



# Upbeat

The Newsletter of the London Gallery Quire

No. 34 Spring & Summer 2023

## A Celebration and a Change

by Phil Price

The first half of 2023 saw two significant events in the history of the Quire— the 80th birthday of Francis Roads, our founder, and his decision to step down from the role of musical director. The first was an occasion for thanksgiving and celebration, marked by a party Francis threw for friends old and new, and members past and present. Our in-house songwriting pair of Alan Franks and Nicholas Markwell wrote a special hymn in Francis' honour. This was rehearsed in secret (as far as we know) and sung to Francis on the day. Alan also wrote a poem to mark this auspicious occasion, and both of these items can be read inside this issue.

The second event, the transition to only the Quire's second musical director, marks an important change of era, accompanied by no small trepidation on the part of your writer, who is the incoming conductor. The official handover was at our concert at Burn Ash Methodist Church, where we have been a number of times always to a very friendly reception – see photo above.

I am pleased to report so far that the transition has been supported enthusiastically by the choir and most thoroughly by Francis, both publicly and in private encouragement, coaching and communication, and I am very grateful for and very enthused by how this process has gone and looking forward to the times ahead. More about that inside.

In the last half year we have also welcomed a couple of new members including, importantly, two more instrument players. We gave a successful Evensong at St Thomas's, Finsbury Park in March, and took part in the London 'Wrenathon' week in June, followed by an Evening service at Pond Square Chapel, Highgate,



(photo left) which was our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary visit. So one way and another it has been quite a busy six months – and that is why this is the first time we have managed to produce an Upbeat, covering both spring and summer.



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## The Big Birthday Party

Reporting by Alan Franks

The United Reformed Church at Winchmore Hill has hosted many of the LGQ's get-togethers over the years, but few, if any, have been more memorable, more significant than the one that took place there on the afternoon of Saturday June 3rd.

Some who were present even spoke of the secular miracle that had enabled them to travel to London's far north on a day beset by train strikes. For many, this entailed a makeshift itinerary consisting of tubes delayed by engineering works and buses reduced to walking pace by the traffic.

But goodness, it was worth it, for this was nothing less than a milestone in the Quire's life of just over a quarter of a century. Technically speaking, its founder and musical director Francis Roads had already passed the baton to his successor Phil Price at the Quire's concert in April at the Burnt Oak Methodist Church in the far south-east of the capital. But here at Winchmore Hill was the party at which we marked and celebrated Francis's remarkable tenure and his Quire's enrichment of so many lives.

Also relinquishing her post after long service was the Quire's administrator Stella Hardy. "For me," she says, "the joy of Francis starting the quire was the way he brought together a group of disparate folks to make music which had not been heard for two hundred years. He managed to produce a sound which was good to listen to and great to sing."

There were other members from the very early days, including Antonina Spittal and David Bidwell. Here too were former members of the Quire, including the much-missed Stewarts—Brian and Jannette—and Maggie Kilby. She had been a pupil of Francis's back in his school teaching days, and has since become an authority on the curtal, a Renaissance-era predecessor of the bassoon.

There we all sat in our big, sonorous circle, landing on numbers from our well-thumbed copies of *Your Voices Raise*, Francis's essential edition of West Gallery favourites. There was also an item of which he was uncharacteristically ignorant. It had been written by Nicholas Markwell and myself without his knowledge. Called *We Thank You Francis From Our Hearts*, and rehearsed in secret, it proceeded to express that gratitude in words and music. When it was done, he rose as if to say something. But then, as he sometimes says to the Quire when they fail to come in on cue: "Nothing happened." Few silences can have been more eloquent than this one.



As loud as any madding crowd,  
As soft as private prayers,  
We do our old composers proud  
As we exhale their airs.

There's Thomas Clark and William  
Knapp,  
Corelli, Carey, Key,  
And then this rather younger chap,  
Born nineteen forty-three.

When Dr. Roads from classroom chores  
Decided to retire,  
The loss was theirs, the gain was ours:  
The London Gallery Quire.

Though he excelled in every art  
Of guiding and instructing,  
Other skills bespoke his heart:  
Composing and conducting.

And so it came to pass that in  
The year of Ninety-Seven  
This fledgling quire grew to hymn  
The harmonies of Heaven.

The blessed creature sallied forth  
To justify its title.  
From Highgate Hill to Bromley North  
It boasted rare recitals.

It played at parties, privately,  
Occasionally at dances  
Under the baton, watchfully,  
Of this good St. Francis.

As this, our once-new century,  
Begins its second score  
We should reflect, admirably,  
That Francis now has four,

Yet there are scores and scores and scores  
And more and more and more.  
When last I looked I'm sure I saw  
Six hundred and forty-four.

Though some are new, there's quite a few  
As steeped as Rome in time,  
Then there are odes concerned with roads  
And all roads lead to rhyme.

So here's to the peerless LGQ,  
Its maker and its moulder;  
Long has he warned we'll miss our cue  
If we stick our nose in the folder.

The podium's loss, the bass-line's gain,  
His skills are with us still  
Since by example he has trained  
His young successor, Phil.

Here's too to that indispensable one  
To chorus and capella,  
Without whose presence we'd have none –  
Our Hardy perennial, Stella.

Double bar-line, end, no more  
Save gratitude—and how.  
Just this repeat: you know the score,  
Or jolly well should by now



# We thank you, Francis, from our hearts

Roding Valley — 8 7. 8 7. D

Alan Franks, 2023

Alan Franks and Nicholas Markwell, 2023

[♩ = 100]

Soprano

1 We thank you, — Fran - cis, from our hearts — For all that you have taught  
2 We thank you — for your pa - tient ways : Your time and to - le - ra -  
3 Long live the — works of Fran - cis Roads, The joy - ful and the jol -  
4 In grate - ful — hon - our of the time — That you have stood be - fore  
5 We thank you — once more from our hearts — For all that you have taught

Alto

Tenor [Air]

8

1 We thank you, — Fran - cis, from our hearts — For all — that you — have taught  
2 We thank you — for your pa - tient ways : Your time — and to - le - ra -  
3 Long live the — works of Fran - cis Roads, The joy - ful and — the jol -  
4 In grate - ful — hon - our of the time — That you — have stood — be - fore  
5 We thank you — once more from our hearts — For all — that you — have taught

Bass

4

us ; The wis - dom which your words im - part, The mu - sic you have brought us ; The  
-tion — Which make these my - riad songs of praise — Such ves - sels of e - la - tion ; For  
-ly ; And like - wise those in pen - sive modes, The mild — and me - lan - cho - ly. How  
us — We here - by of - fer these, our rhymes, In heart - felt four - part cho - rus. Now  
us ; The wis - dom which your words im - part, The mu - sic you have brought us ; Now

pas - sion of such hym - no - dy, Its me - lo - dy and mis - sion, The  
 they have life with - in our souls, Their be - ing is e - ter - nal, And  
 for - tu - nate each fu - ture quire, That shall such hymns in - he - rit, For  
 as the cen - tu - ry un - winds, And this de - cade ad - van - ces, We  
 from these wo - men and these men, Whose lives your own en - han - ces, Let

hea - ling powers of har - mo - ny, The trea - sures of tra - di - tion.  
 though the years would make them old, They stay for e - ver ver - nal.  
 here is mat - ter to in - spire, And slake the thir - sting spi - rit.  
 send, with all our hearts and minds, True gra - ti - tude to Fran - cis.  
 this not be some grave *A - men*, But gra - ti - tude to Fran - cis!



Now that I have been relieved of my duties as bass instrument player by the welcome arrival of a cellist (William), my journeys to and from rehearsals and performances are now considerably easier, as I no longer have to heave and haul a 25lb four-foot box on public transport. Not that I have been unhappy playing the bass clarinet; it has been satisfying instrument to play, especially in its lower register, once the initial 'squeaking' was largely eradicated. The



Evensong service at St Thomas's church in Finsbury Park was the first performance in several years in which I could accompany the quire with my 'normal' instrument, and it was a pleasant change, for me at least.

It was also a comparatively rare event, inasmuch as the instrumentalists were seated close to each other, avoiding the difficulty of synchronising our playing when seated at extreme corners of the quire. As a result, the 'symphonies' and play-throughs, in which the instrumental playing is exposed, were much easier to co-ordinate, not only in time but also in pitch.

The Lenten theme of the service resulted in a contrasting selection of music. For example, as a prelude, we performed quire member Kathryn Rose's *The Lord will Happiness Divine*, a favourite of mine, with its minor key and dramatic contrapuntal build-up in the middle of each verse. This was followed by Isaac Watt's *Come Let Us Join our Cheerful Songs*, a straightforward strophic hymn based on an anonymous Irish melody. Another contrast in mood was supplied by the two Psalm settings. *One Thing of God I do Require* (Psalm 27) is in a minor key with each section of the quire singing solo passages. The setting of Psalm 29, *Ye Princes that in Might Excel*, by Joseph Stephenson, is brighter and more conventional in style.

The Cantate Domino and Deus Misereatur sections of the service were represented by William Knapp's *O Sing unto the Lord* and Stephenson's more metrical *To Bless Thy Chosen Race*, settings which appropriately match their particular purposes in mood. There was a third contribution by Joseph Stephenson later in the service: his anthem *Hear my Prayer, O Lord*, a slow, minor key setting, which was followed by, as a congregational hymn, an arrangement by Thomas Ravenscroft of the familiar melody by Tallis. Was this one of the oldest pieces we have performed? Our Postlude, *Glory to thee my God this Night*, by Knowles, rounded off the service with a majestic flourish.



Even though I am not a churchgoer, I sometimes attend Evensong in various cathedrals and churches for the calming ambience provided by the building itself and the beauty of the choral music. This particular LGQ contribution to the tradition was equally enjoyable, but, at the same time, was a fulfilling experience due to my involvement in the occasion.

Our first event in September is going to be a visit to a quite special place: St Peter and St Paul Church, Chaldon, on the edge of our catchment area in Surrey. This remarkable little country church, nestling close to London but giving the impression of being in the middle of nowhere, dates back to Norman times, and is full of character. What has made it world-famous is a discovery made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of a breathtaking “Doom” painting at the back of the church. This dramatic and fascinating mural attracts visitors from around the world, and it continues to be a source of amazement and pride that it is simply displayed there, on the wall where it was first created, free for anyone to visit, and looking down on parishioners gathering the church, as it has done for hundreds of years. You can read more about it on the church’s website and it even has its own Wikipedia page.



It will look down on us as we give our concert followed by Choral Evensong on Sunday 24th September.

*Remarkably, we have a connection to this church: a relative of one of our basses, Richard, was involved in its rediscovery, as Richard writes below.*



Dated to about 1170, the Chaldon Wall Painting at St Peter and St Paul Church was painted using red ochre pigment in egg tempera on to dry plaster.

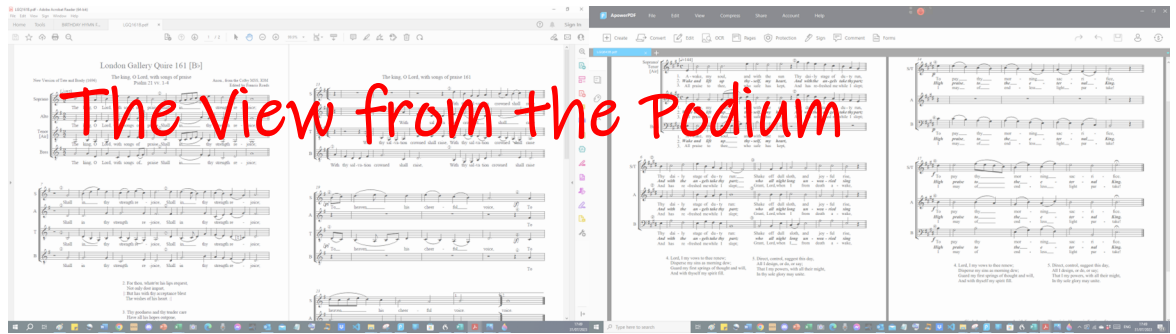
At the time of the Reformation it was painted over with lime wash and it remained unknown until 1871 when workmen were doing some repair work to the wall. My grandfather's uncle Richard Martin, the local surveyor, was called to make an initial inspection.

Wall paintings were common at the date of this mural, which is in excellent condition. They were often painted by travelling monks.

This one is locally known as the ‘Doom Painting’ showing both Hell and Purgatory. Heaven is in a small cloud at the very top where the Devil is also shown vanquished by Christ, who encourages people to climb the Ladder of Salvation to Heaven.

Other vivid images include the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and in the top left quadrant souls are shown being weighed to determine the length of their time in Purgatory.

Richard Link



It is quite a daunting prospect to stand at the podium from the first moments of the rehearsal until the last. Fortunately the beaming smiles (especially from the Altos!) and the solid support from Jill, the committee, and all members help enormously, and I believe we are well underway into our future, with the generous and uncomplicated support of my predecessor, and the enthusiasm of all members.

The Quire continues to demonstrate its ability to produce a powerful and moving sound on the day (not always prior to that point!), and we know how to do our stuff. Our mission remains to enjoy this wonderful and still under-explored repertoire, to bring it to as wide an audience as possible, and to encourage those who really respond to join us as singers or instrument players. Given the changes in styles of worship in churches, and attendance levels, not least since the covid disruptions, our focus will be as much on showing non-churchgoers that this music is important and enjoyable, as on encouraging churches to add this music to their diet. We intend to do more services and especially more Evensongs, the one traditional church service which is increasingly popular and can attract a broad audience.

It has been wonderful to have new instrument players and singers joining this year, and we need to attract more. One project for the coming year is to give the band something of a new identity and mission. We have added band-only rehearsals, and will work hard this coming year to expand the team and build up our performance standard and our repertoire, and will introduce new band-only pieces to our concerts, perhaps different in style, to enrich our appearances.

There are other changes behind-the-scenes. Nicholas is now our Chief Editor, and conducts most of our research. There remains so much material out there that we are never going to run out of wonderful new pieces to perform, and we will continue to add appropriate material of all types to the repertoire. If you come across an interesting old hymn, or short anthem, that looks like it comes from the pre-Victorian period and sounds interesting—even if you only have a modern version of it—do show it. If we like the look of it, we know where to look for the original sources and find a version we can perform.

It would be also nice to have more contact with other West Gallery quires, of whom there are several not too far away. What fun it would be if we turn up to some of the regional Singing Days that happen each year with 20 of us! We would get to sing in a larger group and play in a larger band, and meet members of other quires around the south of England who share our enthusiasm.

Stella is relinquishing the role of Administrator, after a very long period of diligent and thorough service. We thank Stella for this, and many thanks to those who have volunteered for parts of this role. Please support Jill in assigning the remaining responsibilities so that we can function, and put on events, concerts and services efficiently and reliably.

I also will not be able to carry on being editor of Upbeat, at least not very easily. After several years of great fun with it, I would like to pass it on to anyone else who fancies this. Increasingly we have tried to feature interesting articles of all kinds about West Gallery music. A new editor may wish to continue with that approach, or try something completely different, even down to its appearance. If no one feels that they would like to take this on, Upbeat may become a much more occasional, possibly annual publication, or be integrated into the website.

The website now contains more information of use to members, including concert performance notes, venue directions, and other information, and this will become increasingly important. I encourage all members to get in the habit of keeping an eye on it, as it is a very efficient way to communicate.

I have been in the quire now for around 13 years, and some of you have been here much longer than that. My enthusiasm is if anything greater than ever: I see so many possibilities for us to have great fun, and to bring this music we love in front of those who have somehow missed it so far. I am looking forward to a year of moving services, enjoyable concerts, and more social occasions.

Thank you all for being part of London Gallery Quire: let us see what we can make happen in the year ahead!



# “Good Singing Still...”

## 64. The Current Revival of West Gallery Music

*The late Rollo Woods, one of the founders of the West Gallery Music Association, recalls how he came across West Gallery music for the first time, and how the revival got underway*

My introduction to West Gallery music was really just a happy accident. Too much of *Good King Wenceslas* over Christmas 1971 led me to want some new carols for our church youth group. My mother lived in Widecombe, and was a friend of a remarkable farmer, historian, and collector, Hermon French. I knew he had an old carol manuscript, and arranged to visit him in the spring. Hermon produced not one, but eleven manuscripts, plus two printed books, and, most generously, allowed me to borrow them. I soon realised that here was material worthy of any spare time research I could give it.

In fact, it soon became a research project almost rivalling my work in charge of the automation project at Southampton University Library. I spent my lunch hours for some weeks slaving over a hot Xerox 914 and my evenings indexing all the music - hymn tunes, anthems, carols, marches, and dances. I also started on the background reading that is an essential part of any new research project – and everything I read agreed that the music of the West Gallery period was a disgrace to the church and an affront to cultivated taste. I therefore made no attempt at first to get the music performed, however interesting it looked.

In 1975 I ventured to show some of the music to the late David Kettlewell, a fine musician, and EFDSS representative for Wessex. His immediate response was to contact the Rev. David Slater, and together they arranged an “Early Victorian Evensong”, for 6th July 1975. David Kettlewell recruited the band - I remember that Christopher Monk, on serpent, was the only bass instrument - and David Slater invited the singers - as many local folk groups as he could persuade to come. Our anthem was “*Come let us all with heart and voice*”, now in the NEW OXFORD BOOK OF CAROLS. We met at 2.30pm, and the service was at 6.30pm; we were not over-rehearsed. I had expected the service to be good. A little publicity in the folk clubs produced a large congregation, and David Slater preached a fine evangelical sermon. I had not expected a musical triumph, but that is what it was.

There was no question—we must do more of this music. Within the year, we had played for two more Evensongs, and my mother, by recording a pre-service rehearsal, and playing the tape to old people in Widecombe, had unearthed two manuscripts from Annie Hern, and three from Tom Nosworthy. In 1977 the group gave its first Christmas concert, for which I not only edited the music, but also wrote a script (as I have done almost every year since). Like so many later scripts, it began by quoting K. H. MacDermott - ‘*No, there warn’t no organ in them days...*’ and ended by using the accepted tune for *The First 158 Nowell* as a counter-melody to an old Cornish tune with similar text. (I later pointed Hugh Keyte towards my sources in the VWML, and his better researches on this carol can be found in NOBC.)

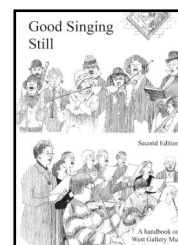
There was no stopping. In 1978 David Slater asked us to play for the Sunday evening Hymn Singing at the Sidmouth Festival. At this event, we appeared in costume for the first time. We also arranged to play for Morning Service at Widecombe Parish Church, and for the afternoon service at Dunstone Methodist Chapel, all on that Sunday. Annie Hern and Thirza Nosworthy were present in the morning, and Hermon French at Dunstone. It was an exhausting day, and two of the band ‘blew their lips’ before it ended. I also did a workshop on the Widecombe marches during the Festival, and by the end, Doreen Hedger had given the group its present name – The Madding Crowd.

I went on researching, the Madding Crowd went on singing. I wrote an article for *Folk Review*, which put me in touch with Bob Patten. I retired to Swanage in 1987, and, after some false starts, we set up the Purbeck Village Quire. In 1990 Gordon Ashman organised a conference on West Gallery music in Ironbridge. The BBC was there, the Madding Crowd came in costume, the WGMA was founded, and the BBC invited us to lead a West Gallery Songs of Praise that autumn. The rest, if not actually history, is at least well documented.

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# What hymn writers did not really mean....

by Claire Wilson



*Immoral*, invisible, God only wise

What a *fiend* we have in Jesus

*Cheribum* and Seraphim

(for when carol singing in the pub?) A breast full of *mild* and a manger full of hay

All people that on earth do *well* (found in a proof of the late Queen's Coronation service)

In intercourse at hearth or board

with my beloved ones.

*From the original verse three of 'Fill thou my life, O Lord my God' by Horatius Bonar*

Though cisterns be broken

*from verse two of 'Begone, unbelief, My Saviour is near' by John Newton*

As children of the post-war years, my siblings and I took this as a reference to our bathrooms dodgy plumbing.

As schoolgirls at Christmas we sniggered over "rude and bare" as a description of the holy manger, from verse three of 'As with gladness men of old' by William Chatterton Dix.

Peace, perfect peace

with loved ones far away.

*From verse four of 'Peace, perfect peace, in this dark world of sin?' by Edward Henry Bickersteth*

.... are lines I still sing thankfully aloud when the whole family clears off without me on their annual camping holiday!

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*Rehearsals next term at St Michael's Paternoster:*

*NEW TIMES*

*Band 6.30pm Singers 7.00pm Ends 9.00pm*

*Rehearsals:*

*September 6th, 13th & 27th, October 11th & 25th, November 8th, 22nd, December 6th*

*Events:*

*St Peter & St Paul's, Chaldon, Concert followed by Evensong 3pm Sunday 24th September*

*St Andrew's URC Frognall, Concert 3pm Saturday 4th November*

*St George's Lutheran Chapel, Alie Street Christmas Concert 6pm Wednesday 13th December*



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LGQ Upbeat—The Newsletter of the London Gallery Quire

Edited by Phil Price Copy Editor Nicholas Markwell

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.