library was constructed on the east end of the playground. Then, in 1984 plans were laid to bring the School into the late twentieth century with the introduction of twelve BBC Basic computers in a room specially built above the choristers' day room. The BBC, incidentally, had featured the School in a documentary earlier in the year.

Above: Choristers and Edward Higginbottom meeting Elizabeth II at New College.

Left: A cricket match against the Fellows of New College was a staple of the School sporting calendar. NCS boys are being led off the pitch, after a match during the 1960s, by Sir Christopher Cox.

THE MODERN SCHOOL

Collectively we soared, there's no other word for it.

Howard Goodall

The tenor of the School changed markedly under Jonathan Edmunds, a Headmaster who was noted for his more liberal approach to education and discipline. It was during his tenure that boarding at NCS was phased out, opening up more space for teaching and learning. The dorms were removed at NCS in 1992; remaining chorister boarders were put up at Magdalen College School until 1994. From this point, the choristers of New College were all day boys, returning to their families at the end of each day. This marked a slight shift in the relationship between NCS and the schools to which it fed.

While some NCS boys continued to go on to the great public schools like Winchester or Eton, many families opted to keep their sons in day

Opposite: Boys in College.

Left: The Savile Road building in the early twenty-first century.

education, focusing their attention on the old Oxford grammar schools like Magdalen College School or Abingdon School. Edmunds also replaced Saturday morning academic lessons with an arts programme. His successor, Penny Hindle, was the first female 'Principal' of the School. She made some important changes to the structure and physical accommodation of the School, with the introduction of a Pre-Prep department and the building of a new complex consisting of a sports hall, an art studio, a music room and a music technology room. Completed in 2007, this building was awarded an Oxford Preservation Trust Award in 2009.

Under Robert Gullifer, Headmaster from 2008, the School grew to 160 pupils – more than double the size it was when Hamilton Baynes cried there were 'too many' boys. With the advantage of the new building, the internal organisation was once again recalibrated to take into account this greater number of boys and the facilities necessary to provide a world-class education at the start of the twenty-first century. A new library and media room complex was installed, for example, in 2011; it was formally opened in November of that year by the author Joanna Trollope. New College School also reaffirmed its particular and traditional role as a school closely associated with an Oxford college. With encouragement from Warden Ryan, the School's articles of governance were reformed so that the Warden *ex officio* now chaired the governing committee and had closer oversight of the whole educational operation. This replaced the scheme that had largely been in

Henry V and the King of France in *Henry V*, a dramatic production in New College antechapel in 2012.

A History lesson in 2013.

operation since 1864 when the Precentor of the College had been given ultimate responsibility for 'the behaviour of the boys'.

NCS boys were given masterclasses by university dons in a variety of topics, ranging from *Macbeth* to the Hundred Years' War. In November 2008, some pupils took the history of the School full-circle by attending a poetry masterclass in the room at Merton College occupied in the seventeenth century by their predecessor at NCS, Anthony Wood. In addition to the choristers' chapel duties, each Wednesday the whole School

The Pre-Prep department was opened under Penny Hindle.

The twenty-first-century prefect uniform, with badges outlining responsibilities and honours.

returned to its medieval home for a service in College. Also, a 'College Day' was instituted, giving all the boys of the School access to the facilities and treasures of the College.

The School also provided a pupil to be page to the Chancellor of the University and welcomed the very first students on Oxford's 'Insight into Teaching' programme – a scheme intended to demonstrate to university students the inner mechanics of the teaching world and to offer a taster of life as a teacher. Some peculiar traditions were also maintained. At the foundation of New College in 1379, William of Wykeham agreed to maintain that part of the old city wall which ran through his college. Every three years since then the Mayor of Oxford and a multi-coloured cavalcade from the Town Hall arrived in College to check that the founder's ancient obligations were being upheld. The twenty-first-century boys of NCS watched them. The pupils also went 'beating the bounds' each May, joining the clergy of the University Church (the School's home in the eighteenth century) to mark out the parish of that church, passing through Brasenose, All Souls, University and Oriel colleges along

Sports day at the University's Iffley Road Sports Ground, the venue for Sir Roger Bannister's sub-four-minute mile in May 1954.

Boys watching the inspection of the city wall by the Mayor of Oxford in the early twenty-first century.

Procession through College after the inspection of the city wall.

Reading in the library.

the way. Parents, too, were not to be left out and increasingly joined in and supported such activities with pupils. What Alan Butterworth had launched as the Equipment Fund Committee became the Parents' Association, a forum for wider consultation as well as fund-raising.

Following the hugely influential Hugh Allen, the choristers experienced the tutelage of a series of distinguished Organists: William

Playing chess.

Harris, John Dykes Bower, Sydney Watson, H. K. Andrews, Meredith Davies, David Lumsden, and Edward Higginbottom. Under their direction, the Choir of New College increased in quality and stature, to the point that *Gramophone Magazine* named it in a list of the best choirs in the world in 2010.

Demand for both recordings and tours boomed towards the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. In the space of a few decades, the choir could be heard singing in: the USA, Cyprus, Brazil, Australia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Japan, Switzerland and the Netherlands. Choristers also sang at the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, the Sheldonian Theatre, the Barbican, Dorchester Abbey, King's College Cambridge, Hampton Court, at the Spitalfields, Bournemouth and Brighton festivals, and in Promenade Concerts at the Royal Albert Hall. The choir could also be heard frequently on BBC Radio 3 – including evensong broadcasts – and on Classic FM. Edward Higginbottom's establishment of the choir's own recording label – *Novum* – increased the opportunities available for the recording of a variety of academically interesting music. The choristers' training also changed slightly, to include a pre-probationary year, during which boys who had been selected for the choir gained an extra year of musical tuition before beginning the traditional chorister education. Reassuringly, the boys no longer served the food in College, but were themselves served tea in Hall prior to their evening practices.

Playing in the snow.

So, to return to the founder's statutes: there were still at least sixteen boys, most were less than twelve years of age, though they no longer needed to be 'poor and needy'. Ideally, they were still of 'good standing and honest conversation' and it was still highly desirable if they were 'competent in reading and singing'. They just did not eat leftovers any more.

OLD BOYS

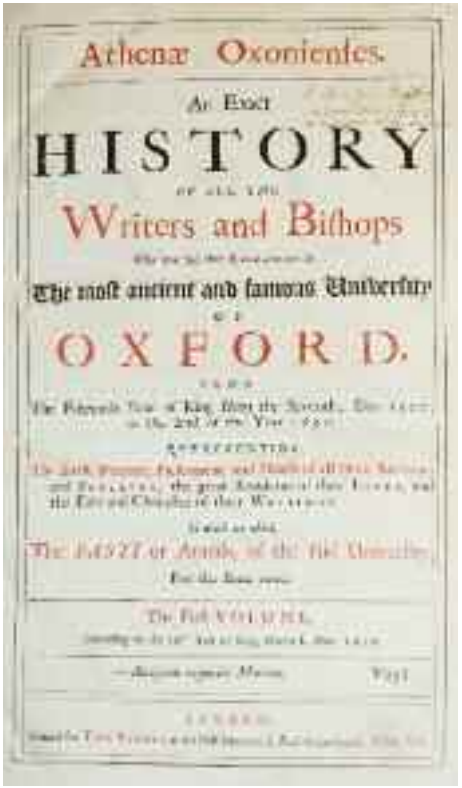
> In 2000 AD or thereabouts the elderly men who were boys at New College School in 1947 will doubtless be complaining monotonously of the decline in manners and manliness which will appear to them to be so obvious in the younger generation of the twenty-first century. They will be mistaken, of course, for in their own recollections they will greatly over-estimate the qualities of courtesy, courage, intelligence, diligence, obedience and so forth which they themselves showed at the same age. Ever since the first ape-man and the first ape-woman first lost their tempers with the first ape-infant, adults have been forgetting the imperfections of their own childhoods, and setting an imagined standard of comparison before their juniors.
>
> *E. C. Fry*

A formal Old Boys' Club was founded in October 1895, when some old boys resident in Oxford met with George Carter to form a 'Reunion Club'. Initially, it was planned that annual old boys' meetings would alternate between Oxford and London, though the London meetings ceased in 1933. Between 1910 and 1930 the Club ran a scholarship fund to aid boys who needed extra financial support in taking up their places at the School.

Over the centuries a number of old boys have gone on to enjoy distinguished careers. As would be expected from a choral foundation, a good number of those careers have been in the arts. And, also quite naturally for a school in the heart of a world-class university, a good proportion of old boys have achieved academic distinction.

John Case, a pupil at NCS in the sixteenth century, went on to become a notable doctor, philosopher, musician, and Canon of Salisbury. Other authors produced by NCS include: **Richard Peers**, **Francis Wise**, **Thomas Allen, James Philip Hewlett** and **John Rogers**, the last of whom was also a royal chaplain. Perhaps the most famous from the seventeenth century was **Anthony Wood**, the waspish historian and antiquarian whose *Life and Times* offers a wealth of information about Oxford in the Restoration period. Wood's

Opposite: Sir Richard Goodwin Keats, former NCS pupil and mentor to Admiral Nelson and William IV.


Athenæ Oxonienses.

An Exact

HISTORY

of all the

Writers and Bishops

who have been Members of

the most ancient and famous University

of

OXFORD.


More Faults on One Side:

OR, THE

Shallow POLITICKS,

Foolish ARGUING,

AND

Villanous DESIGNS

OF THE

Author of a late Pamphlet,

ENTITULED

Faults on Both Sides

Consider'd and Expos'd.

In ANSWER to that Pamphlet.

SHEWING,

That the many Truths in Modern History related by the Author of it, do not make amends for the many Falsehoods in Fact, and Fallacies in Reasoning.

LONDON:

Printed for JOHN MORPHEW, near Stationers-Hall, 1710.


THE

WORKS

OF

VIRGIL:

Translated into

English BLANK VERSE.

With

EXPLANATORY NOTES,

AND

CRITICAL OBSERVATIONS.

By JOSEPH TRAPP, D.D.

VOL. I.

LONDON

Above, left: Frontispiece of Anthony Wood's *Athenæ Oxonienses* (1691–2).

Above, right: Joseph Trapp, *More Faults on One Side* (1710). An old boy's contribution to early-eighteenth-century pamphlet debates.

Right: Joseph Trapp, *The Works of Virgil: Translated into English Blank Verse* (1735). Trapp was the University of Oxford's first Professor of Poetry.

Athenæ Oxonienses (1691–2) provides biographical information about authors and churchmen who studied at Oxford.

Joseph Trapp went on to become a clergyman, poet, playwright, translator of the complete works of Virgil (1731), as well as the first Professor of Poetry at the University of Oxford. Trapp was lucky enough to have been taught by James Badger during one of the School's golden ages. In addition to his literary career, Trapp entered into politics as a Tory, assisting Henry Sacheverell at his trial. Badger had also evidently instilled in his pupil an admirable work ethic, as Trapp was once described as the hardest-working man in England.

NCS alumni have also made contributions to the visual arts. **Alfred Drury**, who attended the School in the mid-nineteenth century, became a sculptor in the New Sculpture movement, providing the figure of Prince Albert above the main entrance to the Victoria and Albert Museum, and of Sir Joshua Reynolds at Burlington House. While a pupil at NCS, Drury apparently had a penchant for sculpting miniature busts of the Headmaster in offcuts of wood. The Headmaster, unaware of course of Drury's later career trajectory, threw the busts into the fire.

NCS has also produced at least two very notable military figures. **Sir Richard Goodwin Keats** arrived at NCS in 1766, before heading to Winchester. His talents as a naval commander caught Horatio Nelson's eye in 1803 – 'Every day increases my esteem for him as an officer and a man', Nelson gushed. On Nelson's death on HMS *Victory* in 1805, his Breast Star Order of the Bath was passed to Keats, in whose family it remained until it was sold at auction (with an estimate of £500,000) in 2010. Keats was also mentor to the young prince who became William IV. When Keats died in 1834, the king ensured that he was buried with full military honours.

Alec Cranswick attended NCS between 1926 and 1933, before going on to St Edward's School. He served with unique distinction in the Royal Air Force, achieving the honour of flying the most operational missions in the Second World War. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and then the Distinguished Service Order. Cranswick lost his life on 5 July 1944, aged just twenty-four. He had successfully completed his target-marking task with Path Finder Force on his 107th mission when he was shot down outside Paris. The NCS archives contain a poem written by Cranswick, written in May 1941 while he was based in Kabrit, Egypt, the first verses of which run:

> The Skylarks sending down their songs from high
> Acclaim the joyous advent of the spring,
> But living man greets Easter with a sigh,
> On him is lost the beauty of the thing.
> No longer are the fields of Europe filled

Alec Cranswick (centre), pictured in the 1932 NCS football team photo. Cranswick was later awarded the DFC and DSO, flying the most operational missions in the Second World War.

With workers toiling hard behind the ploughs,
Unseen by eyes to whom nature is killed
The leaves begin to form upon the boughs.
The peasant drops his everyday attire
To follow in the standard's curling wake,
E'en Loafers leave the comfort of their fire
To take up arms, their country safe to make.
Far to the North a people make a stand
'Gainst ravishing hordes and overwhelming odds,
They are alas a small heroic band
Adhering to the doctrines of their Gods.

Cranswick was among fourteen old boys who gave their lives in the Second World War.

More recent alumni have distinguished themselves in the arts. **Robin Gibson** went on to become Chief Curator of the National Portrait Gallery. **Sir (Donald) Keith Falkner** became Director of the Royal College of Music, where another old boy, **Paul Spicer**, became Professor of Choral Conducting, in addition to being an organist, producer, conductor and composer. Other notable musicians include: **George Caird**, Principal of the Birmingham Conservatoire; the tenors **Ian Partridge** and **James Gilchrist**; **Howard Goodall**, the singer, broadcaster, EMMY-, BRIT- and BAFTA-award-winning composer and England's first national ambassador for singing; **Martin Pickard**, Opera North's Head of Music; the violinist **Ralph Holmes**; the pianist **Ian Fountain**; the musician and critic **Stainton de B. Taylor**; and **Orlando Higginbottom**, also known as

Left: The NCS First World War memorial, funded by subscriptions from old boys.

Right: The NCS Second World War memorial, given by the Old Boys' Club.

'Totally Enormous Extinct Dinosaurs', the award-winning electronic dance music record producer and DJ. **Richard Seal**, organist of Salisbury Cathedral, was a figure decisive in the foundation of the first girls' top-line in a cathedral choir. Perhaps the most recognisable old boy is the actor, writer and comedian **David Mitchell**, who won the BAFTA for Best Comedy Performance in 2009. This list does not pretend to be complete – there are, no doubt, other distinguished old boys whose achievements would qualify them to be listed here.

An Old Boys' Dinner in progress in Hall.

POSTSCRIPT: ON CHORISTERS

For centuries New College School has been about choristers. It can seem an ancient and fusty preoccupation. But not to anyone who engages in it. An interesting thing about the experience is how it is construed by choristers later in their lives as the way *par excellence* of getting themselves sorted, be they by then captains of UK sporting teams, captains of industry, or merely high-flying professionals. It's that mix of preparing on a daily basis something really demanding for public scrutiny, with no opportunity for nonsense, or slacking; of working as a child alongside adults with no limit to what might be achieved; and of engaging meaningfully with art and spiritual matters when these things can be strongly registered. If a child is up for it, he will never regret the experience. It will enrich his life through all its stages. As a road to educational success, it cannot be irrelevant to cite the eventual university destinations for choristers, where practically all will attend Russell group institutions, and a good third of them Oxbridge. If ever the world is your oyster, it is for a New College chorister.

Professor Edward Higginbottom
Organist, Fellow and Tutor in Music, New College Oxford, 1976–

Choristers processing in College.

Choristers in the snow.

FURTHER READING

This short history is indebted to Jonathan Edmunds, *New College Brats: A History of the Life and Education of the Choristers of New College, Oxford* (Oxford, 1996). Its unfortunate title is derived from a comment made by Reverend W. Tuckwell looking back to the New College choristers of the 1830s. Anne Page's *Of Choristers Ancient and Modern* has a lengthy chapter on the history of the choristers of New College; it is available online at www.ofchoristers.net. For New College generally, see John Buxton and Penry Williams (eds), *New College Oxford, 1379–1979* (Oxford 1979) – especially Paul Hale's chapter on 'Music and Musicians' – and Christopher Tyerman (ed.), *New College* (London, 2010). For the history of choristers more generally, see Alan Mould, *The English Chorister: A History* (London and New York, 2007). David Mitchell, *Back Story: A Memoir* (London, 2012) offers very amusing reminiscences about NCS in the 1980s.

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References to images are in *italics*.