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JOHN OKER/OKEOVER

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John Oker or Okeover made a minor but not negligible contribution to English consort music: nineteen compositions, in three and five parts, workmanlike if hardly outstanding.¹ Manuscript sources are scarce, and his music may never have circulated widely. Two pieces were published over thirty years ago in *Jacobean Consort Music*,² but they remain rarities, and the revival of the viol has largely passed him by.

An outline of Oker's life, by W. K. Ford, appeared in 1958 in the *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*.³ He was an organist, first of Wells cathedral 1620-40, then of Gloucester cathedral until the Civil War stopped music there in 1644, stayed on in Gloucester during the Commonwealth, returned to Wells at the Restoration, and died shortly afterwards. How viols fitted in seemed uncertain. Ford's account is followed in *The New Grove*,⁴ but nothing fresh on Oker seems to have come to light, except as music copyist at Gloucester.⁵

This paper first explores the composer's origins and musical background before 1620, hitherto obscure. It then attempts to survey his works for viols in their historical context. Finally it offers a solution to the problem of the two versions of his name.

Early Life

According to Ford the 1620 organist was previously unknown at Wells. His origins must be looked for elsewhere. The rare surname led Ford to postulate a connexion with the Staffordshire gentry family of Okeover, but this could not be demonstrated.

The name can also be found at Worcester, in a promising context. Nathaniel Patrick, organist of Worcester cathedral 1590-95, had an associate named John Oker, who joined in a bond for Patrick's marriage (1593) and helped to make an inventory of Patrick's goods after his death (1595). This was mentioned without comment in a book about the cathedral organists published early this century,⁶ but has apparently not been investigated.

¹ Ten fantasies a3 in GB-Ob Mus. Sch. MSS D.245-7 (not Christ Church as in *Grove*); seven fantasies and two pavans a5 in Lbl Add. MSS 17786-91, one of the fantasies (no. 7) also in Add. 17792-6. See Gordon Dodd: *Thematic Index of Music for Viols* (1980-82), whose numbering is used here. Oker also wrote a few anthems.

² Thurston Dart and William Coates, (eds.): *Musica Britannica*, ix, 'Jacobean Consort Music' (London, 1955), no. 45 (Fantasy a5 no. 5) and no. 70 (Pavan a5 no. 2)

³ W. K. Ford: 'The life and works of John Okeover', in *PRMA*, lxxxiv (1957/58), 71-81

⁴ *The New Grove* (London, 1980), vol. 13, 523

⁵ J. Morehen: 'The Gloucester cathedral part-book MS 93', in *Music & Letters*, lxii (1981), 192-6

⁶ Ivor Atkins: *The early occupants of the office of organist ... at the cathedral of Worcester* (Worcestershire Historical Society, London, 1918), 32-33

Patrick's associate is described in the bond as John Oker *alias* Cooke of St. Michael's in Bedwardine⁷ - Patrick's own parish, lying next to the cathedral. The churchwarden's accounts contain various references to John Oker (Ocker), the last in 1617.⁸ He was assessed in the middle ranks for poor rate, and sometimes witnessed the accounts. He seems to have been a builder, who supplied boards (1597) and tiles (1614) for church repairs; and illiterate, since he signed the accounts and his own will (quoted below) by mark. Evidently not himself the composer: the parish registers record the burial of 'John Oker' on 3 January 1619/20 and 'Ann Oker widow' on 22 May 1623.⁹

[4] However, this couple's eldest son Jhon the sonne of Jhon Oker' was baptised at St. Michael's Worcester on 7 October 1595,¹⁰ a date compatible with the musician's known career. If the boy showed any gift for music, the proximity of the cathedral and his father's connexions would help. Patrick's successor, Thomas Tomkins, organist and master of the choristers 1596-1646, married Patrick's widow (1597),¹¹ and must have been known to the elder John Oker. The Minister of St. Michael's, John Fido, was a minor canon of the cathedral.¹²

The musical establishment at Worcester cathedral can be glimpsed at intervals in a few surviving treasurer's accounts. Those for 1611, covering the twelve months from Michaelmas 1610, include quarterly lists of ten choristers, numbered in order of seniority. For the first two quarters no. 1 is 'Nathaniel Tomkyns', obviously Thomas's son, the future canon of Worcester, and no. 2 is John Oker alias Cook'.¹³ 3 John Oker afterwards slips to the bottom of the list, suggesting that his voice was breaking. His likely age and the combination of name and alias leave no reasonable doubt that the chorister was the builder's son.

Each quarterly list is countersigned 'ita est Tho. Tomkyns', and elsewhere in the same accounts Tomkins is paid as 'Instructor choristarum', Clearly young John Oker would have learned his musical ABC from Tomkins. Being a chorister alongside the organist's son could

⁷ Worcester Record Office (WRO): Worcester consistory court, marriage bonds, 1593, no. 78b. Alias surnames were not uncommon near the Welsh borders: their significance is obscure.

⁸ *The Churchwardens' Accounts of St. Michael's in Bedwardine, Worcester, from 1539 to 1603* (ed. J. Amphlett, Worcs. Hist. Soc., Oxford, 1896), 114-152; continuation in WRO, MS b.850/BA/2335/16b (iv), ff. 4-25

⁹ WRO, microfilm of original parish registers of St. Michael in Bedwardine, Worcester, under dates named. Ann is identified as the widow of the elder John Oker by his will, v. note 21 below.

¹⁰ St. Michael's registers, q.v. note 9

¹¹ Atkins, *op. cit.*, 44

¹² *Ibid.*, 36, showing Fido's cathedral connexion. He is named as minister of St. Michael's in the churchwardens' accounts fr 1611-14.

¹³ Worcester cathedral archives, MS A. 26, which also contains the only other surviving detailed pre-civil war accounts, those for 1619, 1639 and 1642. Thanks are due to the Dean and Chapter of Worcester and to the Rev. Canon J.R. Fenwick (archivist) for access to the cathedral archives.

have fostered this connexion; and his initial choir ranking implies some general musical ability as well as his voice.

Choristers of the period sometimes learned instruments too. A 1569 Worcester 'visitation' enquired whether the master of the choristers was 'apt and willing to instruct them in singing and playing upon the organs according to the statutes'.¹⁴ Two Worcester choristers of Thomas Tomkins's period turn up later as organists, no doubt thanks to his tuition. Canon Nathaniel Tomkins 'could play better on the organ than on a text'.¹⁵ Richard Browne, no. 1 chorister in 1639 and a singing-man in 1642, became organist of Worcester after the Restoration.¹⁶

Viols were 'an important element in the education of choirboys' in mid-sixteenth century London and by the early seventeenth century in some other cathedral choir-schools, e.g. Exeter.¹⁷ An apparently less noticed instance is Gloucester, where in 1628 one of the singing-men, John Merro, was teaching the 'children' (choristers) 'to playe uppon the Vialls'.¹⁸ Practice at nearby Worcester would probably be similar, especially since Tomkins composed for viols and his father was precentor of Gloucester (1610-25). Two Worcester choristers of John Oker's generation come to notice later as viol players - Humphrey Withy and his brother John, both associated with Tomkins in a midcentury viol-playing circle at Worcester.¹⁹ Humphrey Withy, hitherto a rather shadowy figure, appears as no. 5 chorister in the 1611 list. John Withy's name occurs as no. 5 chorister in the 1619 Worcester accounts.²⁰ He became a viol composer.

A leading chorister like John Oker would thus probably have studied organ and viols (perhaps composition too?) under Thomas Tomkins. He would be equipped to have become the musician known to history. Contemporary composers known

[5] or thought to have begun as choristers include Ward (Canterbury), Orlando Gibbons (King's, Cambridge), the Lawes brothers (Salisbury) and Locke (Exeter), not to mention lesser names like John Withy at Worcester itself. In Oker's case proof eludes us, but it is a reasonable working hypothesis. Some other pointers are noted below.

¹⁴ W. H. Frere (ed.): *Visitation Articles and Injunctions of the period of the Reformation* (London, 1980-10), vol. 3, 230

¹⁵ Atkins, *op. cit.*, 52

¹⁶ Worcester cathedral accounts (*q.v.* note 13); *The New Grove*, vol. 3, 346

¹⁷ Ian Woodfield: *The Early History of the Viol* (Cambridge, 1984), 213 and 247, footnote.

¹⁸ Account-book of the Dean and Chapter of Gloucester, 1628/29, quoted by A. Ashbee in Introduction to *John Jenkins: Consort music for viols in four parts* (London, 1978), xv

¹⁹ John Irving: 'Consort playing in mid-17th century Worcester', in *Early Music*, xii (August 1984) 337-344. Ob Mus. Sch. MSS E.415-8, a collection of consort music, contains the names 'Mr. Tho. Tomkins' and 'Mr. Humphrey Withy', and includes two Tomkins pavans marked 'made for Jo. Withy'.

²⁰ Worcester cathedral accounts, 1611 and 1619. Humphrey Withy's origin as a chorister was noted by Atkins (*op. cit.*, 61 footnote) but John Withy is not in *The New Grove*.

The chorister had apparently left Worcester before 1620. His father's will, dated 24 September 1619,²¹ divided the residue of the estate between Anne my wife, John my sonne and Samuel my sonne', but his house, 'shopp' and trade implements were to revert after Anne's death to Samuel. Odd to pass over the elder son, unless John was already launched on some other career elsewhere. The sons were joint executors, but the will was proved at Worcester on 16 July 1620 by Samuel alone. The new organist had been sworn in at Wells on 16 February the same year.²²

Later in 1620 a new organ was built at Wells cathedral by Thomas Dallam, who had recently (1613) built one to Tomkins's design at Worcester.²³ Did the new Wells organist know the Worcester organ? Dallam was of course well-known; but a curious detail independently suggests some Worcester connexion. The case for the 1613 organ was made by one of the Worcester singing-men, Robert Kettle. The Wells organ account too (1621) includes a substantial payment to 'Mr. Kettle', and in 1624 'Robert Kettle' became a vicar-choral of Wells.²⁴ Could this be Oker's influence?

Between 1611 and 1620 there are two references elsewhere to a musician of the same name, both apparently short-term assignments which the Worcester Oker could have held before fetching up at Wells. On the wall of the organ-loft at Winchester College are scratched the letters 'M IO: OKER: ORG.' (Magister Iohannes Oker organista?), possibly in association with the date 1616 on another part of the wall. A Winchester historian has suggested that the Wells man was organist at the College for a few years before 1616.²⁵ The Worcester chorister would have been eighteen in 1613. Such a post could be the start of a musical career; Thomas Wheelkes had held it briefly in youth (1598-1601).

The other instance occurs in the Essex household of William 2nd Lord Petre (Thorndon and Ingatestone Halls), where the resident musician was Richard Mico. Among the Petre papers is an inventory of music books 'left at Mr. Mycos going away' endorsed 'all of which were placed in the charge of John Oker June 1616 - with a chest of vialls.'²⁶ Mico was back by the 1620's, probably sooner. Understudying someone of Mico's calibre implies a rising young musician, and the reference to viols tends to link this man with the consort composer.

²¹ WRO, wills in Worcester probate registry, 1620, no. 117.

²² *Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC), Wells II*, 376

²³ Worcester cathedral MS D 248; *HMC Wells II*, 376-9; *The New Grove* vol. 5, 156 (Dallam)

²⁴ Worcester cathedral accounts, 1611 and 1619, and MS 248; *HMC Wells II*, 379 and 384 (allowing a year's probation).

²⁵ Alan Rennie: *The story of music at Winchester College, 1349-1969* (Winchester, 1970), 12-13

²⁶ Essex Record Office, MS D/DP.E.2/8. See John Bennet and Pamela Willetts: 'Richard Mico', in *Chelys*, vii (1977), 32

It might be questioned whether an unknown Worcester youth from a simple home would be likely to get responsible posts so far afield. But means existed, although their actual use is conjectural. As a chorister he would have had a free grammar school education.²⁷ A pupil of Tomkins would be a strong candidate as organist of another west-country cathedral. Arthur Lake, dean of Worcester (1608-13) in Oker's chorister days, became bishop of Bath and Wells (1616-26).

[6] He was a generous patron, interested in music (he 'led the way' over the 1613 organ).²⁸ As Warden of New College Oxford from 1613 to 1616 Lake would also be influential in the sister foundation at Winchester (his own old school) just when Oker's name turns up there. And Tomkins's old master William Byrd was a neighbour and intimate of Lord Petre, who himself had Worcestershire connexions.²⁹

Religion prompts another query. William Lord Petre was a Catholic, and the household musician would have to provide music for the illegal Roman rite in his private chapel. Another Catholic like Mico might be expected. Yet in Jacobean England the religious breach was not yet quite absolute. William Petre had recently (1604-13) employed as resident tutor to his sons a man who evidently conformed to the established church before and after his Petre service, though presumably a covert Catholic sympathiser (William Smith, Oxford graduate and subsequently Warden of Wadham College).³⁰ Why not a musician too—a less sensitive post than tutor? Byrd himself illustrates how musical careers could sometimes transcend the religious differences of the times.

If the 'working hypothesis' is accepted, we may thus see John Oker as an example of a provincial boy of humble origins who 'made good' through music.

Consort music

Grove states that 'the five-part fantasies and pavans date from before 1640, the three-part works from after that date; they were possibly composed for local meetings during the Commonwealth'. Precise dating of consort music is seldom possible. But taking into account the manuscript sources and the character of the music itself, a reverse sequence seems more likely, and earlier dating generally.

²⁷ *Documents illustrating early education in Worcester* (ed. A.F. Leach, Worcs. Hist. Soc., London, 1913), lvii and 138

²⁸ *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 11, 408-9; biographical preface to Lake's *Sermons* (London, 1629; by his chaplain)

²⁹ William Petre married a daughter of the Earl of Worcester, and in 1612 their eldest daughter married William Sheldon of Beoly in Worcester. The Earl and Sheldon were both Catholics, and any cathedral connexions are speculative. The Byrd-Tomkins link seems rather more likely.

³⁰ Nancy Briggs: 'William 2nd Lord Petre', in *Essex Recusant*, vol. 10 (1968), 55; R.B.Gardiner: *Registers of Wadham College, Oxford* (London, 1889), 3

Anthony Wood wrote that Oker 'hath composed several ayres of 2 and 3 parts for the violin and viol which are, I think, extant'.³¹ But the surviving Oker trios are not in fact 'ayres'. The source calls them each 'fantazia', and they are built of imitative contrapuntal parts with no regular melodic pattern, nor anything above the frets of the treble viol. The manner is Jacobean rather than mid-century. It looks as though Wood can scarcely have known Oker's music well (unless he was alluding to some later trios, now lost like the duos). Whether or not the known three-part pieces were played (with violins) at Wood's Oxford meetings during the Commonwealth, they seem old-fashioned to have been composed for such a context.

The unique source (GB-Ob Mus. Sch. MSS D. 245-7) was compiled by John Metro of Gloucester. Oker's fantasies a3 must have been completed before Metro's death in 1639. Elsewhere in *The New Grove* D. 245-7 is dated 'c.1620'.³²

These fantasies are uniform in style and tonality (A minor) and give the impression of having been written at one period by a composer not without talent but with a limited vocabulary. Broadly speaking they belong to the conservative Gibbons/Tomkins school and lack for example the 'Italianisms' of Coprario. Certain affinities with Tomkins a3 suggest themselves, such as the use

[7] of thematic fragments and of rapid keyboard-style passage work. One fantasy, no. 2, opens like a paraphrase of Tomkins a3 no. 5. In general they might be earlyish works composed under the influence of Tomkins. Merro had connexions with the Tomkins family, through whom Oker's music might have reached him before Oker became more widely known.

Some of Oker's five-part consort works recall his manner a3. The majority however seem more melodious, with traces of madrigal influence, and seem better organised harmonically, particularly fantasies 2, 3 and 5 (which alone in all Oker's work use a one-flat key signature), and both pavans. This second group leave the impression of being nearer to the mainstream of English consort style, and it is difficult not to regard them as later than his three-part fantasies rather than *vice-versa*. Composition as a whole was perhaps spread over a longer period than the relatively homogeneous three-part set.

The development of his consort style suggests contact with more 'modern' influences than Tomkins. This could have begun in Petre service. The Petres were a musical family in touch with the fashionable life of nearby London. The music placed in Oker's charge included Italian madrigals and the later works of William Byrd, whom he would probably have met. Mico's consort music would have been in use in the house, and Oker could have studied with him if their service overlapped

³¹ A. Wood: *Fasti Oxoniensis* (ed. P. Bliss, London, 1815), vol. 1 col. 468, recording Oker's Oxford degree in 1633.

³² A. Ashbee, letter in *ML* lxxviii (1967), 310-11; *The New Grove* vol. 17, 716, s.v. 'Sources of instrumental ensemble music'

sufficiently. The critical commentary to *Jacobean Consort Music* draws attention to a 'double choir' effect found in several of Oker's fantasies a5. Mico (among others) used it too, and there are one or two thematic resemblances between the two composers (e.g. Oker fantasies nos. 2 and 3 with Mico no. 4). 'Modern' influences were not lacking at Wells too, as shown below.

The source containing his complete five-part works (British Library MSS. Add. 17786-91) has been attributed to the early years of the seventeenth century,³³ which would rule out a composer born in 1595 unless he were a child prodigy. However, a more recent study suggests that the group of pieces which includes Oker's were added to the part-books later, and implies that uncertainty about Oker's career is an obstacle to more precise dating of this important manuscript.³⁴ Composition must fall before 1640 because the source calls him 'Wellensis' - but how much before?

In 1633 he received the degree of bachelor of music at Oxford (as noted by Ford: not 1630 as in *The New Grove*). Residence was not then required for a music degree; it was more like a modern honorary degree, based on reputation and backing.³⁵ The inference is that by the early 1630s Oker was regarded as an established musician. Since there is no evidence of distinction as a performer, the degree presumably recognised his merits as a composer, with a considerable output already to his credit.

There is converging evidence from Wells. The cathedral has the remains of a collection of manuscript music formerly belonging to the vicars-choral (a corporate body comprising cathedral singers and organist, with quarters nearby).³⁶ Ford mentions this indication of domestic music-making but does not particularise.

[8] Most of the surviving items are in fact later than Oker's Wells period. There are however the tenor and bass part-books of some five-part Italian madrigals, their covers stamped with the name of Oker's immediate predecessor Richard Browne, organist of Wells 1614-19.³⁷ An incomplete part-book of anonymous Italian madrigals probably dates from the same period.³⁸ All the madrigals are textless except for their opening words, recalling Roger North's observation:

³³ P. Brett, (ed.): *Musica Britannica*, xxii, 'Consort Songs' (London, 1974), 175

³⁴ Craig Monson: *Voices and Viols in England, 1600-1650* (Ann Arbor, 1982), 159-60, 169, 174

³⁵ *Registers of the University of Oxford* (ed. A. Clark, Oxford, 1887), vol. 2 part 1, 148-9

³⁶ Thanks are due to the Dean and Chapter of Wells, and to Mr. L. S. Colchester, hon. Archivist, for access to the records of the Vicars-Choral, which supplements the cathedral's own records calendared in *HMC Wells*.

³⁷ Wells Vicars-Choral (WVC) Music MSS 2 and 3. The tenor book is inscribed 'Francesco Soriano. The 4th Sett. December the 17, 1612'—presumably the date of copying (Soriano's fourth book was published in 1602). There are also madrigals by Ruggiero Giovanelli (reprinted in Antwerp 1606).

³⁸ WVC, Music MS 1

The earlyer consorts were composed for 3,,4 and more parts for songs in Itallian or Latine ... And in England when composers were scarce, these songs were copyed off, without the words, and for variety used as instrumentall consorts, with the first words of the song as a title.³⁹

Instrumental performance of vocal chamber music was evidently developing at Wells by Oker's time. Instrumentation would depend on what happened to be available, and might originally have been mixed. But shortly after Oker's arrival a deed of gift dated 20 January 1622/23 from Henry Southworth of Wells esq. (a cathedral benefactor) presented to the vicars-choral

one Cheste and five instruments of musicke called Wyolls ... to the chieftest use and behoofe of those who cann play thereon, to bee used art such their Civil Convocations and meetings as the major parte of them shall thinke fitt.⁴⁰

Composers were no longer 'scarce'. Oker could be expected to exploit this new resource, and might even have inspired it. The 'cheste' fits his larger-scale work (laid out for the usual 2Tr/2T/B). He might well pick up a more tuneful and expressive style from playing those madrigals: if so, here is another example of the Italian influence on English consort music discussed in a recent *Chelys* article.⁴¹ Perhaps also from John Ward's madrigal-type fantasies a5, fragments of which survive among the Wells MSS.⁴² All this strongly suggests that most of Oker's five-part fantasies and pavans were written for these Wells players, probably in the 1620s.

The vicars-choral evidently played viols for pleasure and to enhance their corporate life, not as part of their cathedral duties. Yet in the nature of the case they were trained musicians and in a position to meet regularly. Standards might be quite high. The fourteenth-century Tudor-panelled Vicars' Hall is intimate in scale and would make a responsive setting for viols.⁴³ In general, too little is known about the public for whom consort music was written or the circumstances of its original performance. Here we seem to have an interesting close-up.

Elsewhere too there are indications that cathedrals, like country houses, were sometimes the focus of amateur viol consorts: for example Worcester (see above) and Gloucester, to judge by Metro's collections

³⁹ John Wilson (ed.): *Roger North on Music* (London, 1959), 340; extracted from *Memoires of Musick* (1728)

⁴⁰ WVC, Indenture Book, 1617-1661, f. 17v

⁴¹ Joan Wess: 'Musica Transalpina, Parody, and the Emerging Jacobean Viol Fantasia', in *Chelys*, xv (1986), 3-25.

⁴² WVC, Music MS 4. Bass parts only of four fantasies a5, see Dodd: *Thematic Index* (q.v.), s.v. Ward. Composed before 1620, though no evidence when they reached Wells. Ward, like Mico, uses 'double choir' effects.

⁴³ A 'music club' met there in the early 18th century, see E. Hobhouse (ed.): *The diary of a west-country physician, 1684-1726* (Rochester, 1934), 39-42

and a post-Restoration catalogue.⁴⁴ Another cathedral organist who wrote string fantasies is Michael East at Lichfield. George Herbert, viol-player as well as poet, used to attend regular music meetings after services at Salisbury cathedral.⁴⁵ There are no doubt other instances. Oker's story suggests that viol consort music among cathedral musicians generally may deserve further study.

His name

Oker or Okeover? The Staffordshire family used both spellings (among other variants) in the fifteenth century, and only standardised as Okeover in Henry VIII's time.⁴⁶ A branch might have moved to neighbouring Worcestershire before then. But the chorister's father clearly had no pretensions to gentility. If any connexion with the gentry family existed, it must have been fairly remote.

Usage of the two names in the composer's own lifetime is not haphazard but shows a definite pattern. He was baptised as Oker. He appears as Oker in the Worcester cathedral accounts, the Winchester organ-loft and the Petre papers (the alias Cook is confined to Worcester). At Wells the Chapter Act Books and other cathedral documents refer to him throughout as Oker or occasionally Oaker. In the vicars-choral's records he can be traced as Oker up to 1628.⁴⁷ A vicars' book of grants and sales beginning in 1632 contains frequent specimens of his signature as one of the 'Seniors': from August 1633 onwards it is John Okeover'.⁴⁸ Cathedral accounts dated 1636/37 show a payment to 'Mr. Oker' for which he signs in receipt John Okeover'.⁴⁹ At Gloucester (see Ford) he is Okeover in 1640 and 1642, but Oker or Oaker again in 1656 and 1660. When entries in the Wells vicars' book resume after the Restoration the signatures from September 1660 to April 1662 are John Oker'. His burial is not on record.

The more elaborate version of the name was evidently introduced on his own initiative when he was already nearly forty, and is confined to the decade before the civil war. The turning-point seems to have been his Oxford degree, conferred in July 1633 on John Okeover' (no middle V—perhaps a phonetic rendering?).⁵⁰ In those Cavalier days he might possibly have seen presentational advantages in spelling his name like

⁴⁴ R. M. Andrewes: 'Hidden treasure at Gloucester?' in *Viola da Gamba Society Bulletin*, 28 (1966). The catalogue includes 'Fancies' for TrTrB by 'Mr. John Oker'—presumably those in the D.245-7 set, rather than lost works as surmised by Ford.

⁴⁵ Izaak Walton: *The Life of Mr. George Herbert* (London, 1670), reprinted in Temple Classics edition (London, 1898), 186

⁴⁶ Major-General the Hon. George Wrottesley: 'An account of the family of Okeover ...', in *Staffordshire Historical Collections*, vol. 7 N.S. (London, 1904), 49-70

⁴⁷ WVC, Act Book 1593-1628, Register 1622-28, and 1627 list of vicars-choral in MS Various 1

⁴⁸ WVC, Various 2 (with continuation in separate cover)

⁴⁹ *HMC Wells II*, 418

⁵⁰ Wood: *Fasti* (reference in note 31)

the gentry family, whether or not he could actually claim descent from them - rather as John Cooper had become Giovanni Coprario when everything Italian was in fashion. This could also explain the reversion to plain Oker after the civil war.

Taking his life as a whole, there is a decided majority in favour of 'Oker', which might now be acceptable as the norm.

In conclusion, a comparison of the composer's name-changes with manuscripts of his music provides two musical sidelights. Metro calls him 'Mr. Okar'; Add. 17786-91 on the other hand uses mostly 'Okeover', but occasionally 'Oker', as though by copyist's lapse. This supports the suggested sequence of the three-part and five-part sets. Moreover, since Add. 17786-91 is an Oxford source, associated with New College, which presented the composer for his degree, it seems possible that the five-part set was completed by 1633 and copied into these part-books during his visit to Oxford (under his new name) for the ceremony. Did he perhaps present these compositions, or a selection of them, as the customary 'exercise' for his degree?

Postscript: Since this paper went to press, the three-part fantasies have been published in the U.S.A., in the 'Barrington Series', edited by Martha Bishop, and attributed to John Okefer' (a spelling not observed elsewhere).