

Sing Joyfully

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter



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October 2018

Summer time

Sunday 7 October sees the start of Summer Time for the south-eastern states. On that day, the choir uniform will be "shirts". Men, forget your ties and leave your winter jackets at home for first, third and the occasional fifth Sundays over the next six months.

SEPTEMBER

Sunday 23 September

Today will go down in the choir annals as being a particularly busy day. We started with 23 choristers at the 8 am service singing three hymns and a version of the Mendelssohn motet *Verleih' uns Frieden gnädiglich*; the translation and arrangement by John Rutter. At 10 am we came back with 32 voices to sing another three hymns and the same motet. At 11:30 we were back in the church with 33 voices to sing two more hymns and Rutter's *Aaronic Blessing* at the baptismal service for Zoe Snell.

Not content with a full morning, we all picked up new music and high-tailed it to the home of Eleanor and Peter Gilkes in Cremorne for another of our occasional choir soirées. Their music room was chock-a-block with people and the program was sufficient to last the best part of two hours. It opened with Phil singing *The Floral Dance* and concluded with the whole ensemble singing the Flanders & Swan *Hippopotamus Song*. In between we had a wide variety of genres, opera, ballads, comic sketches.



Carol's rendering of the Joyce Grenfell piece *Such peaceful thoughts my mind doth fill* was great fun, as was the Hobson's duet *O no John*. But we really shouldn't highlight the individual pieces lest any artist feels we might have overlooked them. The two Peters (Hamilton and Gilkes) split the accompanying duties. We did a rough count and concluded that 20 members of the choir contributed items for the concert. It was a great afternoon with sumptuous eats to follow. Thanks and praise to the Gilkes for being the hosts, and to the individuals who were brave enough to stand up and be heard!

Two funerals

On Wednesday 26 September we sang a couple of pieces by John Rutter at the funeral of Joan Copeland. Phil directed and we had Ross Cobb playing the organ. Then on Friday 28 September we sang at the funeral of Philip Rasmussen. Peter was back at the organ console on Friday; Richard Kaan directed. The choirs were about 20-strong and reasonably balanced on each occasion, so thanks to all those who came and sang.



October

St James', King Street, Sydney

We shall sing Evensong at St James on Wednesday 17 October at 6:15 pm. Expect a rehearsal call for 5 pm on the day.

An RSCM event

One of Britain's best known choral conductors, has retired from his job in Oxford after 33 years. Professor Stephen Darlington has been Christ Church Cathedral organist since 1985.

In addition to overseeing the cathedral choir, Professor Darlington is Christ Church's director of music and is in charge of academic music. The choir has become renowned for its quality and variety and Professor Darlington revealed this was his aim from the start.



One of Professor Darlington's more unusual projects was recording for TV *The Vicar of Dibley* theme music with Howard Goodall, who also composed the themes to *Mr Bean* and *Blackadder*. The pair, both former Christ Church undergraduates, are good friends and as a result Professor Darlington's choir was asked to perform the sitcom's soundtrack.

Now retired, Professor Darlington is coming to Sydney. He will lead a "Come and Sing Evensong" event in St Andrew's Cathedral from 10:30 am on Saturday 20 October. The workshop will conclude with Evensong at 5 pm.

Swiz choir is a corporate member of RSCM, so the cost of the day is \$30 per head, a saving of \$10. Further details will be revealed as the date draws nearer.

DBD

Several months ago a little booklet appeared among the sopranos of the Swiz choir. It bears a longish name: *Descants for Hymns for Today's Church*. Inside the covers lie 135 descants; a rough estimate indicates that around a quarter are the work of various English composers and have been published elsewhere, but not in *Hymns for Today's Church*. All the rest, more than 100 of them, have been composed by either "PBH" or "MM".

The preface to the booklet indicates that "PBH" is Peter Hamilton and "MM" is Meg Matthews ARSCM and to both of these composers we express admiration and thanks! Nearly every Sunday we experience the joy of presenting a world premiere performance.

The Oxford Dictionary of Music notes that the term "descant" has meant different things at different times. Today, in modern hymn singing, (it is) a freely written or improvised soprano part added to a hymn tune while the tune itself is sung by the rest of the choir or by the congregation.

The Oxford Dictionary itself reveals that DESCANT (or DISCANT) has had its present meaning since the 16th century. So the "modern" meaning is not really so modern. The word reaches us from Mediæval Latin via Old French and Middle English – dis – asunder, apart; plus cantus – song.

The preface to the booklet also contains advice by the authors about the singing of descants:

*This collection of descants for HTC means that about 35% of all the hymns in that fine collection of Christian praise now have a descant. **However death by descant is not pleasant** (the bold print is theirs). We suggest that descants should NOT be sung at every possible opportunity. Discretion is needed.*

The bold-print sentence is the reason that Phil is referring to the booklet as "DBD" – death by descant. We feel that such a sobriquet is a bit harsh and now announce a competition to devise a more suitable brief title. The prize is a year's complimentary subscription to *Sing Joyfully*, so who wouldn't want to enter. Please send entries to the Editor at chideock@optusnet.com.au. Judging will take place towards the end of October 2018 and the successful entry will be announced in the next issue of *Sing Joyfully*. The judges' decision will be final.

Salisbury 2020

The choir has accepted an invitation to sing services at Salisbury Cathedral, from Monday 17 to Sunday 23 August 2020.

A short history of Salisbury

The story of Salisbury began 2,500 years ago when an iron-age fort was built on Salisbury Hill about 2 miles north of the modern town centre. In the 6th century AD the Saxons invaded Wiltshire. In 552 Saxons and Celts fought a battle at Salisbury Hill. The Celts were defeated and fled westwards. The fort probably lay abandoned for centuries.

However by the early 11th century a settlement had grown up on the site of the old fort. In 1003 the Vikings raided Wilton. Some of the survivors may have fled about four miles east to the safety of Salisbury Hill and founded a new settlement. The new town had a mint and a market.

About 1069 William the Conqueror built a wooden castle to overlook the settlement and keep the inhabitants in line. In 1075 a bishop moved his seat there. However Sarisberie, as it was called, was a small settlement, much smaller than nearby Wilton. It probably only had a population of a few hundred.

Salisbury in the Middle Ages

The modern town of Salisbury began about the year 1217 when the Bishop decided to move his seat to land owned by the church south of the hill. Perhaps there was friction between the clergy and the soldiers in the Norman castle. A shortage of water on the hill may have been another reason for the move. He created a new town on the plain. The Bishop laid out streets in a grid pattern and leased plots of land for building houses. So a new settlement grew up at Salisbury but the town at Old Sarum continued for centuries.

The new town of Salisbury was given a charter in 1227 (a charter was a document granting the townspeople certain rights). By 1219 Salisbury had a market and an annual fair. In Middle Ages fairs were like markets but they were held only once a year. People would come from all over Wiltshire to buy and sell at a Salisbury fair.



Market Cross in Salisbury

Medieval Salisbury was very successful. This was partly because it was on the road from Wilton to Southampton. It was also on the road from London to Exeter. (In those days Exeter was a large and important town and much traffic went between those two towns). In 1244 a stone bridge was built across the Avon, which increased the traffic flowing through Salisbury. Obviously travellers would stop at Salisbury and spend money in the town.

However the main industry in Medieval Salisbury was making wool cloth. Much of this wool was exported through Southampton. Salisbury grew to be one of the largest towns in England by the 15th century with a population of perhaps 8,000.

Work on Salisbury Cathedral began in 1220 and continued until 1258. The tower and spire were added in 1334. The Bishop's Palace was also built in the 13th century. Then in 1269 Salisbury was divided into 3 parishes.

Meanwhile in the 13th century the friars arrived in Salisbury. In Salisbury there were 2 orders of friars, the Franciscans (called grey friars because of their grey costumes) and the Dominicans (known as black friars).

Salisbury in the 16th Century

In 1538 Henry VIII closed the friaries in Salisbury.

During the 17th century the wool industry in Salisbury slowly declined. The population of the town also declined slightly to about 7,000. Salisbury was a large and important town in the Middle Ages but by 1700 it had dwindled into a medium sized market town. On the other hand in 1612 Salisbury was given a new charter. This one made the town completely independent of the Bishop.

Like all towns in those days Salisbury suffered from outbreaks of the plague. It struck in 1563, 1604 and 1627.

Salisbury in the 17th Century

In 1642 came civil war between king and parliament. For 2 years Salisbury escaped the fighting. Then in October 1644 a royalist army occupied the town. In December 1644 a parliamentary army attacked Salisbury and quickly defeated the royalists taking many of them prisoner. However in January 1645 another royalist army attacked Salisbury. They drove out the parliamentary troops. Salisbury remained in royalist hands until January 1646. By then the king was losing the war and he withdrew his troops from Salisbury as they were needed elsewhere.

The civil war ended in 1646 but in 1655 a royalist uprising took place. Not many men from Salisbury were willing to join the revolt. The uprising was soon crushed and 7 rebels were hanged in Salisbury. Others were transported to the West Indies.

Salisbury in the 18th Century

During the 18th century Salisbury remained a market town of only local importance. Cloth manufacture was still the main industry but it gradually declined. Furthermore Salisbury suffered outbreaks of smallpox in 1723 and in 1752.

Yet there were some improvements in Georgian Salisbury. It gained its first newspaper in 1715. Then in 1737 an Act of Parliament formed a body of men with powers to pave, clean and light the streets with oil lamps. They also appointed a force of night watchmen. An infirmary was built in Salisbury in 1774 and a theatre was built in 1777.

Salisbury in the 19th Century

In 1801 Salisbury had a population of 7,668. By the standards of the time it was a fair sized town. However Salisbury grew little in the early 19th century and had a population of less than 9,500 in 1851. In the late 19th century the population grew more rapidly. It reached 17,000 by 1901.

In the 19th century the industrial revolution transformed Britain but it largely passed Salisbury by. The old cloth industry died out altogether, but it remained a market town. Nonetheless there were some improvements. In 1833 Salisbury gained gas street lighting and in 1836 a modern police force was created in the town. Then in 1847 the railway arrived.

In 1849 Salisbury suffered a severe outbreak of cholera and 192 people died. Afterwards, in the 1850s, sewers were dug under the town and a piped water supply was created. Salisbury museum was founded in 1860. In 1892 a public swimming pool opened.



A "steamy" day at Salisbury Museum

The original settlement at Salisbury was on a hill north of the town. By the early 19th century it had dwindled to almost nothing. It became a 'rotten borough' where 10 voters elected two Members of Parliament. This situation was finally ended in 1832. Then in 1882 Old Sarum was finally extinguished when it became a public park.

Salisbury in the 20th and 21st Centuries

In the 20th century Salisbury continued to grow quite rapidly but it remained an agricultural town. Today one of the main industries is tourism.

The first cinema in Salisbury opened in 1908. Then in the 1920s and 1930s the first council houses were built. Some of them were needed to replace demolished slums. More council houses were built after 1945.

Old George Mall opened in 1968. A new library opened in 1975. A new swimming pool opened in 1976. The Redcoats In The Wardrobe Museum opened in 1982. The Maltings Shopping Centre opened in 1986. Wilton Shopping Village opened in 1998.

In the 21st century Salisbury is a thriving market town. Today the population of Salisbury is 40,000.

The two names for the city, Salisbury and Sarum, are humorously alluded to in a 1928 limerick from Punch:

*There was an old Sultan of Salisbury
 Who wanted some wives for his halisbury,
 So he had them sent down
 By a fast train from town,
 For he thought that his motor would scalisbury.*



Choir program - 2018

Date	Venue	Time	
Wed 17 Oct	St James, King Street	6:15 pm	Evensong
Sat 20 Oct	St Andrew's Cathedral	From 10:30 am	Evensong with Stephen Darlington
Sat 3 Nov	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong for the persecuted church
Thu 22 Nov	Swiz	12pm	TLC lunch carols
Sat 1 Dec	Swiz	5 pm	Advent hymn festival
Mon 10 Dec	RNSH	Lunchtime	Carols in the atrium
Thu 13 Dec	Swiz	11 am	Service of Solace & Consolation

Note that nothing is final until the actual day has arrived, so please be mindful of possible changes.