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## Present at the birth

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Nicholas Temperley

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*In his keynote address, Nicholas Temperley notes that, over thirty years ago, the Americans accepted country psalmody as an important part of their musical culture whereas it was largely ignored in its country of origin. He describes his own change of attitude towards the repertoire and points to significant publications and groups which have been influential in arousing the growth of interest in country psalmody. He continues by attempting to slot country psalmody into pre-existing musical categories before a brief examination of the attempts to sing the psalms and the role played by the itinerant singing teachers. In the second part of his paper Temperley outlines his recent work on the Hymn Tune Index.*

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This is the first event of its kind. I am proud to have been invited to give the opening lecture, and I am grateful to all those who conceived and organised the conference. I feel that I am present at a historic moment, at the birth of an entirely new phenomenon.

When I started working on country church music nearly thirty years ago, there was no question of hearing any of the music; in fact hardly anyone seemed to know that it existed. I can hardly believe that I am now attending an entire conference devoted to the subject, with abundant opportunities to perform and hear the music.

In those days, the Americans were the only people who paid any attention to country church music. William Billings had never been entirely forgotten, and from early in this century the New England tunesmiths, as they call them, were seriously studied by historians and revived in publications, performances and recordings. The Americans even have a continuous performing tradition (Sacred Harp singing<sup>1</sup>) that seems to preserve some of the styles and practices of 18th-century country psalmody.

Why were the Americans so far ahead of us? I think the reason is clear. England has a long and grand tradition of art music, and we could feel good about our musical history without looking at anything that seemed rough or unsophisti-

cated. But for Americans, 18th-century psalmody was the beginning of their musical history. So it automatically had weight and significance, just as medieval polyphony like ‘Sumer is icumen in’ did for English historians. It was associated with the dawn of their country. They connected it, also, with democracy, patriotism and individualism. In fact, the first scholars who wrote about it thought that Americans had invented this kind of music! We can hardly blame them for making this mistake. There was nothing to contradict it in any current books, editions, or performances. The English had said nothing about their own country church music.

For me, it was an American who first opened the door to the great storehouse that we are now exploring. In 1966 Ralph Daniel published a book called *The Anthem in New England Before 1800*. Andrew Porter asked me to review the book for the *Musical Times*. I was surprised to learn that there was any such thing as an anthem in Puritan New England in the 18th century. I had always connected anthems with Anglican cathedrals. When I read Daniel’s book I found that not only was there a New England anthem, but it was modelled on an English type of parochial anthem that was quite new to me. I had just migrated to the States and I happened to be at Yale University, where the music library has a marvellous collection of British printed music. That was where I first began to explore the works of Chetham and Tans’ur and Arnold and Knapp.

The other day I looked up my review of Daniel’s book in the *Musical Times* of 1967, and I found some things that surprise me now. I said that although these English and American anthems were historically interesting, I didn’t think them worth reviving in performance. They were not like folk music or ‘primitive’ painting, I said, for the following reason:

When a composer tries to learn the techniques used by those who write music for the educated elite, his music acquires pretensions, and cannot easily be judged by standards other than those it seeks to attain ... This music is full of unexplained dissonances, meaningless sequences of harmony, false accents, and many other features that can only be called gross blunders by the standards of European music of the time – standards to which the composers themselves aspired, for they prefaced their

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<sup>1</sup> A name used for the southern singing school tradition of America taken from the enormously popular collection *The Original Sacred Harp* published by B. F. White and E. J. King in 1844. [CT]

collections with rules of composition which were watered-down versions of classical works of music theory.

(Temperley, 1967, pp. 510–12)

I quote this now against myself. It was the reaction that might have been expected from anyone who had had the kind of education and musical training that I had had at Cambridge and the RCM. But it had already been challenged by American scholars and critics. I soon changed my own views when I got more deeply into research on the music, and when I worked in an American university where similar music of American origin was already accepted, and where ethnomusicology was challenging many of the ideas I had been brought up to believe in.

That was the background for my book, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Temperley, 1979). Like Daniel's book, it was on a subject that had not existed before. By the time it appeared I was convinced that country church music is worth performing, though I'm not sure that I have reached the heights of enthusiasm that some of you seem to feel. For me, this weekend will be almost the first chance to hear a lot of this music live, though I have enjoyed listening to tapes made by various groups. It will also be a chance to hear diverse views on the formidable problems of editing, performing, and evaluating the music.

### Defining our field

I don't know when or how the revival of this music in England got off the ground – perhaps someone else will fill me in on that point. I understand that the Madding Crowd dates back to 1975, and was the first of many groups that are now included in the West Gallery Music Association, founded in 1990. These groups, it seems to me, have brought in the enthusiasm and the positive approach that have begun to convince many people, including listeners to the BBC, that there is something here worth listening to. Then there was *The New Oxford Book of Carols* (Keyte and Parrott, 1992). The open-minded attitude of its editors was enormously refreshing, and it led them to include whole classes of popular carols that had been ignored in the old Oxford Book (Dearmer, Williams and Shaw, 1928). There is now no longer any doubt that this music is to be treated seriously.

Back in 1928, Percy Dearmer began his preface to *The Oxford Book of Carols* with a famous sentence: 'Carols are songs with a religious impulse that are simple, hilarious, popular, and modern' (Dearmer, Williams and Shaw, 1928, p. v). This was certainly intended to challenge or shock people out of old prejudices, and it sounds like an all-

inclusive definition. But Dearmer went on to talk about 'true folk-poetry' and the purity of folk music, and it turned out that he and Vaughan Williams were placing very distinct boundaries on what was acceptable. Anything that sounded too much like either classical music or urban popular music was excluded, or altered and reharmonised to suit the modal tastes of the folk-music revival.

This brings me to a question that I have so far only skirted around. What is this music that we are talking about? The conference is called 'The Gallery Tradition', perhaps taking a hint from the name of the West Gallery Music Association. This is a very appealing phrase. It gives a wonderful visual image. It brings to mind that evocative painting of the west gallery choir, supposed by some to be at Bow Brickhill, Buckinghamshire. The term 'gallery music' is distinctive and easy to remember.

Even so, I hesitate to use the term myself, because it seems too pointedly associated with the Anglican parish church. Although the kind of music we are talking about certainly originated in the Church of England, the dissenting churches played a very important part later on, which should not be treated as if it was somehow marginal. For them, 'west gallery' means very little: their chapels had no liturgical east and west, and if they had galleries they were just as often for extra seating as for singing. Incidentally, the term also excludes American music of the same kind, which is very closely linked to it. We would benefit from exchanging ideas with our American counterparts, who have accumulated a lot of experience in dealing with this music. And of course, even in Anglican circles a lot of this music was sung and played on the ground floor of a church, or in a secular building or out of doors.

I'm quite sure that whoever decided on the term '(west) gallery music' did not mean it to be exclusive, but I think there is that danger. So I prefer to go on using the terms I used in my book: 'country church music' or 'country psalmody'.

Names apart – what is this music? It is choral music composed for people and places where the standards of trained professional music did not apply. Where does it fit into the general musical culture of England or Europe? We are used to a conventional division of western music into classical or art music, folk music, and popular music. One gets into trouble if one pushes this classification too far, and there are always ambiguous cases at the borders; but the categories themselves are still useful. Everyone knows roughly what they mean, and each of them has its own traditions, performing groups, journals and so on. Does country psalmody fit into any of these boxes?

Let's try them one by one. Art music, generally, is what people of high culture will pay to listen to, and in the past it produced professional musicians. They were the servants of the listeners, or at least their social inferiors, but they were also practitioners of a learned art; they set the technical standards, which were more or less unchallenged. That doesn't really apply to country psalmody. The people of high culture certainly did not pay to hear it; they generally didn't want to have anything to do with it. The composers, performers and audience all came from much the same social class. Their music was vulnerable to criticism or outright rejection by their social superiors, who applied standards that were based on a different kind of music.

Then what about folk music? It is the music that people make for themselves, and it can be learned by anyone without special skill or instruction. That doesn't apply to country psalmody either. The creators of country psalmody were eager to acquire the skill to compose, and they taught performing skills to their singers.

What about popular music? That requires a mass public and large financial investment, and it produces highly paid stars and hit songs. These things, too, are foreign to country psalmody.

So we have here something that does not fit into any of the established categories, and that I think is why it has had a struggle to get accepted in the scholarly world – and the struggle is only beginning. For each of the three main categories, there are agreed canons and standards and methods for dealing with the music – for understanding it, describing it, evaluating it, editing it, performing it. But in dealing with country psalmody, these standards don't work very well.

As one example, take editing. The standard conventions for editing art music are designed to reproduce, as exactly as possible, what the composer intended. Sometimes it can't be done with the sources that have survived, but at least there is no doubt what the scholarly editor is trying to do. The composer is the ultimate authority.

With folk music, the composer has disappeared from view and we have only the performer. We can cut out the editor and just listen to a tape; but if a scholar does try to write down the music, his/her goal is to be as exact as possible. The performer is the ultimate authority.

But what are we going to do about country psalmody? We may think we know who first composed a piece, but the music was passed round, modified, rearranged, or combined with bits of other pieces as it travelled round the regions or across the ocean. Of course the same may well

have happened with a folk-song, but in that case we have only the several surviving versions to listen to. With country psalmody we can often trace the whole process of change through the various printed and manuscript editions. Is the earliest version really the only authentic one? I think it would be wrong to come to that conclusion. It would thrust an importance and a responsibility on the composer that he did not claim or want. Then what is an editor to do? And how can we distinguish between unintended errors and deliberate breaches of the rules of composition?

The answers probably vary with the circumstances, but my point is that we are going to have to work out our own standards and methods. It will be a long process, but I think this conference will help it along. We are going to be taking part in discussions about editing and performance practice, and we are going to be performing music that has been edited. I am very keen to find out what other people have concluded on these difficult questions.

### **How did it start?**

Meanwhile, I want to explore a different question: How and why did country psalmody come into being? As far as I know, there is nothing quite like it in other European countries; it seems to have been a strictly English development, later spreading to Scotland, America, and English-speaking communities abroad (I am fascinated to see that we are going to hear about the tradition spreading to the Isle of Man and Australia). In the rest of Europe, whether Catholic or Protestant, the churches kept a strict control over the singing through the agency of professional musicians. Even in the Calvinist parts of Holland and Germany, organs were soon provided by local nobility or city councils. As Luke Milbourne<sup>1</sup> pointed out in 1712, 'both the High and Low Dutch, and French, have taken more care of their ordinary psalmody than we have' (Temperley, 1979, p. 128).

England around 1700 seems to have had a unique combination of circumstances that allowed the development of a new kind of music. The nobility and gentry were distancing themselves from English music and running after the Italians; the parish clergy were trying to be gen-

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<sup>1</sup> Luke Milbourne (1649–1720), who was the Rector of St Ethelburga, Bishopsgate Street, London (1704–1720), preached a sermon to the Company of Parish Clerks at St Alban, Wood Street, November 1712. His own collection *The psalms of David in English metre ... suited to all the tunes sung in churches* had appeared in 1698. [CT]

try (you remember the stories of the parson racing through the sermon with spurs under his surplice, ready to follow the hunt<sup>1</sup>); democratic feelings were asserting themselves; commerce was thriving, in the printing and publishing trades as much as anywhere. Congregational singing had been neglected for 150 years. Some serious-minded clergy wanted to do something about it, by employing singing teachers to teach young men to sing the old psalm tunes correctly and in time. But, as we know, the choirs soon wanted new and more challenging music.

At first, professional composers were commissioned by publishers such as Henry Playford, or the unknown compiler of the 1708 edition of the *Supplement to the New Version*, to provide new music for country churches. But before very long, untrained country musicians decided they could do just as well for themselves. The music they produced was very far from correct by the standards of art music. In Holland or Germany, it would probably have been suppressed. In England, it was ignored by the authorities, occasionally criticised or ridiculed by superior people, but tolerated. And so country psalmody was able to develop on its own terms for 150 years or more.

The first generation of country psalmody composers – John and James Green, Matthew Wilkins, Israel Holdroyd, John Chetham, and their colleagues – may have begun by copying the professionals, but if they did, they moved away rather rapidly. For one thing, little direct help or encouragement came from the upper classes or from professional musicians. But there was a more compelling reason. The free market was operating. Style was shaped by demand. The country singers they were writing for had no access to opera houses, concerts, or drawing-rooms, and rarely if ever heard cathedral choirs. Their music was what we would call ballads, folk-songs and dances; they felt much more at home in the dorian mode with a flat seventh than in the harmonic minor scale, and chords like the dominant seventh, secondary dominants, and suspensions sounded alien and unsingable. The spirit of classical restraint and elegance that was found in Corelli, Handel or Arne meant little to them; if they sang, they wanted to sing with unabashed feeling, exuberance, and ostentation – and most of the time, loudly.

But the singing teachers who provided this music could not invent a new style in a vacuum.

<sup>1</sup> One of the most famous hunting parsons was the Rev. John (Jack) Russell (1796–1883) of Swymington, Devon, whose hunting terrier Trump was the ancestor for all Jack Russells (see Hinde, 1983). [CT]

They had to take as a starting point the only kind of harmonised music that existed: the art music of the day. They published introductions copied from learned theory treatises, sometimes setting out rules of composition, and they tried to follow those rules. But they did it in a way that produced a very different sound from the music from which the rules were extracted. William Tans'ur followed the rules of consonance and dissonance quite closely. In many tunes he harmonised every note with a triad or a bare fifth. Country singers could tune their voices nicely to these chords, and they liked the result. Upper-class listeners waited in vain for the cadence formulas and ornamental dissonances they expected, and when they failed to hear them, they dismissed the music as barbaric and beneath contempt.

But it was allowed to continue. Some country composers tried out the effects of clashing passing notes, or used 'successive' composition, where each part worked all right against the bass but the total combination was left to take care of itself. There are some wild passages here and there which are a tough problem for editors. Another development was the extension of genres – from simple tunes and anthems, to fuguing tunes, carols, chanting tunes, canticle settings, and set pieces. Later still the instruments joined in, and were given independent symphonies to play. From time to time, the influence of recent art music was felt, as in the music of Joseph Key. But country church music still had its distinctive character, I believe, when it was forced out by the Victorians.

### **The Hymn Tune Index**

Now I would like to talk about the Hymn Tune Index, which has been taking up a lot of my time since I was last heard from. I am sure that any of you who have worked in this repertory must have been faced with the problem of where a tune comes from, whether you see it in print or in a manuscript or hear it sung. In the past, editors of hymnals and hymnal companions have made great efforts to trace the tunes that happened to be in their selection, and their work is often very valuable, but now that we are trying to open up a huge territory of unknown music, it seems to make sense to try to do the job comprehensively. I started this job in 1976. Later I received a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (a great American institution, which seems about to be wound up by the Republican Congress). The grant money was used up years ago, but we have kept going and we are now very nearly finished.

Of course, the only way to do this sort of thing

today is with computers, and that's how I have done it, but the technology has changed so fast that, since I began, I have three times had to start again with a new system, which is one reason for the long delay. The other reason is that I keep finding new sources.

The word 'hymn' is used in its general sense; the distinction between hymns and metrical psalms mattered to people in the 18th century, but it is no longer significant today, and anyway, I don't know how to tell the difference between a metrical psalm tune and a hymn tune. So we simply lumped them all together as hymn tunes. We start at the very beginning, that is with the first printed source (Coverdale's *Goostly Psalms* of 1535) and go up to 1820. Well, we had to stop somewhere and in the 19th century the number of printed sources almost doubles with every decade, so I'm leaving it to someone else to bring the index up to date – if they can do it in a lifetime. Another practical decision taken early on was to restrict ourselves to printed sources. We would have liked to cover manuscripts as well but there seemed to be no end to them, especially if you include those manuscript tunes that owners often added at the back or front of their printed books. We would have had to look at every copy of every printed tune-book, hymn-book, bible and prayer book.

So: it had to be printed sources only, printed sources of tunes associated with English-language hymn or metrical psalm texts, wherever published (and this includes Scotland, Ireland, America, and the rest of the world). It also includes, of course, many tunes that are outside the country church music tradition. We do not include hymn-books that give tune names without music notation.

We also had to cut out things longer than hymn tunes, such as anthems and set pieces: our definition is a tune intended for strophic repetition. This was the easiest place to draw the line. Once you bring in set pieces and anthems, where is the boundary with cantatas or even oratorios? I understand that Blaise Compton<sup>1</sup> is building an index of parochial anthems; I wish him luck.

Even with these restrictions, we have had to deal with about 2,400 printed sources, of which about 1,800 are different collections of tunes (the others are unchanged reprints of the same book). In those sources we have indexed about 110,000 tunes. I will explain what indexing involves in a minute. Of those 110,000, there are nearly 18,000

different tunes; the rest are exact or nearly exact duplicates of the original tune.

In the past, various people have tried to build up card indexes of tunes, using tune names for the purpose. But many of you will know that that isn't likely to work very well. Especially in the west gallery period, each compiler tended to change the names of tunes and rechristen them after local villages. And old names were used for new tunes.

Clearly, the only way was to use the tune incipits themselves; so we have devised a simple code, by which you turn the notes into numbers, 1 for doh, 2 for ray, 3 for mi, and so on. It works surprisingly well; the first ten numbers are usually sufficient to find a tune in the database. Using this code and a few other symbols, we have entered each tune in its entirety. Each time the tune appears in another printed source, we register its presence and give the name, text, composer attribution, key, and voice setting found in that source of that tune. The result is that we have a complete chronological history of the use of each tune in all printed sources up to 1820. In all but a few cases of doubtful dating, I can give a pretty definite answer to questions like: When did a tune first appear in print? Who composed it, or at least, what part of the country did it come from? When was it first used with such and such a text? Who gave it such and such a name?

There are all kinds of thorny problems. In fact, if I had had any idea how difficult this was going to be, I probably would never have started. Some of the problems may have occurred to you already.

### **Finding all the printed sources**

I don't need to tell you that there are hundreds of books lying undiscovered in churches, record offices, personal libraries and lots of other places. We began with the standard bibliographies (most of which stop at 1800) and took off from there, searching more than 150 libraries, using various databases, and searching for particular books that we knew had once existed from advertisements or copyright entries. We have had a lot of help from people who knew what we were doing and wrote in to tell us about sources they had found – among the delegates at the conference I specially want to thank Sally Drage, and Sue Glover has also been very helpful in this regard. On the average, since we finished indexing the main body of well-known sources in 1987, we have discovered about 25 new sources a year.

Now that the Hymn Tune Index is in the process of being published we shall, nevertheless, continue to maintain the database on-line and we can add sources to that as they come in.

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Compton, a delegate at the conference, selected the material for the repertoire book used at the conference. [CT]

## Dating

Obviously, if you are going to decide when a tune was first printed and then come up with a tune history, the correct chronological order of the printed books is very important.

Most printed music has no imprint date, and even if it does, the date is sometimes wrong, especially in the case of engraved music. Datings in library catalogues are often just guesswork, and may be wildly wrong, but they are often copied in printed books – and that goes for my own book as well. I have taken great pains to try to come up with accurate dates, or at least date ranges, for all our printed sources. These are some of the kinds of evidence we have used, roughly in order of reliability:

*Terminus a quo* (i.e. earliest possible date):

Copyright entries, e.g. at Stationers' Hall

Dated preface or dedication or other date in the book

Date when a publisher, printer or engraver began operations or moved to a stated address

Newspaper announcement of coming publication, or publication 'this day'

Inherited title, office, or degree conferred on a person mentioned on the publication, such as the sovereign, the compiler, a tune composer, the dedicatee, or someone in a list of subscribers; or an event such as a battle or fire

*Terminus ad quem* (i.e. latest possible date):

Dated inscription by an owner of the book

Advertisement offering the publication for sale

Death of the publisher, printer, dedicatee, etc. named on the title page

Removal of the publisher, printer, etc. to a different address from the one given

Review of the book in a dated journal, or reference to it in a dated book

Use of tunes, claimed as new in this book, in another, reliably dated book

When these kinds of evidence are not available, we have had to fall back on more wishy-washy evidence like imprint dates, watermarks, amount of wear on engraved plates, approximate dates of activity of compilers and printers. If all else fails we simply accept the datings in library catalogues.

## Attributions

When a book assigns someone's name to a tune, one has to be very cautious about saying that this person was the composer. Some tunes, such as 'Old Hundredth', have been attributed to

more than 30 different composers. Sometimes compilers put down a famous name like Luther, Dowland, Purcell, or Handel, on the basis of popular legend, or perhaps they made it up to arouse interest. More often they wrote the name of the source from which they had taken the tune, like Arnold or Chetham, and this was copied from book to book until people assumed it was the composer's name.

We look rather carefully to see when an attribution first appeared, and assess its value in that source. If the compiler of a book claims the tune as his own, that is pretty good prima-facie evidence that he really did write it; I have found that most people were honest in this way, and false claims are extremely rare. Also, if a compiler commissioned a number of composers to provide new tunes, that seems convincing, too. But the further away in time and place you get from the first printing of the tune, the less reliable a composer attribution must be. Sometimes the composer left an autograph manuscript (a good example is 'Darwell's 148th'), but this is not common in my experience. Most manuscripts of country church music were copied from printed books, or they were used in a very small circle and the music never got printed.

Another point is that the word 'composed' didn't always mean what we take it to mean. In earlier times, most tunes were anonymous until someone harmonised them, and the harmoniser was often called the composer. Thomas Ravenscroft in 1621 published *The Whole Book of Psalms Composed into 4 Parts* and printed his own name and the names of other professional musicians at the top of each tune setting. But many of these tunes had already existed for many years, and what he meant by 'composed' was what we would call 'arranged'. But what about the new ones, above all 'Old 104th', which has Ravenscroft's own name above it? As this doesn't appear in any earlier source, I have to assume that in this case Ravenscroft wrote the tune as well as the harmonies.

## Which voice

I'm sure any of you who have looked at music, especially from the height of west gallery activity on either side of 1800, will have come across prints or manuscripts where you can't be quite sure whether the trebles or the tenors are supposed to sing the tune. The G clef was ambiguous from Playford onwards; the order of voices from high to low began to change when keyboard instruments came in, and the tune appeared above the bass in the second lowest staff to make life easier for the organist, even if it was to be sung by

the trebles.

I discussed the treble/tenor problem at length in my book. In the Hymn Tune Index we have managed to duck it altogether. We simply decide which stave seems to carry the tune if the book doesn't tell you – the final cadence is often a good indication – and then we number the voices from top to bottom and say which voice has the tune. The setting 3/4 means the 3rd voice out of 4 (counting from the top) carries the tune; and we don't try to decide whether it is a treble or a tenor.

True, in some tunes the treble and the tenor were deliberately given equally satisfying melodies. In such cases we probably record both. Sometimes the two tunes took off on their own and have independent histories.

### Variants

Possibly the worst problem we have had to deal with is tune variants. When a tune appears in 500 books it is unlikely to be identical in all of them. The oldest tunes, especially, tended to change as they were passed on by mouth and ear, so that different versions would exist in different parts of the country, just like any other folk-song. There is obviously no point in trying to decide that one version is authentic and others are in some way corrupted. But how much do two versions differ before you decide that they are really different tunes? And having decided, what you do about the versions that come in the middle, a bit like version A but also a bit like version B? Well, we tried to define our policy, but there were always individual cases where it didn't seem to make musical sense,

so in the end each case had to be decided on its own merits. Minor differences, like extra passing notes or isolated note changes, are ignored; major differences, like changes in the last note of a line or in a series of notes, make a tune different, and therefore separately indexed, though clearly related to the first. But however we divide it up, we always show the earliest version as the 'prototype' and the later ones as 'derivatives'. One kind of change is always called a derivative: when someone adapts a tune to fit a different text metre.

### Passing notes interfering with incipits

I said just now that passing notes and other minor changes don't make a new tune. But suppose they come in the very first line? Isn't that going to affect the incipit? And won't that make it impossible to find the tune in the Hymn Tune Index? There is no ideal answer to this, but we have put in a series of cross-references so that if we have used a version without a passing note, and you look up the version with a passing note, you will be directed to the right tune. But there is always the possibility that someone will find a tune in a manuscript, or taken down from a singer, with new passing notes added that we knew nothing about. Well, we are planning a special sub-index that will classify tunes by metre, mode, and the last notes of lines, as the last notes are not usually altered by passing notes or other ornaments, and we think this will be another way of getting to the tune if the incipit, tune name, text and composer are not enough to do the job.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In concluding his address Professor Temperley asked for information on the following psalmody composers: William Anchors; George Bridges; John Chetham (before he went to Skipton); James Evison; J. French (first name not known); Edward Harwood; James Hewett; Simon Hinton; Israel Holdroyd; Abraham Milner; Thomas Orme; Ely Stanfield; Francis Timbrell; William Yates. [CT]

