

Norfolk Dancing Masters 1690 -1815

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Acknowledgments

With thanks to:

Liz Orna and Harriet Cox of Norwich Early Dance Group

Jenny Watts of Norfolk Record Office - and NEDG

Cathy Terry of Norfolk Museums Service

Helen Rowles of Strangers' Hall

The staff of Norfolk Heritage Centre

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Introduction

At a time when Norwich was the second city in the country it may have attracted a smarter and larger than usual number of dancing masters to set up practice. Between 1690 and 1815 there were 21 of them, between one and three being in practice at any one time. Still more practised in Norfolk, based in Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn. A few worked from a single site; most worked a circuit, twenty miles in radius, of small towns and villages. They often taught in schools on their circuit, and some masters, assisted by their wives, also ran boarding schools.

In spite of their claims to gentility, the masters were a piratical set, apt to raid each others' territories for the Most Commodious Room and to advertise their opportunism as being in the best interest of their pupils. As well as fashionable social dance, the masters taught fencing (having an excellent understanding of self-preservation) French (the language of fashionable society) and etiquette - which is ironic.

Francis Noverre's establishment of his Academy in Norwich in 1793 was less piracy and more a coup d' état. There was already a dominant practice in the city, with a hundred-year history under John Boseley followed by the Christian dynasty. Noverre, whose family history was also dance history, secured the smartest location, the Assembly House, secured the smartest location, the Assembly House, and out-maneuvred the competition, who were justifiable indignant.

As a result of this study of dancing masters, Noverre was extracted from the heap and given his own publication, *Mr Noverre's Academy* (Marsh, 2005)¹.

I had intended to summarise The Rest in a companion volume, but it has become clear that the Boseley/Christian practice was as important as Noverre's, and it forms the centre-piece of this account. There is often little information about other practices. In the case of Boseley and Christian there is plenty of information about their personal lives in legal documents and parish registers but not enough information about their profession.

As a general rule what we know about the masters as a profession comes from their advertisements in the local press: the *Norwich Post* from 1711, *Norwich Gazette* from 1756, followed by the *Norwich Mercury* and *Norfolk Chronicle*. Occasionally a master advertises the publication of his collection of dances in the style of the London masters such as John Weaver, but none of the Norfolk publications are extant except for a *Treatise on dancing*, published in 1815 by Noverre's assistant Francis Lambert.

¹ Recently revised and enlarged with new material, which will be available in due course, on the Norwich Early Dance Group website (www.norwichearlydance.org/uk)

That leaves us with advertisements for classes and scholars' balls. These vary from a brief name, date, place and price to an entire syllabus delivered with 'puffing' - known to us as 'spin' - promising select accommodation and the Most Fashionable Dances taught in an Expeditious Manner.

Some advertisements carry a subtext. In 1730 Mr Cailliault of Norwich made elaborate protestations of being maligned because of his low fees. He was maligned because he undercut the competition - who shortly saw him off. In 1794 Edward Christian and his near-neighbour John Browne both hotly denied that they intended to retire: they were nearing the end of their careers but also facing competition from Francis Noverre. With even worse judgement, Mr Lalliet, in 1798 "refutes the calumny that he has absconded from Yarmouth" where he, too, was facing hot competition, partly from the ubiquitous Mr Noverre. Even more colourful are the masters whose origin was the theatre, or who made use of an appearance on the stage for self-advertisement.

We don't know how their pupils reacted to such advertisements. There is nothing to identify their pupils except for what can be deduced from the advertisements. 'Young Ladies and Gentlemen' means children and young people up to marriageable age, taught for the most part in classes, occasionally in private. Adults were more usually taught privately, either in their own homes or at the master's room.

As to who the pupils were: anyone who could afford a fee to further their social aspirations, particularly in the marriage market, or those already of the Polite World who wished to learn the latest dance and figure well at an assembly ball.

There being no ideal way of arranging an uneven amount of information and masters who do not keep station, I shall adopt the least-worst solution and proceed by way of small country practices to those of Yarmouth, King's Lynn and Norwich. By way of an afterpiece there are the masters from the theatre. Finally, after considering the masters' conduct, practice - and malpractice - terms and conditions, I shall try to assess their place in society.

2 Small practices

There are a few details of two such practices: Mr Poulain taught dancing in Harleston from 1776 to 1778 and taught fencing at Edward Christian's dancing school in Norwich on Saturdays in 1777.

Mr R Winter taught a circuit of Downham, Stoke and Thetford in 1794. Downham features on the circuits of King's Lynn masters - the small fry were the prey of the bigger fish.

3 Great Yarmouth

Of the three main bases we have the least information on circuits based in Great Yarmouth, but rather more on Norwich masters who tried to snaffle bits of Yarmouth and Yarmouth masters who went on a raiding party to Norwich assisted by ingenious advertising. There are more details of their activities in Norwich, so they reappear under that heading. Meantime, here is a chronology of Yarmouth-based circuits.

1729

Mr D M Jones ran a dancing school and a boarding school, working in Yarmouth only. No location is known

1736

Joseph Burney, from London, advertised in the *Gazette* 26 June, a practice in Norwich on Mondays and Tuesdays and in Yarmouth on Thursday and Saturday. No Yarmouth location known.

1738

William Claggett, dancing master in Yarmouth advertised 10 June ' ... he will teach Tuesday and Wednesday at Chapelfield House, Norwich.'²Yarmouth location not known.

1742-50

Peter Oliver, lately of the Norwich Company of Comedians at the White Swan theatre, opened a dancing school in Yarmouth on 22 March 1742. In 1743 he held a pupils' ball in N. Walsham and a practice at Mr Vipond's in Norwich. On 6 January 1753 he advertised a pupils' ball in Yarmouth, unlocated, alas. Oliver came to a sad end; his suicide at Deal in Kent was reported in the *Gazette* on 24 July 1762.

1776-1779

Yarmouth was on the circuit of John Browne of Norwich.

1770

Mr Lindsey of Yarmouth taught twice a week in Norwich.

1792

Mr Lalliet of Paris, lately assistant to François Vernon of Lynn, set up a practice in Yarmouth which ran till at least 1802. He also taught in Beccles in competition with several Norwich masters. In 1793 he tried to set up a practice in Norwich which was apparently unsuccessful and ended in a retreat to Yarmouth.

² Chapelfield House was the earlier name of the Assembly House.

1802

Edward Christian of Norwich ‘... removed his dancing Academy to a commodious room at the Star Tavern’, but we don’t know his previous Yarmouth address on his circuit. His successor, Mr Bailey, included Southtown (Yarmouth) on his circuit. On 26 November 1803 Christian announced his annual pupil balls on his circuit, including Yarmouth, in the *Chronicle*.

1805

Lalliet’s pupil and successor, John Eager, based in Yarmouth as a dancing master but with a wide practice as a music master and musician, made a bid to open a dancing school in Norwich. His high-handed method did not lead to success and he retreated as his master had done. The full story is told in the Norwich section.

The Yarmouth masters tended to have a Norwich practice in their sights. We know more about the ones who worked in Norwich. The Norwich masters retaliated by appropriating bits of Yarmouth for their circuits.

4 King's Lynn

Here there were a number of masters with wide and variable circuits competing with each other and with 'raiders' from Norwich. Two practices had clear lines of descent, others were short-lived. A straight chronological study is not practicable.

Edward Eastland first advertised in the *Gazette*, 1725, holding assemblies at the Duke's Head Inn. It isn't clear whether these were pupil balls, a social event, or a combination of the two. On 16 March 1723 he gave notice of the opening of his girls' school and dancing school, both of which he moved to the High Street in 1725. His assemblies, advertised on 4 April 1727, had moved up-market to the Town Hall.

Richard Harris 'from M. de Stroyd's in London ... teaches at Eastland's late school' by 10 March 1744, and continued to practise until 1766. On 25 August 1759 he advertised his 'Scholars' Ball' at St George's Hall, part of the Town Hall:

'... at 7pm. Scholars 5/-, non-scholars 2/6. There will be dances as usual for Ladies and Gentlemen.'

He had established the regular event which combined a pupil demonstration, a parents' evening, a party and good advertising.

In 1757, at the Town Hall, a Mrs Eastland 'held' Lynn Mart Assembly - a ball which formed part of an annual Fair. Mrs Eastland must have been Edward's widow, acting as hostess, an unusual event in the male establishment running of Norfolk assemblies.

Mr White succeeded to Harris's practice in 1766, or subsumed Harris's practice into his own, based in Norwich, but with a circuit of Lynn, Wisbech, Kennet, Bury, Walsham-le-Willows and Wickham Market. He did not advertise after 1767.

Mr Oswald, 'sometime of Norwich', advertised as music and dancing master at Lynn and at a school in Walsingham on 29 October 1768. Nothing more of him is known apart from his death reported on 28 August 1784 .

Wall du Val advertised on 30 April 1774 as fencing and dancing master at Lynn Town Hall, 'Schools attended within a 20mile radius. Minuet and Cotillon privately taught.' On 3 September 1774 he advertised his pupil ball:

'Town Hall Lynn ... his pupils to have 3 tickets each for themselves and Friends. The Ball to open at 6 o'clock with Minuets. The Young Ladies and Gentlemen ... to conclude at 9 o'clock and spectators to begin at that time and continue dancing the remainder of the evening.'

du Val returned to his London practice in Hatton Garden, run by an assistant in the meantime, in 1777, leaving his Lynn practice in the hands of his local assistant François Veron or Vernon (he is Veron in the *Gazette*, Vernon in the *Mercury*, evidently not local at all, and progressively anglicised; or a franglicised Englishman who regretted his pretence).

Vernon taught dancing, fencing and French on a varying circuit: in 1780 Lynn, Downham, Wells, Walsingham, Fakenham, Swaffham. In 1791 he engaged an

assistant (unidentified) and advertised on 12 March that he would teach in Yarmouth and Norwich. Yarmouth remained on his circuit; he held a pupil ball there on 5 October 1793, but he may have been defeated in Norwich where there is no trace of his activities. He lost Downham from his circuit but gained Dereham. Circuit wars clearly kept the fellows on their toes. His terms were 15/- per quarter, 10/6 entrance for beginners; fencing 10/6 per quarter and 10/6 entrance. 'Entrance' was always waived for those previously instructed. Vernon continued to teach French, which remained the language of fashionable society whether it took a Francophile or Francophobic attitude to the French Revolution. On 22 March 1794 Vernon advertised the teaching of Scottish dances privately, to adults, a fashionable demand in the Romantic period. His death was reported on 25 June 1796.

Of the two remaining practices, I think that of C. Brady picked up Vernon's circuit and teaching. He gave notice of his first annual ball at Lynn on 5 October 1796 and by 25 March 1797 advertised a circuit of Snettisham, Burnham, Wells, Swaffham, Fakenham and Wisbech, and taught:

'... Fashionable Scottish, Irish and Welch steps, the Devonshire and Prince of Wales Minuets, Minuet de la Cour, Gavotte, Allemande, etc. Pedal harp and violin also taught.'

The Devonshire Minuet was created by Vestris Senior and Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire during a private lesson in 1781. Vestris inserted it into the ballet *Ninette à la Cour* at the King's Theatre in London. Fifteen years later it is all the rage at King's Lynn. The harp had become fashionable in the drawing room and the dance band. What 'Welch' steps were - sneaking off, backwards, perhaps - I should like to know. Brady advertised pupil balls regularly, 'introducing a dance of his own composition' at Wisbech on 9 December 1797. He probably composed the dance 'The Vanguard; or the breaking of the line' which began an assembly in Swaffham in honour of the victory at Aboukir Bay in 1798. The Vanguard was Nelson's flagship, Captain Edward Berry. Nelson's niece, Kitty Bolton, wrote to Fanny Nelson describing her mother (Nelson's sister Susannah) leading the dance with Dixon Hoste, father of Nelson's protégé William Hoste, newly made Captain. Alas, Kitty's description is devoted to clothing and ornaments and not about the dance, which gives us some insight into how young ladies viewed an assembly ball.

By 1805 Brady was in practice with Mr Barron, and together they outlasted their main competitor, Mr Baker, music and dancing master at Lynn, Fakenham, Walsingham, Wisbech and Downham (this study is not intended to sound like a railway timetable for competitive private lines). Baker also had musical instruments for hire. He advertised a dancing school at Swaffham, 7 June 1792; his annual ball at Lynn, 5 October 1792; 'Fashionable Scottish Dances' taught at Lynn and Wisbech, 2 August 1794. On 18 March 1797 he advertised his partnership with Mr Hart, teaching music and dancing on a circuit which now included Wells, but after an annual ball at Lynn, 14 October 1797, no more is heard of him. I suspect

that Brady and Barron collected their practice, having previously duplicated their circuit, and reigned supreme at Lynn into the next century.

5 Norwich

Mr Boseley's Dancing Room

John Boseley (c1660-1739) opens the account of the Norwich dancing masters in fine style, but remains an enigma. He was a well-to-do property owner with a coat of arms on the considerable amount of plate detailed in his will. He styled himself 'gentleman', but whether as befits a property owner or from hereditary entitlement I don't know. I don't know his origins; he had relations and property interest in and around Terrington St Clement but his birth is not registered there. He was evidently a dancing master of repute but I don't know who trained him or where. For all we know about the man of property there is little to identify his profession. He grew up with the coranto and would have taught the minuet, but we learn nothing about his syllabus.

He is first known to be in Norwich in 1693. He and his wife Abigail (b.1667) lived in St Andrew's parish where the birth of two of their children was registered: John on 13 September 1693, Thomas on 9 September 1694. Boseley was probably working as a dancing master but nothing is known of his practice at or before this time.

By 1695 he had moved to the adjoining parish of St John at Maddermarket and lived in the building known today as Strangers' Hall, which he owned. Strangers' Hall, on Charing Cross, is a composite building with medieval origins, a Tudor hall and later additions. It had been a merchant's house and, in 1660, it belonged to Sir Joseph Paine, hosier and Mayor. In Boseley's day it was in multiple occupancy: as well as Boseley's house, there were tenements, warehouses and a frontage of shops, each section known by the name of the current or previous occupant. At least, that is the general rule. As it happens there is no reference to 'Mr Boseley's house' but Land Tax assessments prove that he owned the property, and the Churchwardens' Accounts prove that he lived there from 1695 to 1714. There are maps on which this site is called 'the Dancing Master's estate'.

Tradition asserts that Boseley practised there. As he was in practice at his next address we have to argue backwards to a previous practice, probably in the hall which has space but a paved floor, rather than in the smaller rooms with board floors.

The property, which I shall call 'Strangers' Hall' for the sake of clarity, lies in two parishes: St John Maddermarket and St Gregory's. The parish boundary divides the site unequally. The Boseleys registered the birth of their next two children at St John's: William on 10 March 1696 and Abigail on 23 March 1697. Both babies died within weeks of their birth. It looks as if Boseley lived in the East wing of Strangers' Hall, but he may have preferred the vicar of St John's. A second Abigail was born in 1699; her birth was not registered at St John's, but she died in this parish in 1728 aged 29.

In the early 1700s, we meet Boseley the dancing master - after a fashion. He figures as 'Mr Boseley of Norwich' in the list of dancing masters who subscribed to John Weaver's *Orchesography; or the Art of Dancing* (1706). This was a translation of Feuillet's *Choreologie* with the author's new system of dance notation, published in Paris in 1701. 'Mr Boseley' was also among the masters subscribing to Edward Pemberton's *Essay for the improvement of dancing* (1711). Both works included a short treatise and a collection of dances.

Boseley figures in these lists among an elite: four court dancing masters, the best stage dancers, the best teachers of social dance (see Appendix 2 for details of the subscribers). They cover interesting times. Josias Priest danced in the Duke's Playhouse in London in 1667 but is better known for his girls' school in Chelsea where *Dido and Aeneas* was performed. Mr Isaac was Queen Anne's dancing master when she was a child and at her court. The significance of the lists to this story is that Boseley must be presumed to be among equals. He may have risen so high in his profession that he now practised only privately. We know much less about such practices, and we have learned nothing about Boseley's life in Norwich.

In 1715 he let Strangers' Hall to a Mr Bateman and moved a few hundred yards east into St Michael at Plea parish where he had a property which included what came to be known as 'Mr Boseley's Yard', in which stood 'Mr Boseley's Dancing Room'. The contemporary direction was 'by the Red Well'. Chase's 1783 *Directory* identifies it as at 3 Redwell Street, opposite the church, in a yard which would be gentrified as Clement Court in 1816 and demolished in slum clearance c.1950. A photograph c.1939 shows the yard looking towards the entrance. Unfortunately the photographer has his back to the public health laboratory, which was once Mr Boseley's Dancing Room. A dwelling on the left may have housed the Boseley family, but we know only their parish, not their home address. They were certainly nearby in a parish of only 113 houses and 482 souls.

Family misfortune pursued Boseley to his new address. His son Thomas died on 17 May 1715 and was buried at St Michael at Plea. John also predeceased his father, but when and here is not known. On 8 April 1718 Boseley's daughter Abigail married Thomas Jenney at Colney which may have been Thomas's parish. There was evidently no paternal disapproval for Thomas and Abigail became the occupants of Strangers' Hall or a part of it. Three of their children will play a further part in this tale: Abigail born in St John Maddermarket parish 1 April 1719, Thomas born in St Michael at Plea parish 17 March 1727; and Mary whose baptismal record is not to be found. Their mother died on 26 March 1728. Thomas soon re-married but his wife died in childbirth on 20 October 1729. Thomas vacated Strangers' Hall, but we shall meet its next occupants shortly.

Boseley's professional life, meanwhile, continued in his new Dancing Room where concerts were advertised on 24 November 1716, 5 January 1717, 6 August 1720 and 7 January 1721. This is the first evidence of his profession in Norwich, even if it tells us very little. Nor do we learn much more except for the conclusion

of his professional life when Francis Christian advertised on 29 July 1732 that he would move his dancing school 'to the Great Room in Mr Boseley's Yard.' Mr Christian is the second half of this story and we will return to him with reference to Boseley as his landlord.

Boseley remained in St Michael parish, where his wife died on 10 April 1738, aged 71. Boseley himself died on 28 December 1739 aged 79. At his funeral the coffin was borne by six of his tenants, two of whom may have been Francis Christian and his son. Boseley had expressed a wish to be buried with his wife but their grave is not to be found in the churchyard. The church has long been deconsecrated; the churchyard, whose surface is high above the road, has been pared away for road widening. The Boseleys are either hidden by later burials or somewhere in the ether.

Boseley's will reveals the man but barely hints at the dancing master. He was a godly man and began the will with an extended statement of his faith. He was charitable and asked for his poorest tenants - paying less than thirty shillings a year - to be excused a quarter's rent. He left a shilling each to ten poor widows in the parish.

He left a startling £1,125 in bequests aside from the dispersal of his property and possessions. His properties included Strangers' Hall, 'Mr Boseley's Yard', property in St Peter Parmentergate parish and unspecified property in London. It is not clear whether he inherited the properties or bought them himself. The manner in which he divided his estate between his executor/nephew - John Boseley of Terrington - and his three grandchildren hints at expectation that trouble would arise, in which case bequests to his disputatious grandchildren were revoked and his nephew was to be sole heir. Trouble duly arose, but not as it had been foreseen. Boseley's nephew died in 1748 and further complicated the business.

It is all so Galsworthy that one is not surprised to find Very Young Abigail: 'my granddaughter Abigail' - Abigail Jenney who married William Wicks shortly before they became the occupants of Strangers' Hall in 1735. Extremely Young Abigail, the fourth of their eight children, was born there in 1740. Her eldest brother was blessed with the name Boseley Rice Wicks.

Under the terms of her grandfather's will, Abigail Wicks inherited £400, £10 more for mourning, a share of household goods and Strangers' Hall, held in trust during her lifetime by the executor while she received interest and profits - whilst living rent-free - 'for her sole use ... that she may not be charged with the debts and engagements of her husband, William Wicks'. In 1748 the executor died and William Wicks raised a mortgage in order to convert Strangers' Hall to the Judge's Lodging whilst living on the property. Chase's 1783 *Directory* lists him at 8 Judge's Lodging where he remained until 1788. (Burial records for Abigail and William Wicks are not to be found; where they died is not known.)

The Redwell Street property including the Dancing Room was left, in trust, to Mary Jenney, not yet eighteen, who lived in London with her brother Thomas and their twice-widower father, Thomas senior. The latter received a bequest of £50,

but he already received the profits of Boseley's London estate, probably as Abigail Boseley's marriage portion. Thomas junior was left the accoutrements of a gentleman: an agate dram bottle case, a Paris gun and a silver watch. He would probably inherit the London property through his father.

The details of the will show that although he wished for a plain coffin Boseley had lived in comfort and style, looked after by two servants who must have spent much of their lives polishing the crested plate. He owned 15 pictures including his daughter's portrait by Morland, whom I guess to be George Morland the elder, a genre painter in London. Boseley was not bookish; aside from dance and music books 'a small parcel of books' was valued together with household goods. Mrs Boseley's refinement is indicated by a 'red earthenware teapot with a gold chain' and a dressing case left to Mary Jenney.

Boseley the dancing master makes a characteristically brief appearance. He left his violins and flute to Thomas Jenney junior, except for one violin to be chosen for himself by the executor. Thomas and the executor were bidden to share the dance and music books. The instruments and books were valued together at probate for £3. There is no mention of a sword which Boseley might have worn in his everyday life, nor of a dancing master's fencing foil, but he may have disposed of them at an earlier date.

I cannot find the least hint that the recipients of the instruments and music/dance books were themselves dancing masters. They may simply have been amateur musicians. John Boseley left a surfeit of Abigails but was denied the opportunity of leaving his own dynasty of dancing masters. He may, however, have fostered the dynasty of his professional successor.

Francis Christian and his descendants

Francis Christian is first known to be in Norwich in 1726 with his son, also called Francis, working with him, and his grandson, yet another Francis, soon to be born into the profession. For the sake of clarity I will call them Francis I, II and III.

The family's origin is not known. *Norfolk since 1550* (Rawcliff and Wilson, 2004) refers to one Francis Christian only, c1676-1754. This is Francis I who was buried at St Michael at Plea in 1754. His life up to 1726 is a mystery. It is possible that he was Boseley's fellow subscriber 'Mr Christian of Blandford' in 1706/1711, and that Boseley was instrumental in his coming to Norwich. Blandford parish registers before 1731 have not survived; neither those after 1731 nor any other source in Dorset Record Office has any reference to a Francis Christian. This may prove that he left Blandford but it doesn't prove that he moved to Norwich. The family may have been Norfolk born; the surname is not uncommon. Boseley was unusually helpful to the Christians for one of his normally competitive profession and I think there was a previous connection between them.

On 9 April 1726 'Mr Christian' - Francis I - advertised that he had hired Justice Thacker's house in Norwich market place to open a girls' boarding school. French, music and dancing would be taught; needlework would be taught by Mrs Christian. The school was in competition with many others where girls were boarded and taught a few accomplishments. The proprietors were often dancing masters and their wives; dancing and music would therefore feature strongly.

On 24 March 1730 Francis I advertised: 'Mr Christian will move his Boarding School to the late house of Mr Jenney in St John Maddermarket': the school moved to Strangers' Hall, recently vacated by the twice-bereaved Thomas Jenney; and the Christians became Boseley's tenants. Evidently Boseley, half a mile away in Redwell Street, did not see them as in competition with his own practice, and the school was likely to be a lucrative tenancy. Strangers' Hall would have accommodated the school well, at the risk of losing the young ladies in that warren of rooms.

It is common sense to assume that Mr and Mrs Christian lived with their boarders, but the St Michael at Plea parish register lists the birth on 20 August 1729 of Mary, daughter of Francis Christian and Ann his wife. Mr Christian did not live in two parishes at once. Mary's father was Francis II, born in 1697, married to Ann Cooper and presumably assisting his parents who run the boarding school. Francis II's home can be located only by parish, St Michael at Plea, where the births of Mary's siblings were registered: Francis III on 17 October 1731, Humfrey in 1732, Ann in 1733 and Esther in 1736.

Shortly after his parents moved to Strangers' Hall Francis II and Ann mortgaged to Boseley a property inherited by Ann at Gissing Kemps cum Dalling, near Diss. Boseley gave them a loan of £330, the interest to be paid annually. They may have needed a loan merely to stay afloat, but the loan may have been a way of raising enough money to buy the Redwell Street practice - not the premises - when Boseley retired. On 29 July 1732 it was advertised that 'Mr Christian will move his

Dancing School to the Great Room in Mr Boseley's Yard.' The Christians now had a second tenancy with Boseley and they succeeded to his practice.

I doubt whether Boseley would have treated encroaching local competitors in this fashion. I suspect there was old acquaintance or indebtedness between Boseley and Francis I. Having lost his own children Boseley might have fostered a succession to his practice by way of an old friend.

No more is heard of the boarding school. It had certainly ceased to exist by 1735 when Willian and Abigail Wicks became the occupants of Strangers' Hall. The boarding school may have failed by 1732 when there is first a mention of Mr Christian's Dancing School at Redwell Street. Perhaps Mrs Christian senior had died, and Francis I and II, ineligible to run a girls' school, were now jointly running a dancing school, possible also teaching music and French, but probably not needlework.

Up to November 1735 the interest on Francis II's mortgage was paid alternately by 'Mr Christian junr' and 'Mr Christian'. Either the father was helping the son or this was an arbitrary way of referring to the same person. It is without doubt that it was Francis II who mortgaged his wife's property. The interest entries for 1736/7 are illegible. From 1738 the firm hand of John Boseley of Terrington receives interest from 'Mr Francis Christian' as if there was one Francis only active in the matter.

Boseley of Terrington, as Trustee for Mary Jenney, became the Christians' landlord when Boseley senior died on 28 December 1739. Either Francis or both father and son may have been tenant-bearers at the funeral with mourning and gloves paid for under the terms of Boseley's will. 'My tenant Mr Christian' was a minor beneficiary, receiving 'a guinea for a ring' as did 'William Brook Esq. Steward of Norwich'. Francis I would be more equal in status with a civic dignitary; the tenancy may refer back to Strangers' Hall, or to the Great Room, or to housing within Mr Boseley's holding at St Michael at Plea.

On 6 October 1741 Francis II and Ann discharged their debt to Boseley by re-mortgaging Ann's property to Anne Norris, widow, of Norwich. On 12 October 1748 Anne Norris surrendered the property to Francis II who sold it to the Rt. Hon. Horatio Walpole. The Christians evidently got by financially by the skin of their teeth but they styled themselves 'gentlemen'.

For the next decade we learn little about the dancing school, although it certainly continued, and more about peripheral activities. On 4 December 1742 'Mr Christian Junior', ie Francis II, advertised that he 'will open a Boys' School near the Red Well, dancing not obligatory.' Given the unenthusiasm for dancing of the average Englishman - and Boy - this is a curious way to advertise oneself to advantage. Where was the school? Probably occupying the Great Room when it did not hold a dancing class, and paying the rent. It cannot have been in Francis II's house which teemed with five young Christians: Francis III now eleven and probably under parental training, Humfrey aged ten, later a clerk at Bawburgh,

and their three sisters. The Boys's School is not heard of again. It may have underwhelmed the local Boy and his parents.

As in Boseley's time and in common with many dance practices, the Great Room was let for concerts. Francis I advertised on 4 December 1742: 'Mr Christian will let his Great Room for Concerts at 2 guineas a night', from which we can gather that the dancing school was not paying its way. The Great Room was also let for meetings of philosophical and debating societies. At this period such meetings had not acquired the notoriety they achieved thirty years later, when 'debating society' in Norwich meant 'Jacobin'. The Christians do not seem to have taken part in dangerous political activities.

Early in 1754 Francis I died and was buried at St Michael at Plea on 2 February. At what date he moved into the parish, possibly to his son's house, is not clear. No burial record has been traced for Mrs Christian senior and no will is extant for Francis I. Francis II continued the practice at the Great Room but for some years we know little about what happened there, either because Francis II did not advertise, or because the local press had no space or time for such notices. Occasionally a concert was advertised in a laconic manner as in the *Norwich Mercury* 29 July 1758.

'Concert at Mr Christian's Great Room at 12 noon because of Plays and Assemblies in the evening.'

There follows a twelve-year period in which nothing is known of the practice except that it continued. From 1770 there was more activity, more notices in the press, and the current state of the Christian dynasty needs explanation.

Francis II is now 75. Francis III - 'Mr Christian junior' - is 39 and married to Elizabeth, which is all I can discover about her. Francis III may have worked or trained away from home for a while and has now returned to revitalise the practice. His son, Edward will shortly join the family business. I have not found Edward's baptismal record; at a guess he was born c.1755 and is now 15. If there was a Francis IV, he did not survive childhood.

In 1770 Francis III is first to appear in the final act of this dynastic drama, with a better advertising style than that of his father:

'The New concert Room in St Michael at Plea will be opened by Mr Christian Junior on 11 June, with a Concert and Ball. The band will be led by Signior Manini who will, between the Acts, perform a favourite solo.'

I think the New Concert Room is the old Great Room refurbished and presented with puffing. The combined concert/ball was a feature of the period; the double event was a bigger draw. There are no reports of this occasion and we have to gather from those of similar events that the gallery was 'fitted up for Ladies and Gentlemen' for the concert audience but declared off-limits at the ball when it was intended for the band and not for assignations. Concerts were arranged in 'Acts' at this period. Signior Manini was a soloist/band leader and a feature of entertainments in Norwich pleasure gardens.

Francis II and III advertised on 31 December 1771: 'Messrs Christian start their public days'. This was the beginning of the season of publicly advertised open dancing classes as opposed to their unadvertised private lessons.

On 30 March 1774 Francis II died, aged 77, and was buried at St Michael at Plea. Although he was styled 'gentleman' in the mortgage documents his Will omits gentrification and begins 'I Francis Christian of the City of Norwich, Dancing Master'. It is a simple will, of one sheet of paper naming 'Ann my Loving Wife' as sole executrix and beneficiary of his estate, of which there are no details at all.

Edward, now about 20, joined the family firm by 1775 when 'Messrs Christian' advertised their pupils' ball at Yarmouth on 10 October. This is the first we know of their teaching circuit which may have been of long standing. On 25 July 1776 two six-year-old pupils of 'Mr Christian' danced at the White Swan theatre, probably to advertise their masters' practice; theatre companies had their own Infants Phenomena for in-house promotion.

Mr Poulain of Harleston was hired to teach fencing on Saturdays in the Great Room in 1777, which tells us that Messrs Christian did not teach fencing themselves.

After this hopeful surge of activity, trouble arrives, first in the shape of John Browne who, having taught dancing at other locations in Norwich, in 1782 set up a Ladies Boarding School 'at his premises in St Michael at Plea': 12 Redwell Street, a few yards away from the Christians and a challenge to their practice. There is no mention of Francis III beyond this point. The first Norwich *Directory*, by Chase 1783, lists as Dancing Masters John Browne, 12 Redwell Street, and Edward Christian at 3 Redwell Street, flanked by a perruquier and a French master. I have not found a burial record for Francis III and there is no extant will, but it seems that he had retired or died by 1783.

The practice at the Great Room continued under Edward, apparently without an assistant. Classes and pupils' balls were advertised with brevity: time, place, tickets from Mr Christian. He developed a line in charity concerts on St Cecilia's Day in 1784 and 1785 'for decayed musicians'. Not a tactful fellow, the last of the Christians.

By 1793 he was facing serious competition. John Browne remained a few feet away. Mr Lalliet of Yarmouth tried and failed to get a foothold in Norwich in January. In July piracy by Mr Matthews was dealt with successfully. The third raiding party had style and it won. On 31 August 1793 Augustin Noverre advertised at length and with much puffing that his son, Francis, was to be established as a dancing master at the Assembly House, the very best address for such a practice, in the former town-house of the Hobart family. I suspect that the Noverres did a recce, identified a failing practice at an unfashionable location, found a smart address elsewhere and appropriated it.

Not unchallenged, however. Francis Noverre advertised his 'DANCING ACADEMY' on 20 September. In the next edition of the *Mercury* Edward advertised his pupils' ball at the Assembly House, where he had never held such events

before. We don't know whether this counter-attack took place; such events were rarely reported in the press.

Edward made a strategic retreat to his Great Room and deployed reinforcements: Fashion and Capital Letters:

Mr Christian, having been solicited to open an ACADEMY for giving instruction in REELS, SCOTCH STEPS and present mode of COUNTRY DANCES ... will give attention 2 evenings a week at his own rooms. NB 1 evening for Ladies, 1 for Gentlemen.'

Segregation was no doubt practised to spare the blushes of the average Englishman, but at last we learn what Edward was teaching.

While Francis Noverre hogged the Assembly House, Edward continued at Redwell Street - under pressure. In 1794 he advertised that 'he denies he intends to retire'. John Browne made a copycat denial two weeks later. This was probably a desperate appeal to disappearing pupils. On 25 September 1794 Noverre advertised his 'FIRST ANNUAL BALL since his establishment in this City' at the Assembly House.

John Browne's death was advertised on 10 August 1799 and debts called in; his practice had been failing - or rather his pupils failed to pay their master. In 1800 Edward was still teaching in Norwich and Yarmouth. Peck's *Directory* 1802 lists him as dancing master at 11 Redwell Street. This may have been a new practice address or an old home address where he now practised.

On 2 August 1804 Edward Christian 'Gentleman' died. There was no family succession to the Great Room. Mr Bailey advertised on 12 January 1805 that he had bought the practice from Mrs Christian and would move it to 1 St Stephen's Street, promising all that was Fashionable to his pupils (further details of Mr Bailey's practice appear below). Mrs Christian is Edward's widow; Elizabeth, Francis III's widow, died in 1797.

In 1812, when Bailey died, Noverre bought his practice and Rooms at 1 St Stephen's Street to add to his own. No other dancing master occupied the Great Room at Redwell Street. a century-old practice had come to an end.

Elsewhere in the City

While Boseley and the Christians held their Great Room other dancing masters came and went from other locations in the city. Often we have only the parish or landlord by which to locate them before 1783 when Chase's *Directory* saves us the guesswork. Some of the masters were birds of passage, with the disposition of a gannet. In many cases there is nothing to prove that an advertisement raised enough pupils for a viable practice.

Mr Lax was an early bird of passage. In 1717 he was a singer/dancer with the Norwich Company of Comedians at the White Swan. He gave notice on 4 March 1721 that he was to settle in Norwich and teach dancing as from Lady Day, but that is all we know of him.

A Mr Eastland (without location) appears with Boseley in the list of subscribers to Pemberton's book in 1711. He may or may not have been connected to two Norfolk masters ten or so years later. James Eastland put a notice in the *Gazette* 17 April 1724 that he was not to be confused with Edward Eastland of Lynn. James came from Bury St Edmund in 1722 and set up a dancing school in St Andrew's (parish). His premises may have been in Little Cockey Lane, serially used as a dancing school. He moved his family and his girls' school from Bury to Norwich on Lady Day 1723 and advertised an assembly at his rooms on 16 May. The following January his family returned to Bury but he continued to teach on Tuesday and Thursday in Norwich but by March his rooms were up for sale. On 13 April 1728 a 'good house' was offered for sale 'where Eastland, dancing master lately lived' and on 4 April 1730 a concert was advertised in his Rooms; his name persisted in his absence.

Mr Cailliaut from London advertised on 30 September 1727 that he would teach dancing and French at Chapelfield House, then the disused town house of the Hobart family let for assemblies and dancing classes. He was the son of Francis Cailliaut of Isleworth, forty years a London dancing master, which gives us a glance back to 1680. He also gave classes at Mr Hutchinson's, music master of Lower Close and at N. Walsham by 24 January 1730 but taught two days a week throughout the year at Chapelfield House. After his advertisement of 27 February 1731 he disappears. He had failed to woo pupils - or endear himself to other masters - by undercutting standard tuition fees. He protested that if more pupils came forward he could afford better premises *and* keep fees low. He would make concessions to pupils who stayed in his tutelage. He failed; it pays to advertise, but not like Mr Cailliaut.

On 10 June 1738 the Yarmouth dancing master William Claggett gave notice that he would teach on Tuesday and Wednesday at Chapelfield House, but that is all we know of him.

There were several members of the Burney family active in music and dance teaching in Norwich and Norfolk. Joseph Burney from London advertised on 26 June 1736 that he would teach in Norwich on Monday and Tuesday and in Yarmouth on Thursday and Saturday. In 24 March 1744 he announced the opening of his dancing school in St Andrew's (parish, possibly Eastland's old premises). On 19 May 1750 the *Gazette* noted that 'he formerly taught in a room in Norwich Market Place.' This must be in what was known as 'Justice Thacker's House', then as 'Mr Burney's', and used by a succession of dancing masters.

Mr Welch from London advertised on 7 July 1739 that 'he has been in Norwich for three weeks and teaches twenty pupils on Tuesday and Thursday', and he too disappears from view. His teaching location remains a mystery; a pupil would have had to enquire through the *Gazette* offices.

Peter Oliver, once with the Norwich Company of Comedians, became a dancing master in Yarmouth in 1742 and held a ball in N. Walsham on 5 November 1743. In 1749 he added Norwich to his scalps, teaching at Mr Vipond's on Tuesday and

Thursday. This was a location much used by dancing masters in St Stephen's parish, not otherwise identified. Mr Vipond does not appear in Chase's 1783 *Directory* but was evidently well known at an earlier date. In 1750 Oliver moved to a room in Sir Benjamin Wrench's Court - also serially used by dancing masters. It was in fact a large room in the Lobster Inn, but advertised to advantage. Jarrolds Department store stands on the site today and in 1750 it was within a fiddle-string of Little Cockey Lane. A month later Oliver advertised classes in 'Burney's old room'. In 1752 he held a ball in the 'Great Room' at Little Cockey Lane - now Little London Street; it appears on an 1810 map as a cul-de-sac. Oliver hired a succession of rooms without ever settling. After his Yarmouth ball on 6 January 1753 nothing is known of him until the *Gazette* announced his suicide at Deal in Kent on 24 July 1762.

Charles Gosnold may have been born locally. The parish register of St Michael at Plea has a Gosnold birth in 1728 but the child's Christian name and sex are illegible. Perhaps he was a pupil of Francis Christian who returned several times as encroaching competition.

As a dancing master Gosnold advertised evening classes 'near Charing Cross' on 9 April 1756. On 18 December 1756 he published a *Collection of Country Dances*, price 1/-, printed in Norwich, and gave a ball at his Rooms. In 1757 he danced at the White Swan theatre, apparently as a PR exercise - later repeated by Christian's child pupils. In February 1757 he advertised that he would teach within a 20-mile radius of 'his new-built house in St Andrew's'.

In common with many of his profession he went to London to take lessons from a superior master and returned to advertise: 'he has received instruction from Miles' in London'. The refurbishment of his practice and himself was to no avail; he closed his evening class on 13 March 1758 and disappeared from the local competition, or was frozen out, until 1 January 1780 when he advertised in the *Mercury*:

'DANCING: Mr Gosnold, late of Hampshire, Dancing Master, having taken a genteel and convenient house in Willow Lane, intends opening a School ... for Young Ladies and Gentlemen. His Days for teaching will be Tuesdays and Thursdays. [He] is determined that nothing shall be wanting on his Part to expedite the Improvement of those who shall be entrusted to his Care. He flatters himself that having taught dancing for more than 20 years in Principal Schools and Genteel Families will sufficiently recommend him. ... dances comprehended viz: the French Dances, Cotillon, Allemande, Minuet, Louvre, Country Dances, 15/- per quarter, ½ guinea entrance. Schools and families within 14 miles attended. He teaches the Young Gentlemen at Palgrave School.' Does he mean Mrs Barbauld's nursery of radicals at Palgrave? He also taught at Wymondham schools by 1782.

Louvre and 'the French Dances' suggest an old-fashioned syllabus, and he may have had to revise it, re-advertising on 9 September 1780 'the most fashionable dances taught'. In July 1781 a similar notice appeared, in which he advertised a

room to let: the genteel address may have been over-ambitious. In 1782 he taught at Sir Benjamin Wrench's Court; he hired a teaching room and lived or lodged elsewhere, after which he disappeared from the local newspapers and was not listed in Chase's 1783 *Directory*.

Gosnold seems to do all the right things yet still fails. Either he was not as good as his advertising or the local competition took against him.

On 13 September 1760 Mr Guerin made another appearance in the Theatre Royal, which, finding itself without a licence to present plays, was pretending to be a concert hall. Guerin appeared with two dancers from the theatre company.

At the Grand Concert Hall ... a Concert; between the acts the Opera La Serva Padrona; between the Acts of the Opera Dancing by Miss Burn, Master Taryot and Mr Guerin.'

Mr Guerin was trying to attract more pupils to his new room - a familiar location for dancing classes (later used for art exhibitions by the Norwich School). His status, or his expectations rose briefly; he took on John Browne as an assistant and added French to his syllabus in 1761 after which we hear no more of him, but we will encounter John Browne again.

Little is known of Mr Wood of Ipswich who opened a dancing school in Norwich on 25 May 1757, or of his son Charles who had taught in London and opened a dancing school in Lynn at Mr Taylor's in the high Street in 1770.

Like the young Charles Gosnold, Mr Guerin publicised himself by dancing at the theatre, in this case Ivory's new Theatre Royal, a month before advertising in the *Mercury*, 4 August 1759:

'Mr Guerin, Dancing and Fencing Master ... finding great encouragement in this city and county ... Dancing and Fencing [taught] in the genteelest and most expeditious manner at the usual Price either at his School at Mrs Masterman's, St. Peter Street, or in their own houses. Schools attended.'

As anyone who has learned to fence knows, it may be the sport of gentlemen but it is formalised warfare. 'Genteel' signifies fashionable decorums; it was a necessity for a gentleman to use a sword. The alleged 'encouragement' is 'puffing', now known as 'spin' - Mr Guerin was encouraging his clients. On 1 March 1760 Guerin announced his change of address:

'Mr Guerin is to open a DANCING SCHOOL ... in Sir Benjamin Wrench's Court ... Ladies and Gentlemen will be taught in the genteelest manner. Use of the small sword also taught.'

Mr M. White of Bury St Edmund advertised that he would start dancing classes at Mr Strutt's in St Giles (parish) on 14 June 1766. He had been Aylmer's pupil at Colchester, then instructed in London by Davenport and Tomlinson. This must be Kellom Tomlinson, an apprentice 1704-14 and choreographer at Lincolns Inn Field Theatre 1716-21. I suspect that White's instruction was at some time in the past and he himself no longer a young man. White had also subsumed the remains of Harris's Lynn practice and circuit: Lynn, Wisbech, Kennet, Bury, Walsham-le-Willows, Wickham Market. By 1767 his Norwich rooms were at Mr Riley's, Fleece

Yard, St Simon's. St Simon and Jude, now the Scout HQ, is at the foot of Elm Hill. Fleece Yard is one of the many Norwich Yards whose location is now unknown. I suspect this was a move down-market and we hear no more of him. Mr Strutt and Mr Riley have left no trace.

Mr Oswald left little trace of his Norwich 'sometime' practice. He taught music and dancing at a school in Walsingham and dancing at Lynn and died 28 August 1784.

T B Bradfield published a set of dances with notation in Norwich 15 December 1787. There is no trace of him as a dancing master but he publicised his troublesome wife whose debts 'he will not discharge' on 22 December 1787.

The Yarmouth dancing master Lalliet advertised his raiding party in Norwich in the *Mercury* 19 January 1793:

'Lalliet. DANCING MASTER from Paris. Having met with great success and given general satisfaction in Yarmouth and Beccles ... intends to open a School at the Rampant Horse, St Stephen's ... from 10 to 12 and from 2 to 4 [on Thursdays] to instruct the children of those who may please to honour him. 1 guinea per quarter, 10/6 entrance.'

No more is heard of this venture; he was evidently seen off.

Of the two dancing masters trying to establish themselves in Norwich in 1803, Mr Lassells is to be found as the star of the theatre section below. He probably raised a smile among the local competition. Mr Matthews issued a challenge in the *Chronicle* 23 July 1803:

'DANCING. Mr Matthews who for the space of 15 years has taught dancing in some of the Principal Schools and in Families of Noblemen and has the honour of teaching many Ladies and Gentlemen of Norwich, intends settling in this city and has engaged a commodious room in Sir Benjamin Wrench's Court ... his terms may be known on personal application at 19 Bethel Street, where the most respectable references will be given.'

He was too close to the well-established Noverre and Christian practices. No previous trace of him is to be found, but he may have advertised elsewhere or given private tuition only. Whatever his past may have been he evidently had no future in Norwich.

Lalliet's pupil John Eager followed his master's tactics with bare-faced cheek in 1805. He was already to be found everywhere in the local music scene as musician and teacher by 1802; on 1 August Neech's Ranelagh and Pantheon - a pleasure garden with a pavilion/concert hall - advertised Eager as band leader/first violin and soloist in entertainments for Assize Week. On 5 February 1805 Eager (*must* have been called Overeager) advertised in the *Mercury* as teaching harp, piano, violin, clarinet and singing, £1 per instrument, £2 for piano and voice. In the *Chronicle* 22 June 1803 he announced his return from London 'where he has been to perfect himself' under no less than three dancing masters, in a remarkably short time, in order to teach music, fencing and dancing and to make:

‘... every movement in dancing correctly agreeable to time and measure, and thus effectively removing the prevalent art of dull motion generally taught by professional men destitute of musical knowledge.’

Now we understand why dancing masters needed proficiency with a sword. Mr Eager claimed to have been taught fencing in London by Mr Angelo, the foremost riding and fencing master in the capital and famous coach of stage duels. Mr Eager evidently got his comeuppance, and probably some derisive snorts into the bargain. He continued as music master at King Street but retreated to his Yarmouth dance practice. He finally hung up his dancing shoes in 1812.

John Browne had a forty-year history as dancing master in Norwich. In 1759 he taught at Chedgrave, Long Stratton, Thetford, Aylsham and with Guerin at Mrs Masterman’s in Norwich. In 1760 when Guerin moved to Sir Benjamin Wrench’s Court, Browne opened a dancing school at Mr Vipond’s, St Stephen’s (parish) on 14 March. Vipond is not in Chase’s 1783 *Directory* and I cannot establish who and where he was, but he kept rooms serially used as dancing schools and they may have been at 1 St Stephen’s Street, later used by Bailey and clearly previously used as a dancing school.

True to form Browne advertised his teaching ‘in the genteelest manner’ at 15/- per quarter, and private tuition. In 1763 he taught on Thursdays at Vipond’s and in country schools on other days. 1764 saw him at Mr Riley’s in Fleece Yard.

On 2 March 1765 he promoted himself with ‘he has been instructed at Noverre’s in London. He also teaches use of small sword.’ He was taught by Augustin Noverre, whose misjudgement with a sword in the Drury Lane riots of 1755 led him into hiding in Norwich; by 1757 Augustin was respectable again, dancing minuets at Drury Lane and building a private practice as a dancing master.

Browne’s circuit in 1766 included Dereham, Hindolveston, Holt, N. Walsham and Bungay. He moved ‘to a larger room’ not otherwise specified in 1771, added Yarmouth to his circuit in 1773 together with the school at Brooke, and his newly opened girls’ school ‘at his premises in St Michael at Plea’ in 1782 which at last places him precisely: he is in the 1783 *Directory* at 12 Redwell Street, competing with the Christian practice at No.3. Browne’s denial that ‘he intends to retire’ on 22 March 1794 looks like desperate pupil-seeking in competitive times. His death was announced on 10 August 1799 and debts called in.

Mr Bailey was an apparent newcomer to Norwich when he advertised on 12 January 1805 in the *Chronicle* that he had taken over the Christians’ practice from Mrs Christian and had moved to 1 St Stephen’s Street, promising his pupils

‘to perfect them in the newest and most fashionable dances with Scotch, Irish and Italian steps as taught by the first masters. Hours at 11 am and 3 pm.

Private tuition and schools attended.’

He continued the concert-letting tradition; on 9 November 1805 the oratorio *Joshua* was performed ‘at Mr Bailey’s Great Room, the gallery fitted up for Ladies.’ His premises were probably a previous master’s rooms and may have been ‘Mr Vipond’s’. By July 1805 he advertised a circuit: N. Walsham, Worstead,

Halesworth, Holton, Southwold, Wangford, Loddon, Brooke, Shottisham, Bungay, Southtown (Gt Yarmouth).

Bailey retired in 1812 and his rooms and assistant, Harwood, were taken over by Francis Noverre who may have envisaged continuing at the Assembly House - where he now lived in the west wing - while Harwood enlarged the practice in St Stephen's Street, but Harwood disoblged and left to set up his own practice in Sir Benjamin Wrench's Court in 1813.

Noverre was already in partnership with Mr Nicholson in 1805 and, from 1812, with Francis Lambert who published his *Treatise on Dancing* in Norwich in 1815. I suspect that although the expression of the treatise was Lambert's the teaching behind it was Noverre's, derived from his father Augustin's 'simple and scientific method' and from his uncle and tutor Jean-Georges Noverre.

Pigot's 1830 *Directory* lists both Francis and his son Frank Noverre as dancing masters at the Assembly house, but they now appeared in 'Professors and Teachers', and not in 'Trade', which was a reflection on changing times as well as Noverre respectability. Francis retired in 1837, succeeded by Frank, and, for many years, by Frank's male descendants. Daughters were music teachers; in 1859 Miss Josephine 'professed' singing and the concertina, and Miss Sophia 'professed' piano and harp. Francis lived in the west wing of the Assembly House until his death in 1840, having become a respected citizen of Norwich and one of the founders of Norwich Union in 1809. As raiding parties go, his was entirely successful.

6 Dancing masters and the theatre

One might expect dancing masters to have some involvement in assemblies and the theatre. In Norfolk and Norwich assemblies were raised and run by - and for - county and city grandees; attenders of lower status being ignored by the local press. Dancing masters were 'trade', according to local directories until 1822, and may have been, or felt, unwelcome for that reason. Assemblies may have been a busman's holiday to them. Whatever the reason there is apparently no link between assemblies and dancing masters - apart from that curious exception Mrs Eastland who 'held' Lynn Mart Assembly.

With the theatre there was two-way traffic; masters used the theatre for advertisement; actors - who were also singers and dancers - had sidelines in order to survive financially and they were usually the teaching of fencing, music and dancing. Mr Dixon, the scenic artist at Norwich Theatre Royal c1800 to 1805, was a drawing master. There were odder sidelines; an actor on the Lancaster circuit was also a dentist. There were also the performers who left the stage to set up as dancing masters.

We have already met most of those in this study, but to summarise: 'Mr Waddy of the Theatre' advertised as fencing master in 1782. Mr Last of the Norwich Company of Comedians at the White Swan theatre advertised that he would settle in Norwich and teach dancing in March 1721 but nothing further is known of him. The White Swan was a 'fit-up' in a large inn room; it saw Macklin's *Shylock* and designs by Devoto.

Peter Oliver also left the company at the White Swan to set up as dancing master in Yarmouth in 1742, and in Norwich at a succession of places: Mr Vipond's in 1749, in Mr Burney's Room in 1750, and in Little Cockey Lane in 1752, after which nothing is known of him until the report of his suicide in 1762.

Charles Gosnold was a Norwich dancing master who danced at the White Swan in 1757, apparently as a PR exercise for his 'new-built Rooms' and 20-mile-radius circuit.

Mr Guerin danced in Ivory's new Theatre Royal in 1759 a month before advertising as a dancing/fencing master in the city, and again in 1760 to advertise his improved circumstances.

Two 6-year-old pupils of Edward Christian danced at the White Swan on 25 May 1776, but whether at the request of the theatre - which usually fielded in-house infants for such entertainment or as a Christian PR exercise, I don't know.

And now, for a special diversion - Mr Lassells of the Theatre Royal advertised in the *Chronicle* on 22 January 1803:

'DANCING. Young Ladies and Gentlemen and Grown Persons instructed in the art of DANCING, particularly in the most fashionable Scotch and Irish steps, and attended at their own houses by Mr Lassells sen. Terms 1 guinea for 12 lessons. No entrance required of previous pupils. 6 Gun Lane, Norwich.'

Gun Lane ran from Chapelfield Lane to the S door of St Peter Mancroft, so he was encroaching on Noverre, but not very seriously for we hear no more of him as a dancing master but much more about his career as choreographer and dancer at the Theatre Royal with his tribe of Infant Phenomena.

On 27 March 1802 their benefit night included: 'A New Grotesque Ballet by Mr Lassells' performed by the family 'in a manner peculiar to themselves' (supply your own translation), and *As You Like It* 'with a New Grand Ballet'. In January 1803 Holcroft's *A Tale of Mystery* was presented with Lassells additions: 'a pas seul - Master Lassells, a pas tambourine - Miss Lassells, a pas de trois - Messrs Lassells'. On 27 April 1803 they performed 'A grand Serio Heroic Pantomime Ballet - *Blackbeard* - with a Broadsword Battle.'

They are Dickens' Crummles troupe to the life if 40 years early and evoke *The Indian Savage and the Maiden* as performed by the Infant Phenomenon and Mr Folair. Dickens ridiculed the performance but described Romantic Ballet style and classical mime with great accuracy.

Mr Lassells intruded into the genteel world of the dancing master - without raising more than a smirk, probably - much as his 'ballets' took any play of any genre by surprise.

One might have expected Francis Noverre to have some connection with the neighbouring Theatre Royal. His father, Augustin, danced at Drury Lane, but left the theatre to become a dancing master. Francis is said to have had tuition by his uncle, the ballet-master Jean-Georges Noverre, 'the Father of Modern dance', who once claimed 'I am sick of Minuets.' I think it is more likely that Francis was trained by his father with additional polish by his uncle, as explained in Marsh (2005). Francis does not seem to have had any theatrical leanings apart from marrying Harriet Brunton, daughter of the manager of the Theatre Royal. She had no theatrical aspirations either. Dancing at the Theatre Royal was the preserve of Mr Lassells, and I wish I knew what Francis Noverre thought of him.

7 Conduct of a dancing master's practice

In spite of ungentlemanly raids on other fellows' circuits and premises there were clearly rules, or a gentlemen's agreement, as to terms of practice and standard prices for tuition, and 'entrance' fees, which all masters waived for a pupil with some tuition from another master. Examples of terms show a rise from the mid 1790s:

- 1760 Browne 15/- per quarter 5/- entrance
- 1793 Vernon 15/- per quarter 10/ entrance
- 1793 Lalliet 1 guinea per quarter 10/6 entrance
- 1793 Noverre 1 guinea per quarter 1 guinea entrance
- 1803 Lassells 1 guinea per quarter 1 guinea entrance

Matthews was one of many who considered it not the thing to advertise financial terms which 'may be known on personal application' and in private.

Caillault - knowingly or otherwise - undercut the other masters and was maligned as a result. He seems to have played the innocent but did not profit by it.

The world of the Norwich dancing master was a busy one; there were more than 20 masters who practised between 1690 and 1815 in 21 locations used as teaching rooms. Between one and three masters were in practice at any one time with incursions from one to three raiders in some years.

Dancing masters commonly practised within a 20-mile radius; they worked hard and travelled a lot. Advertising that they took no more than 20 pupils (Gosnold) was meant to indicate that no pupil could skulk, ignored, at the back of the class.

The Pupils' Ball had standard rules and prices:

- 1759 Harris 5/- scholars 2/6 non-scholars - a sop to parents and a carrot for prospective pupils
- 1793 Christian 6/-
- 1794 Noverre 5/-, which remained his price into the 1800s.

The Pupils' Ball began at 6 or 7 pm, and at about 9pm 'There will be dances as usual for Ladies and Gentlemen', who no doubt felt obliged to dance better than usual. There were variations. Oliver's 'Scholars' Publick Ball' in 1752 opened with a concert. Vernon opened his Scholars' Ball in 1774 with minuets, but it was usual to open with an entry march for the pupils after which minuets were succeeded by allemandes, gavottes, cotillons and 'fancy dances' - arrangements of a couple dance for several couples to show off to Mama and Papa. Dancing masters' published collections of dances often follow this order, eg Augustin Noverre's *A New March, 6 new Minuets, 6 new Cotillons and 2 new Country Dances*.

In some towns, Lancaster for example, pupils' balls took place in the theatre. There is a description of such an event in *The Clandestine Marriage*.

London dancing masters commonly made visits to France to learn new dances and fashions. The provincial master went to London for training by a metropolitan master and new dances at second hand, returning to advertise his new skills.

Naturally they all competed to be the first to teach the Scottish and Irish steps and dances which were fashionable in the 1790s.

Classes and private tuition were accompanied by the master on his fiddle or 'kit', a rudimentary violin described in the 17th century as 'a dog's bone, and sounds as if it has the French disease' - even in the hands of John Eager. A dance band was hired for pupil balls.

We get no closer to the business of dancing than in such gems as Charles Gosnold's 1780 notice summarising his syllabus. Our knowledge is derived from the masters. We don't know the opinion of their pupils, or who were their pupils.

Francis Lambert's *Treatise*, probably inspired by Noverre ideas, gives a valuable suggestion about the thinking behind the best dance teaching. It is about good physiological movement whether aimed at the aesthetic or the correction of knock-knees. Its principles are as good today as they were in 1815.

Masters' advertisements spoke in the fashion of the day and conveyed their aim at the 'genteel' and 'expeditious', ie fashionable and quickly achieved. Much of their notices was a form of words; all masters were 'genteel', and rooms were 'commodious' - or odious but with good intentions.

If the pupils strove to appear to be fashionable, the masters aspired to belong to a profession, to which status Pigot's 1822 *Directory* raised Norwich masters formerly listed as tradesmen. Part of their aspiration was demonstrated by their employment of pupils or assistants. If they had apprentices we do not hear of them; newspaper advertisements for apprentices are for other trades. But dancing masters certainly did employ apprentices, perhaps after the fashion of Dickens' Turveydrop apprentice, the scowling boy practising his steps in the kitchen until he can appear with sufficient skill as a 'pupil', rising to be an 'assistant'.

But how did the fashionable world see the dancing master? With some ridicule, I fear. Jacobean drama used dancing as an innuendo-laden metaphor for sex in *Women beware women*. Marston's dancing master, a 'pretty little brown gentleman' is a target for mockery. In the Restoration period the dancing master Luke Cheynell was satirised as a 'hop merchant'. Mr Pendleton precipitated tragedy in the Pepys household - but we only know Samuel Pepys' biased opinion of him. Lord Chesterfield regarded anyone with a fiddle under their chin 'in a very frivolous, contemptible light, bringing him into a great deal of bad company' (*Letters*, 14 April 1749), but he insisted that his son should take dancing lessons, therefore the dancing master was a necessity to the fashionable world - to it, not in it. Dr Johnson retorted that the *Letters* to Chesterfield's illegitimate son 'taught the morals of a whore and the manners of a dancing master.' The manners and modishness were only a veneer.

As is made clear in *The Mirror of the Graces*, a conduct manual from 1811 by 'A Lady of Distinction', the wife of a former ambassador. The Lady makes it clear that the dancing master gives a service for which he is paid like any other tradesman; he may call himself a professional but he is never to be regarded as an equal in the Polite World.

She has even greater disdain for professional dancers from the opera house employed to give private lessons. Vestris senior taught Georgiana Duchess of Devonshire, but it was Not Proper. Nor was the introduction into the ballroom of the Fandango and the Bolero 'quite the thing', even if it was a peaceful outcome of the Peninsular War.

The Lady had no mercy on men who did not dance: '... dancing is so neglected by men in general', who prefer to 'imitate grooms and coachmen'. She recommends them to a dancing master as a necessary evil, to learn steps and conduct but without the 'affectation' of the dancing master. It is a sad reflection that, while the dancing master taught an art, his pupils the Gentleman and (especially) the Lady must not aspire beyond propriety and elegance.

For their part the dancing masters called themselves 'gentlemen' not on the grounds of breeding but upon material worth. Boseley owned property, inherited a coat of arms and may actually have been a 'gentleman born'. Francis Christian II owned property temporarily but reverted to 'dancing master' in his will. Edward Christian died a gentleman but failed as tradesman/professional.

The Noverres' gentry status was both inherited and acquired. In his naturalisation papers of 1771 Augustin Noverre is 'a Gentleman and a Protestant'. He probably took his status from his father who was an officer in the Swiss Army. His son, Francis, registering the births of two of his children, was a 'dancing master' in 1813 and a 'gentleman' in 1819; he was still in practice but he now owned the West wing of the Assembly House. He was also a weighty citizen, one of the original directors of Norwich Union, founded in 1809, with his brother-in-law the Earl of Craven as Trustee. But Craven's involvement came about through his marriage to Mrs Noverre's sister and has nothing to do with Francis Noverre as a dancing master.

Appendix 2

John Boseley's fellow-subscribers to the publication of Weaver (1706)³ and Pemberton (1711)

M. L'Abbé: Anthony L'Abbé c1680-1739. Court dancing master to George I. Taught George II's daughters for £200 p.a.

Mr Thomas Calverley: Taught Kellom Tomlinson who was his apprentice 1704-14 and became a well-known dancing master, theatre dancer and writer on dance.

M. Cherrier: René Cherrier. Stage dancer - noble and grotesque roles - at Drury Lane. Taught K. Tomlinson stage dancing 1703-08.

Mr Christian of Blandford

M. Le Duc and M. D'Elisle [ie De Lisle]: of the Académie-Royale, Paris; brought to England to appear in *Calisto at court in 1675*.

Mr Eastland: Possible connection with James Eastland, dancing master in Norwich 1722-24, or Edward Eastland, dancing master in King's Lynn 1723-27.

Mr Essex: John Essex, London dancing master, wrote *For the further improvement of dancing, 1710*.

Mr Isaac: 'Monsieur Isaac' d.1720. One of the English dancers in *Calisto 1675*. Taught John Evelyn's daughter. 1682-1783, little known of him. 1703-14 Queen Anne's court dancing master; he had trained her for her appearance in *Calisto* when she was a child.

Mr Lane: Dancing master to Charles II. Composed *Mr Lane's Trumpet Minuet* and *Mr Lane's Maggot*.

Edward Pemberton: London dancing master.

Mr Priest sen. of Chelsea: Josias Priest d.1734. In 1667 dancer at Duke's Playhouse with Moll Davis. Apprenticed to Luke Cheynell, whom he succeeded as

³ 'Several of the Nobility and Gentry' said to have subscribed to Weaver's book - this is a 'puff'; the Nobility and Gentry would expect their names to appear if they had subscribed.

house dancing master 1673. Choreographer of *Calisto*.⁴ Ran a school for girls with his wife at Chelsea. Produced, with his pupils, Purcell's *Dido ad Aeneas* and Blow's *Venus and Adonis* - which he had choreographed earlier at court, Moll Davis singing Venus. Contributed a Minuet for six couples in Pemberton. Weaver on Priest: '... the greatest Master of Grotesque ... every gesture just.'

M. de Ruell: Phillipe du Ruel. He and his wife danced at Drury Lane with Cherrier from 1703 to 1707 when they returned to France.

Mr Weaver: John Weaver 1673-1760, of Shrewsbury where he taught at the School. Later creator of English ballet in London, working towards naturalism, precursor of Noverre's *ballets d'action*. Pantomime dance. Choreographer - *The Loves of Mars and Venus* and *The Tavern Bilkers*. Wrote books on Time, Cadence and Anatomy for dancers. Charles Burney was taught by him and recalled him as: 'A man of infinite wit and considerable learning'. Weaver was still teaching minuet, rigaudon and L'Ouvre at the age of ninety.

⁴ *Calisto*, 1675, called 'the last Stuart masque' but not true masque form; a court entertainment featuring courtiers, younger royalty but not the monarch, imported professionals and vast expense. Priest had general oversight for £100. M. Isaac was one of the English dancers at £10. De Lisle and Le Duc, at £5 each, were part of a group of dancers brought in from the Académie Royale by the Duke of Monmouth who was a notable dancer and had danced in French court ballets.

