

# Hyfrydol

*St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter*



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## **A new year; a new masthead!**

**Hyfrydol** (Welsh word meaning "cheerful"; pronunciation: [həv'ɾədɔl<sup>1</sup>]) is a Welsh hymn tune from the nineteenth century which appears in many Christian hymnals in various arrangements. Composed by Rowland Prichard, it was originally published in the composer's handbook to the children's songbook *Cyfaill y Cantorion* ("The Singers' Friend"). Prichard composed the tune before he was twenty years old.

We adopt the name as our new masthead to indicate cheerful or joyful singing.



## **This month, February**

The choir will reconvene for rehearsal on Thursday evening, 30 January, to prepare for our return to regular morning services on Sunday 3 February.

The first special service will be Evensong, to be sung on the first Saturday in March.

## **December**

We had a busy month, as always at that time of year. Many members of the choir sang Messiah, either in the Town Hall or in the Hornsby Catholic Cathedral, to sell-out audiences/congregation.

On Saturday afternoon, 1 December, at Swiz, we presented a program of hymns and carols for Advent. Choristers introduced each of the nine congregational hymns and three anthems.

At lunchtime on Monday 10 December we presented a program of Christian Christmas music in the atrium of Royal North Shore Hospital. The audience in this venue is a mobile one, but we managed to hold a small nucleus for our 45 minute gig in the midst of a bustling lunchtime crowd.

A cohort of choristers presented lessons and carols at Wahroonga House on Sunday afternoon, 16 December and again at Bupa, St Ives on Thursday morning, 20 December

There was a huge congregation at the Christmas Eve service in the church at 11 pm on Monday 24 December; and again at the Christmas morning service at 8 am on Tuesday 25 December.



## **Epiphany**

As a choir, we miss the opportunity to celebrate Epiphany because we are in recess every January.

"Epiphany" comes from the Greek word "manifestation, appearance of a divinity" (Oxford Dictionary). The term originally marked a feast to celebrate the baptism of Christ (Matthew 3:13-17), and still does in Eastern Orthodox churches. Our Lord similarly "revealed his glory" at his first miracle in Cana (John 2:11).

Since the fourth century, however, Epiphany has been linked with Christ's manifestation of himself to the Magi, the first gentiles who believed in him (Matthew 2:1-12). In England,

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<sup>1</sup> ə is the unaccented vowel – as in Adelaide  
ɔ is the low-mid back rounded vowel – as in "or" "all".

it is now customary for the Queen to offer gold, myrrh and frankincense in the Chapel Royal every year on 6 January, the day the feast is observed.

When the Wise Men located Jesus and Mary, the ‘manger’ (Luke 2:16) would have been a distant memory. They would have been living in a modest house in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:11), because by this time Jesus would have been a toddler, probably between one and two years old. Hence Herod’s order to kill all male children up to two years old.



Very few of the hymns we sang during this last Christmas season include direct references to the Magi:

*The First Nowell*

*O Come all ye Faithful* (but only in verses in the extended version that we don’t ever sing)

Then there are the hymns that deal specifically with the Magi:

*As with Gladness Men of Old*

*Brightest and Best of the Sons of the Morning* (this hymn places the Magi at the newborn baby’s cradle)

*O Worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness*

*We Three Kings of Orient are*

There are a great number of modern anthems composed for Epiphany. And some older ones, of course. We have sung Felix Mendelssohn’s *There Shall A Star from David Come Forth*, although never during Epiphany.

We have not (at least not recently) presented the beautiful solo setting of *The Three Kings* by Peter Cornelius, with the choir singing *How Lovely Shines the Morning Star* beneath, as accompaniment (100 Carols for choirs, No. 90).

A missed opportunity? Perhaps not. (I definitely need a break after our regular busy Christmas season.)

## Salisbury 2020

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

A registration form will shortly be sent to everyone who has expressed interest in being part of the Salisbury contingent. It will give dates, outline the program, and give early information about the accommodation that is being arranged. It will ask for a monetary deposit so that firm bookings can be made. We ask that the registration form be completed and returned, with the deposit, to the organising committee promptly.

**In preparation for our trip** to Salisbury next year, I am reading “Sarum”, the epic novel by Edward Rutherfurd. Before we went to Ireland in 2017 I read both “Dublin” and “Ireland awakening” and had a better than basic understanding of the very complex history of the country and the issues it has faced over the years.

“Sarum” was the first of Rutherfurd’s historical works, published in 1987. It covers the pre-history and history of the area which we shall visit in August 2020 by weaving a fictional narrative through the many events that its inhabitants have faced since Britain was separated from Europe by the melting of the ice-cap at the end of the last ice age. He starts his story seven thousand five hundred years before Christ was born with a hunter who took advantage of the warming climate to migrate away from the snow-bound wasteland he had been born into and seek fresh opportunities in what was to later be known as Europe. But he found his way barred by the newly-created English Channel and had to settle on the plains where Old Sarum was eventually established.

It is a monumental novel. I am happy to lend it, once I have finished it. But my copy runs to more than 1,300 pages and I expect to be reading it for a while yet.

BPW

## **The Spafford Family** (contributed by Anne Apin)

As part of the recent Claydon tour of the Middle East, we attended the Sunday Morning Service at the Anglican All Saints Cathedral in Cairo. I was surprised that one of the hymns was *It Is Well with My Soul*. I have also been reading the impressive tome, *Jerusalem – The Biography*, by Simon Sebag Montefiore, and I find that the Spafford family did indeed have a role in that part of the world particularly in Jerusalem. I found this very interesting, so, in the hope that you will too, am copying a page or so for you to read:-

“On 21 November 1873, Anna Spafford and four of her daughters were crossing the Atlantic on the *Ville de Havre* when it was struck by another ship. As the ship sank, all four children drowned, but Anna survived. When she learned, after her rescue, that they were dead, she wanted to throw herself into the water after them. Instead she sent her husband, Horatio, a prosperous Chicago attorney, the heartbreaking telegram: ‘SAVED ALONE. WHAT SHALL I DO?’ What the Spaffords did was to give up their conventional life and come to Jerusalem. First they faced more tragedy: their son died of scarlet fever, leaving them one child, Bertha, out of six. Anna Spafford believed herself “spared for a purpose”, but the couple was also outraged by their Presbyterian Church which regarded their fate as divine punishment. Forming their own messianic sect, which the US press called the Overcomers, they believed that good works in Jerusalem and the restoration of the Jews to Israel – followed by their conversion – would hasten the imminent Second Coming.

**Anna Spafford**



In 1881, the Overcomers – thirteen adults and three children, who became the nucleus of the American Colony – settled in a large house just inside the Damascus Gate until, in 1896, they were joined by the farmers of the Swedish Evangelical Church and needed a larger headquarters. They then leased Rabbah Hussein's mansion in Shiekh Jarrah on the road to Nablus. Horatio died in 1881, but the sect thrived as they preached the Second Coming, converted Jews and developed their colony into a philanthropic, evangelical beehive of hospitals, orphanages, soup-kitchens, a shop, their own photography studio and a school.



**Horatio Spafford**

Gradually the American Colony's cheerful hymn-singing and charitable deeds made friends among all sects and religions, and the first port of call for every well-connected writer, pilgrim and potentate. Selma Lagerlof, a Swedish writer who stayed with the Spaffords, made the Colony famous with her novel *Jerusalem*, winning the Nobel Literature Prize. In 1902, Baron Plato von Ustinov (grandfather of the actor Peter) who ran a hotel in Jaffa, asked if his guests could stay at the Colony, the start of its transformation into a hotel. In 1904, Bertha married a fellow Colonist, Frederick Vester, and their heirs still own the Hotel.”

Nine further references are made regarding excerpts from Bertha's Memoirs or newspaper articles reporting on her comments or actions during the tumultuous history up to the late twentieth century. She seems to have been present at all the

important ceremonies – she appears in several photos with the leading political or military figures of the day – and her opinions are covered in the press, both in Jerusalem and abroad. The final mention of her is in relation to the burgeoning tourist industry in the 1960's:-

“The white-haired Bertha Spafford converted her American Colony into a luxury hotel and the brooch-wearing grande dame herself became one of the sights of the city, having known everybody from Jemal Pasha to Lawrence of Arabia: she even featured twice on the British television show *This is Your Life*”.



### **Anglican Future Conference, Melbourne, September 2018**

Don Mayes attended the three-day conference, and wrote a report which he presented to the Parish Council upon his return. We have his permission to publish it in our newsletter because he deals primarily with one seminar at the conference that was concerned with church “music”.

The conference was inspiring and uplifting and the speakers covered all the areas challenging the Anglican Church (except music) in Australia and the worldwide Anglican Church.

The program was divided into plenary sessions and seminars. One seminar, “What kind of music does God like?” was chaired by Andrew Judd (grandson of Archbishop Robinson) and my report is focussing on this. Andrew opened by referring to Col. 3:16, *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God*. He also referred to 1 Chronicles 16 and to Ephesians 5:19, and to James 5:13.

A discussion ensued and I noted a few quotations:

- A song makes you feel a thought.
- The duty of religious singing is to excite and express.
- Music needs to be spirit inspired.
- Distinguish between saving worship and worship of the saved.
- Songs that we can sing together.

Up to this point, no reference had been made to any form of singing other than “songs.” As an organist over the past 60 years, and a chorister for about 30 years, I was compelled to raise the issue of hymns and the rich Anglican music tradition (I did not disclose my background to the seminar). In response, I was advised that **“this seminar is about the future!”**

I now turn to the music performed at the plenary sessions. The conference auditorium was suitable for the occasion. It consisted of black walls and ceiling and a concrete floor, three screens and extensive lighting and sound amplification. The music was led by a band and vocalists on microphones. The band included past St Swithun’s Assistant Minister Rev. John Forsyth.

The “songs” were chorus style, repetitive and all in unison – in my view musically, the lowest common denominator. However, many in the audience sang along and appeared to appreciate them. I did not have the opportunity to ask those people if they had ever heard or been involved with church music other than songs, or exposed to the Anglican choral tradition.

Don summed up his report in the following words:

The lack of musical vision from my observations of the AFC over the three days would suggest that music is not a central or significant theme in their plan for the future.

He made a number of observations to Parish Council suggesting that the RSCM (of which organisation all our choristers are members) is the appropriate vehicle through which we need to promote a much more extensive vision of the place of music in our services.



## March Evensong

Phil advises that we shall be learning new evening canticles for the first Evensong this year. It is timely, therefore, that we introduce the composer.

**Sir William Henry Harris KCVO** (1883 - 1973) was an English organist and composer. He is best remembered today for his Anglican Church music, though during his lifetime he was mainly known for his achievements as a choir-trainer.



He was born in London. At the age of 14, he took up a position as Assistant Organist at St David's Cathedral in Wales, followed at 16 by a scholarship to the Royal College of Music.

After stints at New College and Christ Church, Oxford, he moved to St. George's Chapel, Windsor in 1933. As Organist and Choirmaster at Windsor, Harris was at his most productive. He produced music for the Three Choirs Festival, was a conductor at both the 1937 and 1953 coronations, and had music premiered at the Proms, all of which led to him being appointed Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (KCVO) in 1954.

Bruce Nightingale, who became senior chorister at Windsor during the wartime years, describes "Doc H" as having "a fat, usually jolly face with a few wisps of hair across an otherwise bald head." Although choir practice was normally conducted in a "benign atmosphere," Nightingale recounts that Harris, on the rare occasions he considered a performance mediocre, would scold the choirboys in a loud stage whisper from the organ loft. Harris was involved in the musical education of the teenage Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret Rose, who spent the wartime period at Windsor Castle. Every Monday he would direct madrigal practice in the Red Drawing Room at Windsor, where the two Princesses sang alongside four of the senior choristers with the lower voices augmented by Etonians, Grenadier Guards and members of the Windsor and Eton Choral Society. Jars of Argentinian honey, sent to Windsor by overseas subjects, were donated by the Princesses to the Choir School as a treat for the choristers.

There is one hymn tune composed by Harris in Hymns for Today's Church – No. 48, a paraphrase of Psalm 121 (*Unto the hills around me I lift up my longing eyes*). He composed the tune in 1924 on a long train journey through Alberta, and named it *Alberta*.

There is an anthem in the Church Anthem Book which he composed: No. 75, *O what their joy and their glory must be*. It is based on a traditional French melody. The text has been translated from the Latin of Abelard by J.M. Neale.

Harris was also Director of Studies at the Royal School of Church Music in Addington Palace from 1956 until his retirement in 1961 at the age of 78. He died in London at the noble age of 90 in 1973.



## Choir program – 2019

Date	Venue	Time	
Thu 31 Jan	Swiz	8 pm	First rehearsal
Sun 3 Feb	Swiz	9:30 am	First morning service
Sat 2 March	Swiz	5 pm	Lenten Evensong
Thu 21 Mar	Swiz	7:30 pm	First Messiah rehearsal
Sat 13 Apr	Swiz	5 pm	Messiah
Fri 18 Apr	Swiz	8:30 am	Good Friday service
Sun 21 Apr	Swiz	10 am	Easter Day service
Sun 28 Apr	Swiz	10 am	Anzac Day service
Sat 15 Jun	Swiz	5 pm	Evensong
Wed 19 Jun	St James King Street	6 pm	Evensong
Sat 31 Aug	Swiz	7 pm	Foundation concert
Sat 2 Nov	Swiz	7 pm	Fauré's Requiem
Sat 30 Nov	Swiz	5 pm	Advent Evensong/hymn festival
Sun 22 Dec	Swiz	10 am	Christmas lessons & carols
Tue 24 Dec	Swiz	11 pm	Christmas Eve service
Wed 25 Dec	Swiz	8 am	Christmas Day service

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