

Hyfrydol



No. 132

St Swithun's Choir e-newsletter

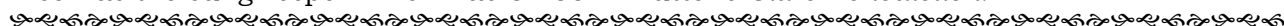
June 2025

June

This month's extracurricular service will be the annual Huguenot service on Sunday 27 June. We have been contributing to this event since at least 2013, when it was held in Scots Presbyterian Church, and possibly even before that. The service moved to St Swithun's in 2016 and has been held here ever since. Once a year, the Huguenot Society puts on the afternoon tea, and we appreciate it greatly.

Last month

The afternoon of Saturday 31 May was rather chilly which seemed to keep many of our regular Evensong followers away. We had a good balanced choir for the Ascension service, but only about 30 in the congregation. The introit was composed by Thomas Tallis – *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. anthem was Croft's *God is gone up with a merry noise*. The canticles were composed by Orlando Gibbons, not by George Dyson as we indicated in last month's *Hyfrydol*. Phillip chose a more familiar set, rather than attempt to teach a new *Magnificat* and *Nunc Dimittis* in the short time available. The single chant to Psalm 110 was the work of J Blow. The only modern work in the service was the sung vesper which was Sir John Rutter's *Clare Benediction*.



Evensong music

I was interested to note that most of the composers of the music we sang at the Ascension Evensong were from the same era, or so I imagined. Before getting too excited, I thought I should check. Just as well I did, because I was wrong. The chart shows just how wrong.

MONARCHS			COMPOSERS			
AD	Tudor					
1500	Henry VIII	(1509-47)				
1510			Tallis			
1520				(1505-85)		
1530	Edward VI Mary	(1547-53) (1553-58)	Byrd			
1540			(1543-1623)			
1550						
1560	Elizabeth	(1558-1603)				
1570						
1580			Gibbons			
1590		Stuart	(1583-1625)			
1600						
1610	James		(1603-25)			
1620		Charles				
1630			(1625-49)			
1640				Blow		
1650		(Commonwealth)	(1649-1708)			
1660		Charles II	(1660-85)	Purcell		
1670				(1659-95)	Croft	
1680		James II	(1685-88)			
1690		William III	(1688-1702)			
1700		Anne	(1702-14)			
1710			Hanover			
1720			George	(1714-27)		
1730						

A biography of Tallis published by the magazine *Gramophone* (www.gramophone.co.uk) reads: Thomas Tallis can fairly be said to be the first important English composer, though little is known of his life. He held a succession of posts as organist, most notably at Waltham Abbey in Essex (until the dissolution of the monasteries in 1540) before joining the Gentlemen of the Chapel Royal from about 1543. He remained there for the rest of his life, serving under Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I. In 1572 William Byrd (40 years his junior) joined Tallis in the Chapel Royal, forming

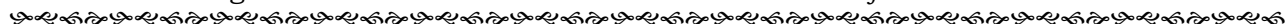


one of music's earliest great partnerships: they became joint organists of the Chapel and, in 1575, were granted the sole right by Queen Elizabeth to print music in England. Their first publication was a joint venture – a volume of *Cantiones sacrae* to which each contributed 17 motets. Tallis spent the last years of his life in Greenwich, described in 1577 as 'verie aged'. His epitaph reads: 'As he did live, so also did he die, in mild and happy sort (O! happy man)'.

Plaque in Waltham Abbey

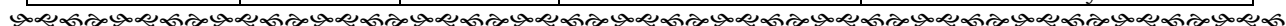
Most of Tallis's music is, not surprisingly, for the church and his historic importance is in being one of the first composers to write for the Anglican service, the composer who bridged the transition from the Roman Rite. Why important? Because the English church-music tradition is among the richest in music history. Though most of the texts Tallis chose to set are in Latin, as a Catholic one may guess that after Queen Mary's reign pragmatism took precedence over belief as he adapted to Thomas Cranmer's English and his requirement of a 'playn and distincte note for every sillable'.

Tallis composed in the whole range of styles and forms then in use. We can marvel at his handling of choral sonority and his technical assurance of grand polyphonic textures, as well as in the simplicity of four-part hymn tunes. 'Tallis in D' is still in use today (No 78 in *Hymns Ancient & Modern Revised*¹). This first appeared in Archbishop Parker's Psalter of 1567 in which can also be found the tune on which Vaughan Williams based his *Fantasia on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*.



Choir Calendar for 2025

Day	Date	Time	Location	Service/activity
Sat	31 May	5 pm	Swiz	Ascension Evensong
Sun	22 June	2 pm	Swiz	Huguenot annual service
Sat	28 June	1-5 pm	Swiz	Trial by Jury rehearsal
Sat	5 July	1-5 pm	Swiz	Trial by Jury rehearsal
Thu	17 July	5:15 pm	St Andrew's Cathedral	Evensong
Sat	19 July	1-5 pm	Swiz	Trial by Jury rehearsal
Fri	1 Aug	6 pm	St Andrew's Cathedral	RSCM Midwinter Dinner
Sat	23 Aug		Swiz	Foundation concert
Sat	13 Sept	5 pm	Swiz	Evensong
Wed	24 Sep	6:15 pm	St James, King Street	Evensong
Sat	18 Oct		Swiz	Celebrating Psalms
Sun	26 Oct		St Albans, Leura	Celebrating Psalms
Sat	29 Nov	5 pm	Swiz	Advent Evensong
Sun	21 Dec	9 am	Swiz	Lessons & carols
Wed	24 Dec	10 pm	Swiz	Christmas Eve service
Thu	25 Dec	9 am	Swiz	Christmas Day service



¹ HTC has only one of Tallis's tunes, *Tallis' Canon* to which we sing *Glory to you, my God, this night*, No. 274, and *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*, No. 585.