

Sing Joyfully

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter



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March 2017

The program for March

March brings with it our first home Evensong for 2017. We shall premiere the Tertius Noble canticles, and revive S S Wesley's anthem *Wash me thoroughly*. And then we shall repeat the music at St James' Church King Street eleven days later.

Rehearsals for this Easter's *Messiah* will commence on Thursday evening 16 March at 7:30 pm. All parishioners are being invited to join us for this event.

The recent past – February

Sunday 12 February

***And murmuring of innumerable bees*** (Tennyson)

In the final scene of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has Ariel sing: "*Where the bee sucks, there suck I*". Ariel was clearly not a Swiz parishioner on Sunday 12 February last. The small choir arrived at 7:30 am to find the church abuzz with a swarm of the little creatures. Chairs were hastily set out in the hall and Peter Gilkes directed the singing of Schubert's *23rd Psalm* in the sweet acoustic offered by that space. It was the third day of the then current heat-wave and, by 10 am the air-conditioned church offered the more comfortable environment, even though the bees were becoming even more agitated. The much braver 10 am congregation sat in the cooler church with most of the lights extinguished – it was the lights themselves that seemed to agitate the intruders. The choir sang Christopher Bowen's *Lord's Prayer* and the bees were placated.

There had been some discussion about an appropriate dress code for the two Communion services, knowing in advance that the day would be a scorcher. "Robes" was the prior decision. In the event, "mufti" became the dress of the moment and precedent was set. We hope, though, that we shall not experience another day like that for a long, long time.

Soirée

The Hamiltons had hoped to host a choir soirée in their home during the month, but wisely decided that their air-conditioning system would not cope on such a day – the same day of the bees described above. Word was sent that the soirée would be re-scheduled to a cooler time of year. And with that, the Hamiltons abandoned their home in St Ives and moved to Kurrajong.

"The Patrick Project"

The organising Committee met during February. Good progress is being made on arrangements for our trip to Ireland in August.

The time is fast approaching when the 60 people who signed on for the trip before Easter last year will have to pay for their accommodation. Individual invoices will be sent out shortly.

Our tour group currently numbers 71, and 24 of those have signed up for the Insight coach tour around Ireland afterwards. We are very happy to have others increase both numbers. Contact the committee convenor (Brian – email chideock@optusnet.com.au or phone 9482 5817 or tackle him after a service) at any time for further details.

The road to Dublin

Chapter 17: Irish flora and fauna

Since Ireland was completely covered by ice sheets during the most recent Ice Age, all native plant and animal life now extant originated from the natural migration of species, chiefly from other parts of Europe and especially from Britain. Early sea inundation of the land bridge connecting Ireland and Britain prevented further migration after 6000 BC. Although many species have subsequently been introduced, Ireland has a much narrower range of flora and fauna than Britain. Forest is the natural dominant vegetation, but the total forest area is now only 5% of the total area, and most of that remains because of the state afforestation program. The natural forest cover was chiefly mixed

sessile oak woodland with ash, wych elm, birch, and yew. Pine was dominant on poorer soils, with rowan and birch. Beech and lime are notable natural absentees that thrive when introduced.

The shamrock plant is recognised the world over as the badge of Ireland. It is probably most frequently aimed at tourists. It is the logo of the Irish Tourist Board, Failte Ireland, but its appearance is not restricted to helping visitors part with their money. You can find the emblem on everything from the tailfin of the airline Aer Lingus to the lamp-posts of Dublin. Most visitors, and even many locals, believe the humble weed is the official symbol of Ireland but that lofty status is held by the 12-stringed harp.



The original Irish shamrock (traditionally spelled seamróg, which means "summer plant") is said by many authorities to be none other than white clover (*Trifolium repens*), a common lawn weed originally native to Ireland. It is a vigorous, rhizomatous, stem-rooting perennial with trifoliate leaves. Occasionally, a fourth leaflet will appear, making a "four-leaf clover," said to bring good luck to the person who discovers it.

The fauna of Ireland is basically similar to that of Britain, but there are some notable gaps. Among those absent are weasel, polecat, wildcat, most shrews, moles, water voles, roe deer, snakes, and common toads. There are also fewer bird and insect species. Some introduced animals, such as the rabbit and brown rat, have been very successful. Ireland has some species not native to Britain, such as the spotted slug and certain species of wood lice. Ireland's isolation has made it notably free from plant and animal diseases. Among the common domestic animals, Ireland is particularly noted for its fine horses, dogs, and cattle. The Connemara pony, Irish wolfhound, Kerry blue terrier, and several types of cattle and sheep are recognized as distinct breeds.

(Ref. Nations Encyclopedia and Fine Gardening Magazine)



With no new offerings from the many of our readers with Irish heritage, it falls this month on the editor to claim his own:

My Irish heritage

My mother's maiden surname was Barry – a very common name in Ireland.

Odo di Barri came to England as a mercenary soldier with William of Normandy in 1066. One of his grandchildren, Robert de Barry, was a member of the first Norman scouting party that landed at Bannow Bay, near Wexford, Ireland, on 1 May 1169 and marched north to Dublin. That landing was followed in August 1170 by an invading army led by Strongbow and later, in October 1170, by King Henry II of England to begin the Norman/English invasion of Ireland.

In 1185 Robert de Barry was the garrison commander at Lismore Castle, Co. Waterford, when the Irish mounted a successful attack on it. All of the Castle's defenders, including Robert, were put to the sword.

Philip de Barry followed his brother Robert to Ireland once the Normans safely were established there, and he prospered.

The Barry family fortunes fluctuated wildly in Ireland through the following centuries. My mother's great-grandparents, Zachary and Bessie Barry, arrived in Australia in 1853; he had recently graduated from Trinity College in Dublin and was appointed the Church of England Colonial Chaplain in the Swan River Colony. The family eventually landed in Sydney in 1865 and occupied the Rectory at St Jude's Church in Randwick until Zachary was appointed Rector at St Matthias, Darlinghurst in 1868. He remained there for 25 years until he retired in 1893.

BPW

Who else can claim Irish heritage? Please send details to the editor.



Wash me thoroughly

My computer's spell-check doesn't like the word *thoroughly*. It auto-corrects it every time to *thoroughly*, which is fine today, but was less so when the panel who compiled the King James Bible were working. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary dates *thoroughly* to 1400; *thoroughly* to a later time. *Thoroughly* meant *fully, completely, perfectly*. By the 17th century when the King James Bible was being compiled, the meaning had expanded to include *for the whole length of time*. It was no doubt the word the compilers chose to indicate the psalmist's whole plea for God's Grace. It conveys the meaning rather better than today's *thoroughly* which conveys completeness but misses the foreverness.

The words of Samuel Wesley's anthem are a paraphrase of verses 2 and 3 of Psalm 51. The psalm itself (KJV) begins:

- ¹Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness;
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.
- ²Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
- ³For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

The psalm is headed: "*To the chief musician. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, when he had gone in to Bath-sheba.*"

David was concerned, not only for his own sin with Bathsheba but, as King, for the effect that knowledge of his sin might have on the morals of his subjects.

The Medici Pope Leo X first mandated the silent recitation of Psalm 51 (*Miserere mei*) at the conclusion of Tenebrae¹, the services celebrated in Holy Week within Catholic churches, on the evening before or early morning of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. The Pope's own singers, however, quickly adopted the practice of a fully polyphonic performance of the Psalm. Gregorio Allegri joined the papal choir in 1629, serving in it for the rest of his life. In the 1630s he composed a setting of *Miserere mei* for Holy Week that eventually became his greatest musical legacy. The papal choir sang it every year from the seventeenth century until the choir collapsed in 1870. The young Felix Mendelssohn heard it sung once in about 1830, wrote the piece out from memory and bequeathed it to the rest of the world.

Wesley's version was composed around 1840, just a little later than Mendelssohn's transcription of the Allegri version.

Wesley's nod to BACH

On the penultimate page of Wesley's anthem "*Wash me thoroughly*" the basses have the pleasure of singing dotted minims, F, E, G, and F#. This is a noble progression of notes: down a semitone, up a minor third (= 3 semitones), down a semitone.

If we transpose that progression so it starts on Bb, it becomes Bb A C B.

Which is significant, because in the past, the labels given to notes of the scale were slightly different: what they called B then means Bb now; and because what we call B now was orphaned by its label being appropriated to mean Bb, it was given the letter H.

Thus the progression Bb A C B would formerly have been rendered B A C H.

Several composers have taken advantage of this serendipitous sequence to honour J S Bach.

Perhaps the most famous is Liszt's monumental *Fantaisie et Fugue sur le nom de BACH*, as the French publisher Leduc styles it.

Less ambitious is the *Fugue on B A C H* by J S Bach's son C P E Bach, which I played on 5 February as the voluntary at our 10 am service.

PH



The Chorister's Prayer

The following is taken from the RSCM UK website. It is based in part upon research done years ago by a member of the RSCM NSW Branch Committee, Sr Marie Therese Levy.

Bless, O Lord, us Thy servants,
who minister in Thy temple.
Grant that what we sing with our lips,
we may believe in our hearts,
and what we believe in our hearts,
we may show forth in our lives.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The Chorister's Prayer in its most common form was first published by the School of English Church Music in 1934 in the *Choristers' Pocket Book*. No indication of its origin was given there and it has been assumed by many that this may have been the work of Sir Sydney Nicholson and/or Cosmo

¹ **Tenebrae, Latin plural noun, means "darknesses".**

Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury and a keen supporter of Sir Sydney and of the School of English Church Music as the RSCM was then called.

The prayer does however have origins which extend back at least to the 4th century, for the tenth canon of the fourth council of Carthage (c 398 AD) decrees that cantors should be blessed with the words *Vide, ut quod ore cantas, corde credas, et quod corde credis, operibus comprobas* (“See that what thou singest with thy lips thou dost believe in thine heart, and that what thou believest in thine heart thou dost show forth in thy works”).

The same Latin text is also used in the *Pontificale Romanum* of 1595/6 in both the form for admitting a psalmista or cantor and also at the ordination of priests. The earliest English versions seem to date from the 1840s with two, one for use before and a second version for use after Divine Service, published in a booklet entitled *Historical Notices of the Office of Choristers* 1848 by Revd James Millard. Within a few months the ‘after service’ version of that prayer also appeared in the journal *The Parish Choir* – “Grant, O Lord, that what I have said and sung with my mouth, I may believe in my heart; and what I may believe in my heart, I may steadfastly fulfil, though Jesus Christ our Lord” and this identical prayer was published again in *The Choir and Musical Record Almanack* in 1866.

It may be that Sir Sydney modernised the language of The Chorister's Prayer, but we who pray these words weekly carry on a tradition of many centuries and hopefully we both ‘steadfastly fulfil’ and also ‘show forth’ the tenets of our faith in our lives and music.



RSCM Choral Workshop

Saturday 18 March at St Andrew’s Cathedral.



This will be a rare chance to work with one of Australia’s most celebrated church musicians, Dr June Nixon, for 40 years Organist and Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral, Melbourne. June celebrates her 75th birthday this year. She will workshop a very attractive selection of her pieces. Afternoon tea provided. The day finishes as we perform her wonderful music in the service of Choral Evensong.

And all are welcome at the NSW Branch AGM.

Workshop registration is from 1 pm.

Annual General Meeting at 4 pm.

Choral Evensong at 5 pm.

Note that St Swithun’s Choir is a member of RSCM, so choristers can attend at the member’s rate of \$20. Others are welcome also but must contribute \$30 for the privilege.



Draft Choir program – 2017

Date	Venue	Time	
2017			
Sat 4 Mar	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Wed 15 Mar	St James’ King Street	6 pm	Evensong
Thu 16 Mar	Swiz	7:30 pm	First Messiah rehearsal
Sat 8 Apr	Swiz	5 pm	Handel’s Messiah
Fri 14 Apr	Swiz	8:30 am	Good Friday service
Sun 16 Apr	Swiz	10 am	Easter Day
Sun 21 May ¹	Swiz	12:30 – 3:30 pm	Choir workshop
Sat 27 May	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Sun 18 Jun	Swiz	2 pm	Huguenot celebration
Sun 25 Jun	Swiz	12:30 – 3:30 pm	Choir workshop
Sat 15 Jul	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Sat 5 Aug	Swiz	5 pm	Farewell concert
Sun 6 Aug	Swiz	10 am	Commissioning service
Sun 13 Aug	Swiz	10 am	Last service before Ireland
19 – 20 Aug	Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin		
21 – 27 Aug	St Patrick’s Cathedral, Dublin		
Thu 14 Sep	Swiz	8 pm	Rehearsals resume
Sun 17 Sep	Swiz	10 am	First service after the trip
Sat 28 Oct	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Sat 25 Nov	Swiz	7 pm	Bach Christmas Oratorio

¹Note change of date.

Please stay continually alert for advice about additions/amendments. In particular, the program for 2017 is still fluid, apart from the Dublin bits which are firm.

