

Christmas at Alie Street: two visitors report

by Tam Mucklow and Edmund Gooch

On December 8th 2021, after two years, London Gallery Quire was delighted to be back at St George's German Lutheran Chapel in Alie Street, Whitechapel—the German church in London for the best part of 250 years—and our regular Christmas venue for ten years. Two visitors joined us on this occasions, and share here their impressions.

Arriving at St George's from the pre-Christmas bustle of the South Bank, it was a delight to be welcomed into its peaceful interior by members of LGQ, as they prepared for the Advent concert. As always, attending a concert by another Gallery Quire, some pieces were familiar, some unknown and some could be recalled from past Quire gatherings. It is fascinating to consider, over the past 200 years, how many phrases of music and snatches of song must have been heard, remembered, re-written, re-interpreted and evolved among other quires and in other galleries in the UK and across the English-speaking world.

Thomas Merritt's setting of *Angels from the realms of glory* was a joyful illustration. Doubtless this piece travelled with the mining community both aurally and in printed form. Examples of newspaper references to Merritt's compositions are to be found in 'The Cornish Telegraph' 23/01/1913 in Centerville, Montana and 'The Cornubian and Redruth Times' singing for the 'opening' of the Christmas tree in Detroit 07/02/1924. Closer to home it was interesting to listen to the chosen arrangement of parts among voices, in the performance of *Angels*, which differed between London Gallery Quire and the West Gallery Quire of Crediton. As a final example, this piece was played as an instrumental quartet with three of my work colleagues at our department Christmas festivities in 2019.

Refreshments in the form of excellent Glühwein and Stollen partaken in good company, fortified us for our departure on hired bicycles back to our lodgings in Bolsover Street. Many thanks to everyone at LGQ for preparing an excellent concert and for making us so welcome.

Tam Mucklow

After a December day walking around London, we were glad of the warmth—in temperature and conviviality—of St. George's. The LGQ programme had a mix of familiar items and some that were new to us, and even familiar items came with the freshness of approach that comes with another quire's



In this issue: Doctor's Notes **3** A word from our Chair **4** A metrical review of our latest performance by Claire Wilson **4**
Francis looks back on 25 years of LGQ **5** Dissent and Non-conformity **7**

interpretation. For example, where other quires might offer a soprano-led ‘Lyngham’, LGQ’s use of the tune for a congregational ‘Shepherds, rejoice’ made the most of the quire’s strong tenor line, in giving them the air.

Varying the soundscape from verse to verse in some of the longer hymn texts (which can feel that they were written much more for congregational participation than for audience listening) can sometimes be a challenge, and this was addressed with thinning of the texture to a single part, or in some cases a single voice, with instrumental support. This technique seemed especially effective in some of the melody-led carols of the type recorded by the folk song collectors—‘This is the truth sent from above’ and ‘O the holly and the ivy’ in particular.

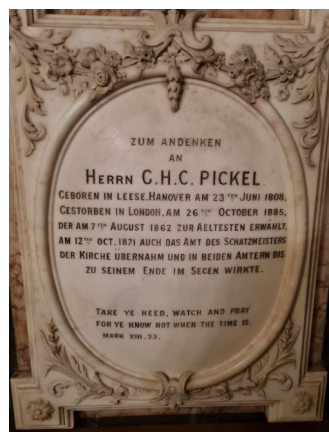
The concert had a strong Dorset focus, emphasised by the Thomas Hardy readings with which it was punctuated, and the selection of instrumental tunes from the Hardy family MSS in the latter half. Again, drawing on the instrumental skills of some of the quire’s singers to augment the band for this medley varied the texture, and worked well.

The Dorset focus was woven into the nationwide (and wider) WG picture too, with William Knapp’s concluding Hallelujah/Amen chorus migrating from Dorset to the Isle of Man, where it rounded off the anonymous anthem ‘Behold, I bring you glad tidings’ from the Colby MSS. John Fawcett’s *Somerton*, on the other hand, found its way into Dorset, moving from its first publication in his *Seventh Set of Hymn Tunes* in Leeds in the winter of 1829, with Watts’ text ‘When strangers stand and hear me tell’, to become a ‘Carol for 1836’, ‘Hark, hear you not a cheerful noise’, in Melbury Osmond. Perhaps the Melbury Osmond singers were encouraged in their re-texting by the general Christmas flavour of Fawcett’s *A Seventh Set of Hymn Tunes, to which is added a few suitable for Christmas*—the book seems to have particularly been promoted in the October-December periods of 1829–31 in the *Leeds Intelligencer*, with the advertisements emphasising its seasonal suitability, and it even had a frontispiece of the Nativity (see right).



As is customary, the concert concluded with a congregational German carol—this time, ‘Ein Kindlein in der Wiegen’, with its curious likening of the radiance of the Christ-child to that of a mirror of noble sheen: possibly an allusion to Hebrews 1:3? Glühwein, Stollen and a catch up with old friends followed, and we went our ways better prepared for the coming Christmas.

Edmund Gooch



Two of the distinctive Anglo-German memorials from St George’s, showing a glimpse of the lives of some of those for whom this chapel was a connection to their roots.



We have had two more commitments since I last wrote. Our Christmas Concert at the German Chapel of St George, Alie St., went well, and it was gratifying that after two missing years our good audience had not deserted us.

And this month we sang an Evensong at St Andrews, Leytonstone. Last time we sang there it was for the wedding of Kathryn, our Assistant Conductor. The new minister seemed delighted with us, and was talking about inviting us back; always a good sign. And the organist who has taken over from Kathryn seemed pro us as well. Getting the local organist on side is as important as pleasing the minister; no “sniffy organist syndrome” from him. And if you don’t know what that is, it is what you get from cathedral organists manqués, who disapprove of such simple and jocund music as ours.

There are still quite a number of our members who have yet to reappear after lockdown. I presume that they are waiting for Covid to diminish to a low level, as we are told that it will never go away. However, those that have come back form a reasonably balanced group. At St Andrews we had five sopranos, three altos, four tenors and two basses, and a full band of five. So as I wrote in my previous notes, basses, please come back!

I wrote previously about my self-published book of John Bishop’s music. My next book is close to publication. It is a modern edition of the complete works of William Knapp, 91 pieces in all, though some that he published are known to be by other composers. It has involved me in much research, and my overview of his entire output has given me many insights into his methods. To name only one, his mind was clearly open to new ideas. In his third publication, *New Church Melody (1751)*, he introduces not only the newly popular fuguing tunes, but also Italian marks of expression, neither of which are found in his two earlier publications, *A Sett of New Psalm-Tunes and Anthems (1738)* and *Anthems for Christmas Day (1744)*. Whether without lockdown I would have found time to do the considerable amount of work entailed in producing these books, I do not know.

It is so good to be back in harness again. When you are retired, you need a reason for getting up in the morning. Looking after LGQ is one of mine.



An 18th century Psalter, with an original pair of spectacles from the late 18th or early 19th century.

By permission of Ros Oswald.



So, here we are in Spring and LGQ too is showing signs of new growth. We are very pleased to welcome two new members; Mike on flute who supports the sopranos very ably and Steven who sings Tenor. We are also delighted that Ruth has returned to us with her clarinets—the Altos are particularly pleased to hear her!

While on the subject of clarinets, a mention must go to Ernest who has persevered with the seemingly temperamental Bass clarinet and now produces a wonderfully rich accompaniment for the basses.

We are lower in numbers still for various reasons—mostly health in its various forms. On the plus side, this seems to have increased the Quires willingness to pull together, for which I am very grateful.

When the basses were short of voices recently a Tenor stepped up and when there was only one Soprano a valiant Alto crossed the floor. We now have a rota for clearing up after refreshments and members have volunteered to cover various tasks which had become vacant. We have even been dragged into the 21st century by Jo who created an online form with which we indicated our availability for a concert!

Plans are well on the way for our Anniversary Sing on 30th April and we have several concert dates in the diary. LGQ is definitely back and sprouting nicely!

Well done everyone.

Review of Evensong, St Andrew's Leytonstone, Sunday 20th March 2022

by Claire Wilson



We sang with fervour, as we do,
The quintessential LGQ!
St Andrew's, where we met in Lent,
Was the ideal environment
For sacred music. Band and quire
Combined to nourish and inspire
The whole community that night.
Then, (as I'd rather hoped it might)
The service ended with a round
Of rapturous applause! We found
Ourselves uplifted. "Ready for
Some coffee now?" Yes, but lots more
Awaited us: exotic cakes
Made by a local chef who bakes
For England, we were proudly told!

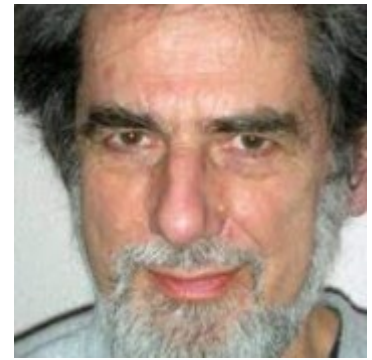
Time to go home. Replete, I strolled
Alone towards the tube. Then hey,
Five minutes on I'd lost my way!
No crisis, though: a kind old gent
Re-routed me, and off I went,
(Singing an anthem), till I found
Myself outside the Underground.

How blessed we are. What would we do
Without our much-loved LGQ?!



Later this year LGQ will be celebrating its 25th Anniversary.

Upbeat talks to LGQ Music Director



Francis Roads about the last 25 years of the Quire he founded.

Starting at the beginning, when did you first become aware of West Gallery music and when and why did you get involved?

There had been a West Gallery shaped hole in my mind since I was a teenager. I sang in the Chapel Choir at Brentwood School, singing cathedral music, which I came to love. But I always had a wish that there was a style of church music which was simpler and perhaps more rhythmic than what we sang, but without going down the happy-clappy guitar-and-drumkit route. At one time I taught music in a Junior School, and when choosing music for the annual Carol Service, I always felt drawn to the more folky carols, Somerset and Gloucestershire Wassails, for example. At one service I caused comment by teaching the children to sing WSWTFBN to a traditional tune in the 1928 Oxford Book of Carols.

In 1990 my son Oliver gave me the best Christmas present that I have ever received. Knowing my liking for the novels of Thomas Hardy, he gave me Dave Townsend's cassette recording *Music of Hardy's Wessex*, which includes some WG carols. I was hooked; it felt like a homecoming. I joined the WGMA in 1991.

What was the first original piece you researched/recovered?

In 1993 I was in the Isle of Man for a non-musical event, and having read in the Newsletter about the Colby Manuscripts, I went to the Manx National Heritage Library and asked to see them. As I was looking at them out of curiosity rather than any intention to do anything with them, in came Fenella Bazin, the world authority on Manx music. She so infected me with her enthusiasm for all things Manx that I decided to transcribe one of the pieces; Ps 72 NV to *Nehemiah*, by William Arnold. On subsequent visits to the island I transcribed and edited the remaining 119 pieces, and received a PhD from Liverpool University for my pains in 2002.

When and why did you decide to establish LGQ?

My first experience of practical WG singing was the Exeter gathering in 1995. There Steve Fletcher recruited me into Chiltern West Gallery Quire, which met once a month in Welwyn. I soon decided that once a month wasn't enough for me, and with much help and encouragement from Sheila Macadam founded LGQ in 1997.

What did you see as LGQ's mission, and is it distinctive from other WG quires?

I wanted a quire drawing on London's population to enable people to enjoy the music, and to bring WG music to the attention of church choirs and other singers in the hope that they might add it to their repertoire. In particular, I resisted any suggestion that we might sing in costume, as I wanted to present our music as relevant to modern life, rather than as a museum piece. How distinctive that is from other quires I can't say.

Who was there at the start and crucial for helping it get going?

David Bidwell and Antonina Spittal were founder members who still sing with us, and Peter Harris has only recently left. Sheila was there of course, and Mike Spittal, Blaise Compton, who tried unsuccessfully to persuade me to include American music in our repertoire, and Bob Barr, a bass singer who also transcribed some material for us. Some established WG singers such as Tony Singleton and Ken Baddley came for a few sessions to help get us going. Other names I have forgotten. There is no electronic record

of membership, as communication was then by letter. Perhaps the most crucial person of all was Sam Wiggs, a judge and friend of mine, who lent us his London flat to hold our first rehearsals.

Why do you think WG music appeals both to those with an active faith and church connection and those without?

Fine music is fine music, whatever your faith.

Who influenced/guided/mentored you in the early days?

As mentioned, Fenella inspired my editing work, and Sheila encouraged me with the quire.

What has been, so far, the most memorable LGQ concert, service, or occasion?

Oh that's easy, the Dancing Vicar service at St Peters, Belsize Park. Exceptionally we sang a Eucharist. The Sunday was Easter 1, so for our voluntary at the end we sang the NV Easter Anthem *Since Christ our Passover is Slain to Auspicious*, an anonymous tune found in a manuscript belonging to our tenor Tim Henderson. It has such a dancey rhythm that the minister, in his Eucharistic finery, came down the nave, grabbed a female member of the congregation, and danced to our music. (Ps. 150 verse 4; "Praise him in the cymbals and dances".)

Looking back, what has given you the greatest sense of satisfaction and achievement?

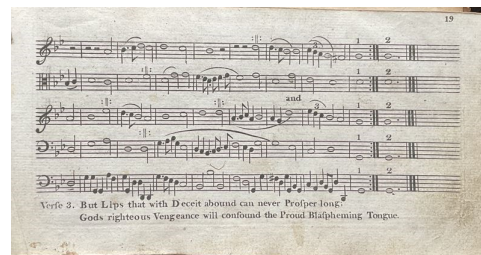
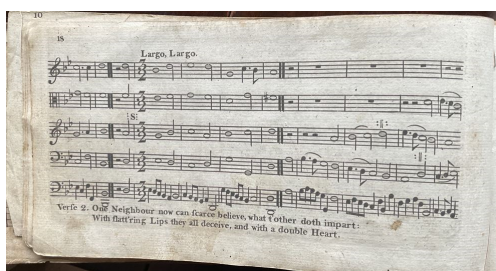
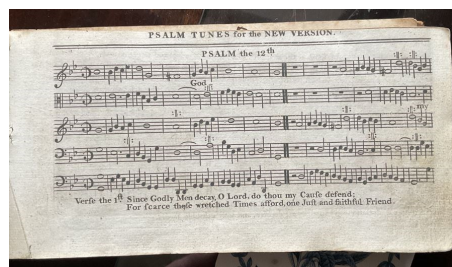
That the WGMA has valued my efforts so highly as to make me an Honorary Vice President. That means more to me than my PhD.

Looking ahead what do you think lies ahead for LGQ and for WG music generally?

It is hard to say. I am sorry that we have made so little headway in getting our repertoire into general use; that is what I would like to see most of all. And I am concerned that so few young people are coming into our ambit, probably as a result of modern education, which teaches our youngsters to have bad taste in music.

But WG music is so splendid that it must survive. I certainly think that LGQ will. At the age of 78 I have to consider succession planning, but the quire has enough enthusiasts to ensure its survival and continuation.

*A metrical Psalm 12,
from this original
18th century psalter
By permission of Ros Oswald.*



“*Good Singing Still...*”

Dissent and Non-conformity, general

Reproduced with kind permission from ‘Good Singing Still’ by Rollo Woods,
Appendix 1 Contemporary References to West Gallery Music

I am against eyes-down worship, where no-one can take their eyes off the book in their lap, in case they miss a cue.

If once we begin to sing by note, the next thing will be to pray by rule, and then comes Popery!

Most Free Church people would say Amen to the first proposition, if not now to the second. Most use no printed liturgy and, ideally, prayer and preaching should be extempore, depending on inspiration from the Holy Spirit. (In practice, all Free Churches issue guides and suggested forms of worship. Sermons, Prayers, Children’s Addresses, etc. are carefully prepared.) They also reject any form of parish organisation, holding that the only true church is a community of believers, united by a public profession of faith, renewed at regular intervals. Free Churches are largely independent, self-governing, and democratic, and provided opportunities for people from the working class to become elders and pastors. Such people also became Trades Union leaders, Chartists, and eventually MPs. The leaders of the ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ were Methodist preachers, and the first working class MPs were Primitive Methodists, Thomas Burt (elected 1874) and John Wilson (elected 1885).

Strictly speaking, Dissenters reject the concept of a state church, while nonconformists acknowledge it, but are unable to conform to all its requirements. However, the word Non-conformist was seldom used before 1800. The separate organisation of the churches dates from the Restoration, when the government imposed a Penal Code on dissent, some of which outlived the WG period. The Toleration Act (1689) allowed dissenters to build their own Meeting Houses, but they could not be used for weddings between 1753 and 1836, or for funerals, and even baptisms by a dissenting minister might not be recognised. The Penal Code barred dissenters from public office, Parliament, municipal government, and the universities. They had to set up their own schools and colleges, some of which were good enough to attract Anglican students. Some Dissenting Academies were absorbed into the first provincial universities.

Their disabilities forced them into close and often closed communities, with the Meeting House or Chapel as the centre of business and social, as well as religious life. A marriage between a church and a chapel family might have overtones of Romeo and Juliet. The Pastor of Swanage Independent Chapel was described (1850) as ‘a zealous and godly man, very strict... During his ministry...four members were excommunicated, one for drunkenness, another for fornication, and two for marrying unbelievers’ (i.e. Anglicans or Methodists). Each church could also develop its own forms of music. In some ways hymns can replace a liturgy, because prayers of penitence, thanksgiving or intercession might be replaced by hymns with a similar theme. Most of the great hymn writers of the WG period were Dissenters, and strong musical traditions developed, even without access to the main centres of musical education, the cathedrals and universities, and without endowments. Most music-making was voluntary and unpaid (as was much Anglican music in country churches). Some Free Church quires surpassed the performances in the Church of England. They also went on longer, into the twentieth century in some cases.

Thankfully, even when the bias against dissent was strong, there were people in all churches who were prepared to collaborate, and this included the quires. The band of Fulbourn, Cambridgeshire, in the 1870s played in the parish church in the morning, and the Methodist chapel in the afternoon. Others lent a hand for special services, exchanged music, and co-operated generally. This tolerance was not universal; one vicar sacked some of his band for playing at a Methodist function.

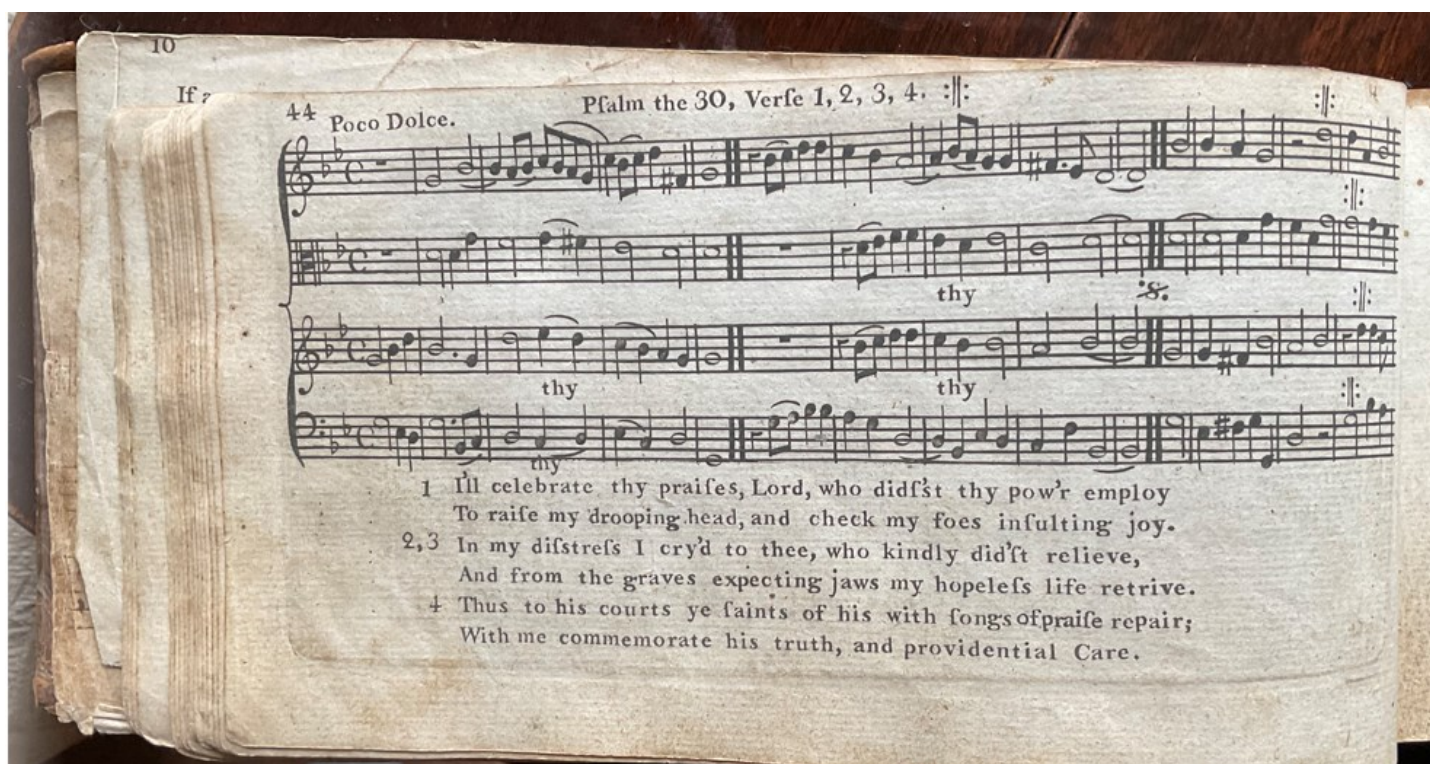
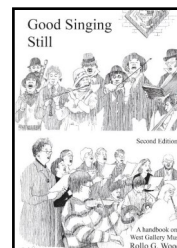
Voltaire, the French satirist, after a visit to England, wrote that the English had a hundred religions (but only one sauce). Certainly there were dozens of small breakaway sects in the WG period, some quite small towns having up to seven little chapels, a number to be augmented by the various branches into which the

Methodist Church split after John Wesley's death. Many produced their own hymnbooks, though copies are now rare. Most have now died out, though the last member of the Muggletonians, a small unorthodox sect, founded in 1651, did not die until 1979. Muggletonians were egalitarian, apolitical, and pacifist, and though they had no form of worship or preaching, did have a collection of hymns, sung to standard tunes. The Society of Friends (Quakers) was also formed in the 17th century, and is still flourishing, but does not use music regularly in its services.

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'Good Singing Still' 242pp is available for £5 + £2 p+p



Another page of an 18th century psalter
By permission of Ros Oswald.

LGQ 25th Anniversary Party 3.30–7.30pm Saturday 30th April 2022
St Andrew's Church, Whitehall Park, Archway, London N19 3TN

Rehearsals next term at St Michael's Paternoster:

April 13th & 27th, May 11th & 25th, June 8th & 22nd, July 6th & 20th.



LGQ Upbeat—The Newsletter of the London Gallery Quire

Edited by Phil Price Copy Editor Nicholas Maxwell

If you have news, a viewpoint, or an interesting musical activity or story,
your contribution is very welcome.

contactphilprice@yahoo.co.uk. Non-electronic submissions welcome on paper at any rehearsal.