

William Byrd Workshop – Hoole, Chester

The 16th May saw the second of a pair of workshops, held in Hoole Community Centre, Chester, around the 1589 publication of the William Byrd *Songs of Sundrie Natures*.

Our tutor, as for the first workshop was Dr Philip Taylor aided by Roger Wilkes, (who coped magnificently, with his usual equanimity and good

humour, with the trauma of his own (diesel) car being damaged in an accident the previous day and the dire consequences of, that morning on the way to Chester, filling his hired (petrol) car with..... well you can probably guess!) This day followed much the same format as the previous one; Rhoda Bramhall in the June newsletter has already provided a succinct but comprehensive report on the background to Byrd's collection and so I shall not repeat it here.

We worked jointly on a mixture of four and five-part items, each enhanced by Philip's scholarly commentary and contextual analysis.

When first by force

Weeping Full Sore

When I was otherwise

O Lord my God

While that the sun

From Clitheron the warlike boy is fled

O Dear Life (Consort Song)

The viols alone:

Of gold all burnished

Wounded I am

The resources available to Philip were slightly more accommodating than for the earlier workshop, (five male and seven female singers plus four viols and two recorders), but the low numbers of instrumentalists in particular meant that there were still problems— for instance it was not possible to work in more than one group of singers and instruments – and for the instrumentalists in particular, the day did not feel as satisfying as it could have been – even so we did have a very enjoyable session working on some of the songs with Roger. I would urge singers and instrumentalists to take part in workshops like this – the chance to explore this repertoire is not one to be sniffed at!

A note about the vocal scores: these were selected extracts, edited by David Fraser, from his complete edition of the published vocal works of William Byrd and made freely available through the Choral Domain Public Library, (<http://www.cpd.org>). I don't know what Thomas East's original publication looks like but I cannot imagine that it could have been more beautifully typeset than this one - it made playing and singing from them a pleasure.

Thelma Williams