



Farewell to a Friend

LGQ paid another visit to Highgate URC on Sunday 15th May to say goodbye to departing Minister and LGQ friend David Currie.

by Antonina Spittal



*Rev David Currie and Francis Roads,
LGQ Musical Director
Photo by Phil Price*

My diary for 1998 shows that Mike and I first attended Highgate URC on Sunday 4th June for a rehearsal at 10am followed by a service at 10.30am. In the early days we always sang a morning service from up in the gallery. This must have caused problems for regular church goers in LGQ and especially for those people like Gillian Ford who had quite a time of it getting from the Reading area to Highgate by public transport for a ten o'clock start. Mike and I were of course enthusiastic attendees with our ten minute walk up the hill and the morning service meant we could easily have our customary roast beef and Yorkshire pudding followed by crumble and custard at our usual dinner time of 6pm!

I am sure that on most occasions everything went swimmingly but I do remember a time when the Quire en masse totally failed to come in for a fugue halfway through the verse. In the silence that ensued, Francis continued to beat time furiously until after what seemed like an eternity Tim Henderson managed to lead the tenors

in and gradually the rest of the singers and instrumentalists drifted in and we managed to get through it somehow. The congregation must have noticed as we sang the following verses quite correctly! I also remember a run through before the service where Mike was the only bass and without a bass instrument was preparing to sing his line unaccompanied when a slow heavy tread was heard coming up the gallery stairs and Peter Harris appeared bearing his bassoon just as the service was due to start and so saved us in the nick of time from what might have been a close shave, performance-wise. In spite of all this I have to admit that I really enjoyed singing from the gallery and am sorry that the custom seems to have lapsed.

Music has always been a strong feature at Highgate URC. A description of a service held in 1847 recounts "the Psalmody was sweet and solemn". The current music section of the church web-site mentions us saying "the London Gallery Quire occasionally add their special historic choral arrangements and instruments". And so on to the present day and our twenty-first appearance for an evening concert on Sunday 15th May. This seems to have been very well received. As I was leaving I was accosted by two ladies outside the church who enthusiastically praised our efforts. They turned out to be Jewish which maybe shows that a concert rather than a service could possibly have wider appeal for a potential audience. I personally thought the selection of readings was very good and having them read by members of the audience rather than by the Quire worked very well. However I must say that I do prefer it when readers

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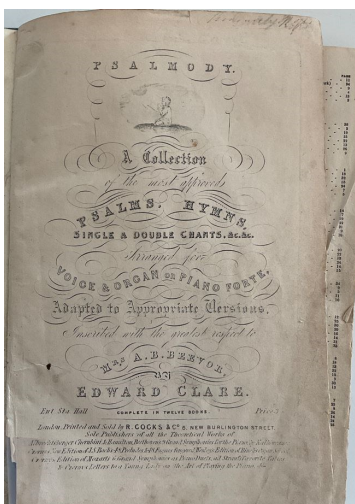
are able to project their voices instead of relying on microphones which do not always function well and have to be passed back and forth all the time. I enjoyed the pieces we sang. There was a good variety of West Gallery music ranging from Playford to our two present-day composers—Alan Franks gave us “When Christ our Saviour suffered on the Cross” from Matthew ch. 27 and Francis Roads provided “Highgate” from Psalm 73 and “Well done thou good and faithful servant” from Matthew ch. 25. It was also good to have our story of the Dancing Vicar confirmed by the church musical director (Robert Manning, a personal friend of said vicar) at the end of the concert. The audience joined in the congregational items with good courage as you would expect from a largely non-conformist group.



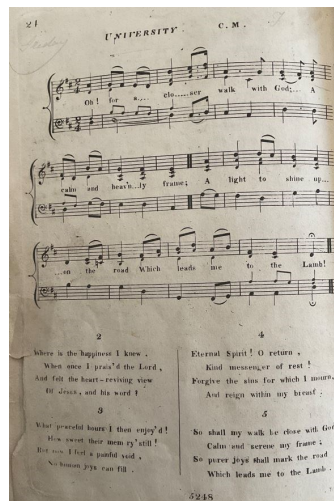
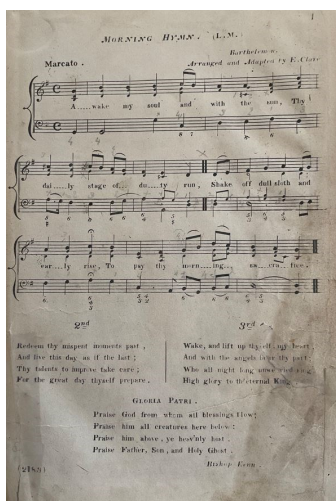
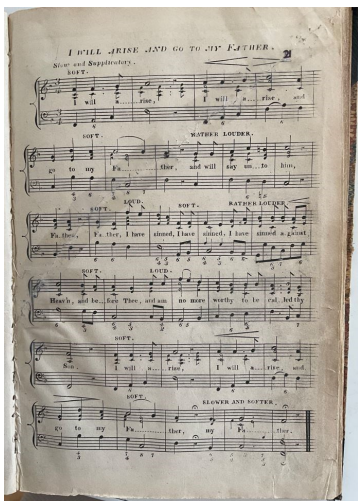
Dr Robert Manning,
organist and Director of
Music and good friend of
LGQ.

Photo by Phil Price

I hope that LGQ can look forward to being asked to give many future singings and playings in leafy Highgate, described with considerable foresight by Josiah Viney, a 19th century Minister at the church, thus: “One of the healthiest spots in the Kingdom, encircled by a radiant county, contiguous to the Metropolis, yet thoroughly rural, it appears destined to become at no distant day one of the most favoured retreats of London’s busy citizens”.



At the July 2022 Hymn Society Conference, the editor was able to acquire a copy of ‘Clare’s Psalmody’, a slim hardback book of hymns, metrical and chanted psalms, and anthems, published at the very start of Queen Victoria’s reign. Many gems appear to lie within it. Maybe some will be suggested for us to sing in the months to come.





A Hardy Pilgrimage

In LGQ's concert programmes, there are usually a couple of readings, frequently from the works of Thomas Hardy. Hardy frequently made reference to the gallery bands in both his poetry and prose works, most notably in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which describes the anguish caused by the disbandment of a band, and its replacement by a barrel organ. The account is believed to be based on actual events at Stinsford Parish Church, where Hardy's father and grandfather had been members of such a band

During our recent holiday in Dorset, my wife Judith and myself spent a couple of days in Dorchester, which enabled a Hardy pilgrimage. First on the list was the Dorset Museum, a magnificent and recently refurbished edifice. There is a gallery devoted to village and town life in the times described in Hardy's novels, and another with a temporary exhibition of his works, with many manuscripts on display. Included in these are some music books penned by his father, with both church music and folk dance tunes. Adjacent to these were the violin and cello belonging to the family, and used by the Stinsford band before its demise. The cello is incorrectly described by the museum as a bass viol, and apparently I was by no means the first visitor to point this out to a member of the museum staff.

Also on the visiting list were Stinsford and Puddletown parish churches. Stinsford church is quite difficult to find, at the end of a winding lane, and in one sense was a disappointment. The old gallery has been replaced by a smaller modern one bearing organ pipes, the console being in the chancel. By contrast Puddletown church, (the Wetherbury church of Hardy's novels,) still has its old gallery, though as with Stinsford there is an organ there now. Nonetheless, I was able to go up there and sit, hearing in my mind's ear the strains of *Cambridge New* played by the band described in *Under the Greenwood Tree*.

Hardy trained as an architect before devoting his life to writing, and he designed for himself Max Gate, the house where he lived and worked for the latter part of his life. It now belongs to the National Trust, who have made a fine job of restoring it to the state in which it was in Hardy's time. If you want to visit it you have to book a time slot in advance, as Hardy did not design it as a visitor attraction, and parts of it are quite narrow. Our guide told us that Hardy designed the staircase so that it would be easy to carry a coffin down it in a suitably dignified manner. Perhaps he foresaw his own demise there in 1928.

I discovered West Gallery music through my love of Hardy's novels. To visit these four places associated with him for the first time was an almost spiritual experience for me. I do recommend such a visit to all who love West Gallery music.



*LGQ Musical Director Francis Roads
in the old west gallery at Puddletown church
Photo by Judith Roads*



On Saturday 30th April LGQ and friends gathered at St Andrews Church, Whitehall Park, Archway to celebrate our 25th anniversary. We were joined by a number of former members who had moved away from the London area, including Pete Harris, our much missed bassoonist, and Geoff Rose, our equally much missed bass. Among many visiting friends we were delighted to have the company of Charlotte and Mike Bailey, from The Madding Crowd, who have been very supportive of LGQ throughout its existence.

Brian Stewart, our long serving bandleader, who recently retired and, with Jannette, has moved up north to be near grandchildren, was awarded Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his diligent service over many years.

The event included a fine feast, a wonderful and most tasty cake made by Stella, and a few sedate dances of the kind that LGQ specialises in these days.



The Honorary Life Membership presented to Brian →

London Gallery Quire

Garlickhythe Occasionals



hereby grants

Life Membership

to the unique and exceptional

BRIAN MICHAEL STEWART

Master of Music Sacred and Profane

Official Recorder

Guardian of the Archive

Purveyor of Discs

Helper of the Confused

Friend and Guide to All

signed

1st January 2022



Musical Director

Femin Roads



Chair

Julie Holland



WHITSUN WALKS

Reminiscences of her Lancashire childhood, by Catherine Johnson.

This article first appeared in Upbeat in 2007, and the editor considers it well worth publishing again for a new generation

Nelson walked on Whit Sunday, but Colne walked, and sang, on Whit Monday. The Festivals were well established In these Lancashire Pennine cotton towns long before the time of my first printed song-and-music sheet, which is dated 1924.

“On Whit Monday, June 8th, the Teachers, Scholars and friends of the Inghamite Sunday School, West Street, Colne, will celebrate their 89th annual Festival. A Procession will be formed at the School at 9.30 am, whence they will proceed to sing at the following places: Midgley Street, Swan Flags and Spring Lane.”

In my home town of Nelson, the many chapels and fewer churches walked through the town in a procession lasting, I am sure, for two or three hours, with May Queens, banners, Girl Guides, Boys’ Brigades, most of the congregations and, of course, the brass bands which flourished in the North. The rest of the town would turn out to watch. It was hard work for a small girl in the early 1950s, but I loved to carry my posy of flowers, ordered specially from the florist in those days.

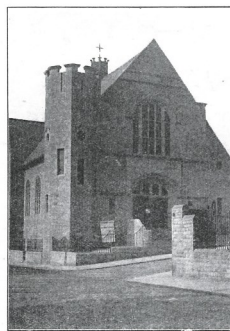


On Whit Monday, however, I went with my grandparents to Colne, and it is this which I remember with joy. The congregations of each chapel were gathered at different points around the large square, as were several brass and silver bands, and it seemed as if the whole town was singing the best loved hymns, properly, in parts, as people then knew how to do. We joined in with LYNNGHAM and MILES LANE, as well as CWM RHONDDA and SIMEON and other hymns, which everyone sang with gusto.

I remember the warm bright sunshine of early summer, and the scent of the moors from beyond the town. And afterwards, as the programme announces, we “returned to the Schoolroom to partake of bun and coffee, and then adjourned to a field for recreation.”



Inghamite Sunday School, West Street, Colne.



The Centenary
**WHITSUNTIDE
FESTIVAL**
1835 — 1935.

On WHIT-MONDAY, JUNE 10th,
The Teachers, Scholars and Friends of the
Inghamite Sunday School will celebrate their
100th Annual Festival.

A PROCESSION

will be formed at the School at 9-30 a.m.,
whence they will proceed to sing at the
following places:—

Midgley Street, Swan Flags and Spring Lane,
returning to thd School to partake of
refreshments, and afterwards adjourning to a
field.

Tea will be served on the field about 4-30 p.m.



Old Inghamite Chapel.

To all who have
ASSOCIATIONS,
MEMORIES,
INTERESTS
with our School in West Street, come
and join in the
SINGING,
PROCESSION,
BUN AND COFFEE,
and make it a worthy 100th Anniversary.
Come, Old Friends! New Friends, Come!

Please Remember the
SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNIVERSARY
SUNDAY, JUNE 16th, 1935.

Preacher—
MR. HARTLEY WHITTAKER,
Of Wh eatley Lane.

“Good Singing Still...”

27. The Metrical Psalms - general

We sung the Old Varsion of the Psalms, or sometimes the Noo Varsion, any on ‘em we liked and anywhen we liked, too. No, vicar, he didn’t care what we sung, and told us to bawl out what we pleased, s’longs we didn’t bother him!

The mediaeval church had a large body of hymns in Latin, set either in unison (plainsong) or polyphonically. The best appear, in translation, in today’s hymnbooks, but at the Reformation all were discarded, and singing in church was henceforth to be in English, where possible congregational, and based strictly on the Bible, which meant the Bible’s own hymn-book, the *Book of Psalms*. The *Book of Psalms* is an anthology, created and edited in stages over perhaps 1000 years, and originally intended for services in the Second Temple in Jerusalem.

No one was certain how the Hebrew psalms had been sung, but it was assumed they had been chanted in some way. However, most people, and therefore WG quires, believed that all 150 psalms had been divinely dictated to King David (also known as The Royal Psalmist, The Sweet Singer of Israel, etc.), even those with plain references to the Babylonian captivity 500 years after David’s time. Singing the psalms in English began at the Reformation, (or even earlier – there were Anglo-Saxon and Middle English versions of some psalms) and continued for nearly 400 years. Indeed, some conservative churches had hardly started to use “human hymns” in their services when the WG period ended. Matthew Henry (1662-1714), a renowned commentator, wrote of the Psalms :

“Further than David’s psalms we may go, but we need not, for hymns and spiritual songs. What the rules of Hebrew metre were even the learned are not certain. But these psalms ought to be rendered according to the metre of every language, at least so as that they may be sung for the edification of the Church... So rich, so well-made, are these divine poems, that they can never be exhausted, can never be worn thread-bare.”

So convinced were people of this, that the novelist Fanny Burney, travelling from Windsor to Weymouth with George III and his court, wrote in her diary in June 1786:

“We continued at Lyndhurst five days... On the Sunday we all went to the parish church and after the service, instead of a psalm, imagine our surprise to hear the whole congregation join in *God Save the King!* Misplaced as this was in a church, its intent was so kind, loyal, and affectionate, that I believe there was not a dry eye amongst either singers or hearers.”

Singing versions of the Psalms were also being developed by Protestant churches in France, Switzerland, and Germany. Calvin approved ‘*simple and pure singing of the divine praises, forasmuch as where there is no meaning there is no edification. Let them come from heart and mouth, and in the vulgar tongue*’.

The Swiss versions influenced the English protestants exiled in Geneva during Mary’s reign. The ‘Old Hundredth’ is one of the tunes they brought back with them. For English worshippers, “rendered according to the metre of every language” meant converting the Psalms from the prose versions in the Bible or *BCP* to verse forms which could be sung to English tunes. These became the Singing Psalms; the *BCP Psalter* contained only Reading Psalms – the distinction goes back to the 16th century, for chanting was almost unknown outside cathedrals and colleges with endowed choirs. Although various verse forms were tried, including blank verse, heroic couplets, and complex stanzas that even Charles Wesley would have thought unsingable, the most successful versions used the simple metres familiar from street ballads and folk-songs – Common Metre (CM), and less frequently Long Metre (LM) and Short Metre (SM). Glass lists 105 metrical psalters published before 1860.

Many of the greatest hymn writers are represented: Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, James Montgomery, John Keble, Henry Francis Lyte, etc. Many others produced versions of a few psalms. It was not a straightforward task, and Julian summarises the problem :

'...partly from extreme reverence for the letter of Holy Writ, partly from the fact that the bulk of the translators were hampered by the secondary object of turning the Psalter into a hymnal, and most of all from the impossibility of representing Hebrew parallelism in English metres... With but few exceptions the succeeding pages are a comparison of mediocrities.'

[Psalters, English. Introduction]

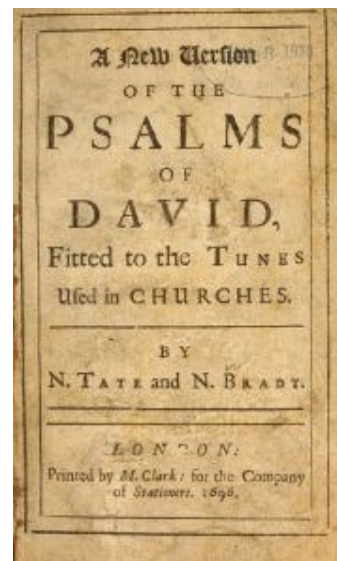
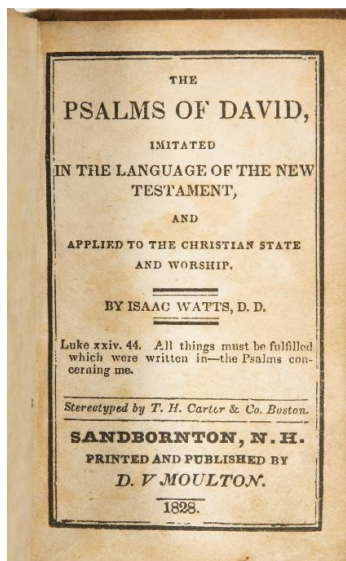
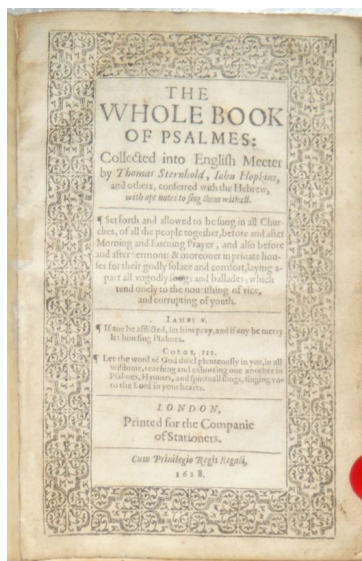
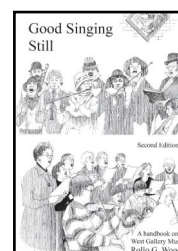
However, during the WG period, three versions were used far more than any others: The OLD VERSION (§28), The NEW VERSION (§29), and ISAAC WATTS (§30).

Anyone studying WG music should own all three. Isaac Watts was usually published with his HYMNS, but OV and NV are usually found bound in the back of *BCP*, or of a Bible. (In OV and NV the verse numbers given are those of the Bible verses, not always of the stanzas as printed.)

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Rehearsals next term at St Michael's Paternoster:

September 7th & 21st, October 5th & 19th, November 2nd & 16th

Concerts:

St Mary's Bromley, October 16th (Sunday)

St Andrew's Frognall Lane, November 12th (Saturday)

German Lutheran Church, Alie St, December 7th (Wednesday)



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.