This article originally appeared in the following journal:


Official URL: https://www.lutesociety.org/pages/journal

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Evidence for the survival of the twelve-course lute in Georgian England is to be found in the seven pieces in the autograph manuscript of the Reverend Robert Creighton II (1636/7–1734), prebendary (from 1667), and later precentor (from 1674) of Wells Cathedral.1 This article reviews what is known of Creighton's life and family. It considers his musical activities and the music club in Wells that he was connected to. His seven lute pieces are reviewed and possible connections with Thomas Mace are posited.

The Reverend Robert Creighton

Robert Creighton II (1639–1734) was the son of the also-named Robert Creighton I (1593–1672), Professor of Greek at Cambridge, then Dean of Wells and later Bishop of Bath and Wells (1670–72).2 Robert junior's career closely followed that of his father in that both were professors of Greek in Cambridge, and both had subsequent ecclesiastic careers at Wells Cathedral. Both father and son were also amateur musicians and both were theologians given to preaching, though the father was more the theologian and the son more the musician.3 The eminent elder Robert was a fiery, and notable, Scottish preacher who had been with Charles II in exile. Pepys gives a description of a very plain-spoken sermon he heard from 'the great Scotchman' on 7 March 1662 on the subject of the neglect of 'the poor cavalier'.4 The elder Creighton gained his degree from Trinity College, Cambridge in 1621, but by 1632 he had moved to Wells. He became Chaplain to Charles I when he moved to Oxford in 1642, but then fled to France around 1648. Apart from his years abroad with Charles II he remained attached to Wells for his career, and was made Dean of Wells while in exile, rising to Bishop in 1670.

The younger Creighton was born in Wells in 1639 and gravitated to Cambridge after being a scholar at Westminster School, though he seems to have followed his father into exile at some point after 1648. He was admitted a scholar at Trinity in 1655, graduated BA in 1658/9, became a fellow in 1659 and received his MA in 1662. The younger Creighton was one of the King’s Chaplains in Ordinary and became Doctor of Divinity in 1678.6 He left Cambridge around 1666 when he gave up his fellowship, married and transferred to Wells to take up a prebendary.7 Eight years later he took up the post of Precentor on 2 May 1674 and remained in this job until his death on 17 February 1734, a remarkable sixty years less three months. He was buried in Wells on 22 February, though his memorial cannot be located.8 Creighton was at the heart of
Illustration 1: Portrait of Robert Creighton II (1639–1734)

the music of the Cathedral for some sixty years and it was his life’s work to resurrect it after the destruction of the Commonwealth period. In his lifetime he gave an organ and left a bequest of £20 annually to the Vicars Choral from an endowment made on his death.9

In 1666 Robert Creighton II had married Frideswide Piers II who had also been born in Wells, around five years after Robert, in 1644. Frideswide and Robert Creighton II had six children; Alexander, Frances, Robert, Catherine, Margaret and Frideswide.10 Frideswide was also the stepmother to John Creighton, Robert I’s son born when Robert II was only 12 years old while in exile with his father and King Charles II. On her death she also was buried at Wells Cathedral. Frideswide, like her husband, came from a leading Wells chapter family as she was the daughter of William Piers II, Archdeacon of Taunton, whose own father, William Piers I (1580–1670) preceded Robert Creighton I as Bishop of Bath and Wells, before and after the Civil War.11 Both the Creighton and Piers families were part of the oligarchy that dominated the Wells chapter in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Frideswide was a spirited woman herself and during the Monmouth Rebellion in July 1685 handed over £20 to the rebels as protection money to save the canons’ houses from being ransacked.12 It seems Frideswide died shortly after the rebellion as there is a memorial to her in the Cathedral dated 1685. Robert Creighton II and his family were Wells born and bred, and as close to the Cathedral’s society and function as it was possible to be.
Creighton’s church music

It is for Creighton’s church music that he is remembered. Ian Spink remarks that ‘though an amateur, he was scarcely inferior to the general run of his contemporaries’. In particular he had a continuing reputation as a composer in Wells, and some of his chants and anthems remained in the cathedral choir’s repertoire for centuries. Creighton left some nine services and fourteen anthems, and the high esteem his music was held in the eighteenth century is expressed by Burney (1789) in his General History of Music, ‘though he was not gifted with great original genius for musical composition . . . yet he has left pleasing proofs of his progress in the art as manifest judgement, taste and knowledge’. A few of his services were printed in the nineteenth century: one by Rimbault (in E flat, in 1847) and one by Ouseley (in B flat, in 1853). His short anthem I will arise, a canon, three in one, was included in Boyce’s Cathedral Music (1760–62) and thus became widely known and was highly thought of until the twentieth century. However, by the mid-twentieth century his reputation had sunk. Kenneth Long describes this, his most popular anthem as ‘a pedantic, somewhat stilted little work.’ Yet even today editions of Creighton’s church music are still available both in print and through the internet.

Lute pieces in manuscript

Like that other lute playing precentor, Mathew Holmes, scribe of the Cambridge lute manuscripts, Creighton’s musical interests stretched well beyond church music. Thus a different side to Robert Creighton’s musical interests are revealed in his autograph manuscript, British Library Additional MS 37074, dating from around 1727. This slim volume (9 x19 cm) contains a mixture of instrumental and vocal music. The book had been owned by Thomas Taphouse in the nineteenth century and was examined by Frank Kidson in 1901. Among the non-sacred pieces are 10 vocal items, most with two violins and bass, 31 trios, 22 sonatas for three treble instruments and bass, 2 keyboard pieces and the 7 solo lute pieces. It is suggested that much of this music may have been in some sense self-educational and is less good than his church music. The instrumental music is perhaps more limited in ambition when compared to the service music—which is similarly backward-looking, and more typical for 1675 than for 1725. However, the lute pieces are perfectly agreeable and work well on the instrument. These lute pieces have been known for a long time. They are mentioned in the usual lute reference books but have never received much attention as music. I mentioned them in my doctoral thesis and gave transcriptions of them there.
Claver Morris and the Wells Music Club

It is curious that Creighton at the advanced age of 91 should have contributed a group of pieces to his manuscript for an instrument that according to Mace was even by 1676 ‘out of fashion’. The most obvious conclusion to draw is that he had composed them in his younger days and then added them to his autograph to preserve them for posterity. One possible reason for conserving the non-sacred music in his autograph manuscript may have been the existence of a very active music circle based in Wells that had functioned for some thirty years (c.1687–1727) at the time Creighton copied out his lute pieces. It was led by the West-Country physician, Claver Morris (1659–1727), and was written about by Harry Johnstone. Until its demise in 1727, this music circle operated as a club and normally met at the Vicars’ Hall in Wells (then called the Close-Hall) which at that time had both a gallery and an organ. Its last year was the same year as Creighton’s dating of his autograph manuscript. The club was principally reliant on the musical talents of the Cathedral’s twelve Vicars Choral, and both vocal and instrumental music was performed.

In 1934 Edmund Hobhouse published a filleted version of Morris’s diaries and account books. More recently the originals were re-examined closely by Harry Johnstone for the wealth of information about musical and social life in the provinces, and the fascinating details of the music Morris heard, performed, bought, and had copied. Morris kept his diary and accounts from 1685 until the year of his death in 1727. He records occasions when there was ‘a very great Company of Strangers’ at the music meetings, especially when the town was full of company for events such as the Quarter Sessions. The club met on Tuesday evenings and sessions could go on late into the evening. The public were charged 2s 6d for entrance, and Morris ran the meetings and supervised the finances of the club. He also attended many other musical events, including in his own home, where he was a generous host, and in the region, both privately among his friends, and more publicly in Bath.

Robert Creighton II is mentioned on a good number of occasions in the diaries and it is clear that Morris was closely connected with him both socially and through the Cathedral, which Morris normally attended daily for Matins at six o’clock in the morning, as well as the usual Sunday services. There is no suggestion that Creighton took an active part in the music-making meetings, though at a musical gathering in 1724 ‘Bassani’s 1st motette set to Mr Creyghton’s Words’ was performed. Presumably, Creighton may have been too old to participate or else deemed it unsuitable for a church divine to perform in public. Yet clearly the Creighton family were very familiar with that of Morris. On one occasion Morris visited Mr Creighton’s Grammar School where Morris heard ‘his Boys Declaim & speak Verses. I gave them 5s. Afterwards I Dined with the rest of the Company he had invited, at this House.’ This may be a reference to Robert Creighton IV, M.A. who was the Wells School master (1712–
36

1727) and probably a grandson of Robert II the precentor.\textsuperscript{30} A volume of Creighton’s sermons was given to Morris’s daughter when she was unwell.\textsuperscript{31} Creighton’s house and garden (now known as the Tower House) were very near the Vicars’ Close (on its east side) as Morris was able to go through Creighton’s garden door to get to the Close-Hall: ‘I with my Wife went to Dr Creightons to wish him a good journey to his Parsonage & got leave of him to make a Passage through his Garden into Close Hall.’\textsuperscript{32} Remarkably Morris’s house, which he had built in 1699, the Vicars’ Close, and the Close-Hall are all intact, and the daily paths taken by the Morris, Creighton and the Vicars Choral are all retraceable.

Illustration 2: William Simes’s map of precincts of Wells Cathedral (1735), showing Close-Hall, and the gardens

Morris was able to obtain the lease for two of the houses at the north end of Vicars’ Close through precentor Creighton. These the physician rented out to sub-tenants, but also opened a passage through the Liberty Wall into College Lane. This act upset the Vicars Choral and, egged on by Bishop Hooper, they brought an action in law to close this passage door. Morris objected and it seems won the case, but the result was the end of the music club as, without the participation of the Vicars Choral, it had insufficient talent to function for long.\textsuperscript{33}

There are a few mentions of the lute in Morris’s diaries and accounts. He paid ‘Will-cocks for barring a lute’ in December 1687.\textsuperscript{34} The amount was only 6d and I would think this would be a reference to fretting a lute in gut, which is a minor operation that has to be done from time to time on all lutes, and not the interior re-barring of a lute which entails taking the belly off. The lute was certainly played at the meeting on
the 27 September (and probably on the 20th also) by the lutenist Thomas Dean who
stayed as Morris’s guest for ten days that month.35 Morris notes that many people
attended that session ‘to hear Mr. Dean’s Lute’.36 This Thomas Dean is listed as both
an instrumentalist and a singer.37 Morris notes in his accounts ‘I lent to Mr. Dean
the Lutenist as he was going from my home to Bath, in my little parlour £3.4.6’.38
The Thomas Deans, father and son, appear in London newspapers between 1701 and
1711, however, one if not both of them seem to have been based in Bath around
1709–1711 as it is noteworthy that Morris refers to Dean who played the lute as
‘Mr Dean of Bath’.39 A Thomas Dean was employed as the organist of Bath Abbey in
1709–11, since payments were made to him for his services at the Abbey in 1709–11,
though no formal appointment is mentioned.40 Possibly it was the younger Thomas
Dean who played and composed for the archlute and visited Morris, and the older
Dean played the violin and organ and was the organist in Bath, but we cannot be sure.

Creighton’s lute pieces

Creighton’s seven pieces in BL MS 37074 are all for twelve-course lute in renaissance
tuning and in this they are somewhat unusual. It is possible that they constitute a
suite (or in Mace’s terminology a ‘set’). Certainly they are all firmly rooted in D minor
and some are distinctively similar to others in the set, with a shared pattern of melodic
gestures and harmonic movement among them. For instance nos. 2 and 3 are both 16
bars long, have cadences in the same places (bars 8/9), and follow roughly the same
harmonic pattern. However, there are differences in the rhythmic displacement of the
bass line, and in the melody of the upper line such that they would not quite work
as a duet. Pieces 1, 5, 6 and 7 all have the exact same last two bars, and in nos. 1 and 5
this extends to the same last three bars. All three are 16 bars long with again a similar
harmonic pattern. Only no. 5 has a clear double bar repeat after the first 8 bars and
a clear melodic sequence in bars 12 and 13 which nos. 6 and 7 do not share. As nos. 1,
5, 6 and 7 share many similarities, so do nos. 2 and 3, while no. 4 is perhaps the most
individual in that it is 28 bars long, with an 8 bar phrase, followed by one of 12 bars
and ending with another 8 bars.

The pieces are quite carefully and closely marked up with right-hand fingering di-
rections and frequent comma ornaments signs, and slurs and holds (tenuto signs) for
the left hand, though Creighton does not give numbered fingering for the left hand.
The comma ornaments are all put before the note and imply either a trill, a pull off or
hammer on. The comma ornament can appear almost anywhere: at expected cadence
points but also before unimportant passing notes. Most interesting is the surpris ingly
detailed fingering for the right hand with a vertical dash for the thumb, a single dot
below the note for the first finger and two dots for the middle finger. Though some
semi-quavers are slurred where it would be expected, sometimes they are not and the
directions are for them to be sounded by alternating left-hand finger strokes. So, for instance, in the identical penultimate bars of nos. 1, 5, 6, and 7 the four semi-quavers are all separately fingered: thumb—first—second—thumb (i.e without a slur). Also the final semi-quaver movement in the last beat of this penultimate bar is not slurred with the first finger striking down though two courses, but played with the index and middle fingers, unlike in French practice.

The texture is generally of two distinct parts, filled out with chords at cadence points. The style might be described as quasi-brisé, with some breaking up of chords into quaver patterns and a clear separation of treble and bass parts. The upper line seldom goes below the third course, and only in a few places ventures out of first position. The use of the bottom three courses is slight. The tenth course is used in only three places (in no. 4 and twice in no. 5), the eleventh not at all, and the twelfth course only in four places (in nos. 2 and 4, and twice in no. 5). As in the works of Thomas Mace, the diapasons down to the tenth course are indicated with letters and lines, and only the bottom course is indicated with a numbers (in no. 5), though, as with Mace presumably the eleventh course would be a number (in no. 4) were it to be required. A point of interest is the lack of the supertonic in the penultimate bars of the final cadences of numbers 2, 3 and 4.

**Antiquarianism in Creighton’s other music**

Peter Holman has written about the interest in old instruments in the eighteenth century in his book *Life after Death* and in particular in the continued use of the viol in the eighteenth century.41 The lute similarly did not die but continued in a limited way, especially when there was an interest in the music and instruments of previous generations. Creighton seems to have had an interest in older music and in particular old instruments. A set of verses found in his autograph manuscript reads:

> I hear a Thunder rolling her beneath  
> Where Curtals and Bassoons their murmurs breathe;  
> And Sackbuts their unfolding tubes of Brass  
> Unsheathing, push and draw their counter Bass.  
> While Clarions, Hautboys and Chirrimias mix  
> Here with 7 with 5; there 4 with 2 with 6,  
> Loud Violin abruptly checks its bow  
> To listen to the harmony below, R.C.42

His mention of the defunct curtals and sackbuts caught the attention of Frank Kidson in 1901.43 While much of the music played at the meetings mentioned by Morris was by such contemporary composers as Handel, Scarlatti and Vivaldi, they also performed Byrd and Purcell, and music which would have been regarded as antiquated.
It may be that some of the music in Creighton’s autograph manuscript was used at the meetings, though Morris does not mention this.

**Thomas Mace and Trinity College**

Much of Creighton’s music relates more to the Restoration period, when he was in his thirties and forties, rather than the eighteenth century; when he was in his sixties and above. It is worth remembering that Thomas Mace would have been a singing man at Trinity College when Creighton was based there, that is until 1666, and that Mace also taught the lute. Mace was awarded the singing man’s place in Trinity College choir that had been his father’s in 1635, migrating from counter tenor to tenor in 1639. Mace remained in his post until his death around 1706, despite his deafness. There are obvious similarities between Mace’s music and Creighton’s, as noted above. The big difference is Creighton’s seven pieces are all in *vieil ton* tuning—which Mace reserves for the theorbo. Mace’s lute pieces in his *Musick’s Monument* (1676) are mostly in ‘The Flat Tuning’; seven ‘setts’ are in flat tuning with only one set in the D minor tuning which was by then dominant elsewhere in northern Europe. This aside, the texture, musical gestures, use of ornaments, clear separation of upper and lower parts is shared in common, and the carefully denoted right-hand dots for index and middle fingers mirror Mace’s practice.

Both the Creightons, father and son, would surely have known Mace, and it is possible that the younger Creighton was a lute pupil of Mace in the years up to 1666. Mace taught singing, the viol and the lute while in Cambridge and was doing so as early as 1647 when he taught John Worthington, fellow of Emmanuel College singing and the viol. He taught his son John the lute through his book in 1671, and he refers frequently in *Musick’s Monument* to his ‘scholars’ on the lute. Could one of these been the younger Robert Creighton?

Photographs from BL Add. MS 37074 are reproduced below, the last being a colour photograph, giving an impression of the physical appearance of the book.
Robert Creighton’s lute pieces in British Library Additional MS 37074
above: f. 4r, below: f. 4v, by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Library.
Robert Creighton’s lute pieces in British Library Additional MS 37074
above: f. 5r, below: f. 5v, by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Library.
Robert Creighton’s lute pieces in British Library Additional MS 37074
above: f. 6r, below: f. 6v, author’s colour photograph,
by kind permission of the Trustees of the British Library.
[1 Allemande]

Robert Creighton (1636/7-1734)

[2 Courante]
[4 Courante or Sarabande]

[5 Allemande or Ayre]
Notes

Further related information can be found in the present author’s ‘Lute and viol in Bath and Wells in the 18th century’, Lute News 127 (October 2018) pp. 16–27.

1 BL Add MS 37074, ff. 4r-6. The lute pieces nos. 3–6 are initialled ‘R.C.’ and nos. 1 and 7 are dated 1727. ‘Creighton’ is also frequently spelt ‘Creyghton’.


5 *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, John Venn and J. A. Venn (Cambridge: CUP, 1922-54)


7 Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, accessed through venn.lib.cam.ac.uk 6 August 2018.


10 For Frideswide see Linzee Colchester, *Wells Cathedral*, New Bell’s Cathedral Guide (1987) p. 169, see also for more about intermarriages in what he calls the oligarchy of the Wells chapter.


12 Crawford, The Vicars of Wells, p. 66. This story is incompatible with the date of death of 1683 given for Frideswide at https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/169487266/frideswide-creighton


15 Charles Burney, *A General History of Music, from the earliest ages to the present period* (1776–89), 4 volumes.


Robert Creighton, Doctor in Divinity, was son of Robert, Bishop of Bath and Wells, who had been with King Charles the Second, while in Exile. In 1674, he became Canon Residentiary, and Chanter, of the Cathedral Church at Wells, and died there in 1736, aged 97. Much of his leisure Time he spent in Musical Compositions for the Church Service, some of which still remain in that Cathedral.


20 Frank Kidson, ‘Dr Arne’s ‘Thomas and Sally’ and obsolete musical instruments’, *Musical Times*, 1 July 1901.


23 Thomas Mace, *Musick’s Monument* (London, 1676), p. 47. This is the sixth aspersion levelled against the lute that Mace discusses. Interestingly he does not seem to contradict the aspersion but rather responds that:

> although it be Thus Aspers’d (as I have here mentioned) by the Ignorant and Inconsiderate, yet notwithstanding It has This General Applause and Praise, viz. THAT IT IS THE BEST MUSICK IN THE WORLD.


26 Hobhouse, *Diary*, p. 84 for 10 January, 1721.


29 Hobhouse, *Diary*, p. 78.
30 Crawford, *The Vicars of Wells*, p. 70.

31 Hobhouse, *Diary*, p. 122.

32 Hobhouse, *Diary*, p. 52, 4 June 1709.


38 Kenneth James, ‘Concert Life’, p. 577.


41 Peter Holman, *Life after Death: The Viola da Gamba in Britain from Purcell to Dolmetsch* (Boydell and Brewer); see also ibid., ‘The lute family in Britain’. For discussion of later ‘lutes’ generally, see *Lute News*, 96, 97, 121, 126.

42 BL Add. MS 37074, f.1r.

43 Kidson, ‘Dr Arne’s ‘Thomas and Sally’, *Musical Times*.


45 Likewise none of the pieces in the Tabley MS are in *vieil ton* though there are some pieces for twelve-course lute in Nanki MS N-4/42, Nanki Music Library, in the old tuning.


47 Mace, *Musick’s Monument*, p. 45.