

June 14 'Songs to popish ditties' – music by John Taverner (c1490-1545)

Another enjoyable day of singing with Peter Syrus, this time in St Mary's Parish Church, Cilcain, Clwyd. On the journey there the weather was undecided whether to be wet or dry, but by lunch time it was sunny enough to eat out of doors, either in the lee of the church (there was still a cold wind) or outside the local pub. But before that we had to earn our food.

The first item was a setting of *Dum transisset sabbatum* for SATBaB. This was one of the simpler pieces of music we tackled, but the form was confusing. It was a respond/motet, meaning that we sang all of the polyphonic setting of the motet, followed by a section of chant, then a repeat of the second half of the polyphony followed by a chanted *Gloria*, finishing by repeating the last section of the motet. During discussion of the correct way to pronounce the Latin it was suggested that we should be using Welsh Latin, but no-one professed to be an authority on this.

Next we tried the *Gloria* from the Mass *Corona spinea*, set for SATBaBB. This was very complex music, reminiscent of Robert Carver's settings. We may not have done it justice, but we certainly enjoyed it. It was worth Peter's efforts to encourage more of the lower voices to book for the day, so that we could attempt this music.

Le Roy Kyrie, an interesting 4-part piece with alternating chant and polyphony, followed. We "squares" found it confusing, remembering when to sing chant and when to sing polyphony - and which bit of chant or polyphony to sing, despite the fact that the numbers at the beginning of each section should have guided us.

Our next effort was the votive antiphon *Mater Christi*, set for SATBaB. The music for this was less complex and held no geographical challenge, but it was well worth doing. After that we returned to the Mass, to sing the *Agnus Dei*. Being from the same Mass as the *Gloria* this was another complex piece. We finished as we began, with another respond/motet 5-part setting of *Dum transisset sabbatum*. As with the first one the music was less difficult than the other pieces we tackled, but there were geographical challenges.

After our afternoon teabreak we sang through all but one of the day's pieces, to a (very) small audience. We had to hope that they forgave our lapses – on more than one occasion we almost fell apart, but somehow managed to pick ourselves up and continue (to our embarrassment and Peter's amusement). Thank you, Peter, for introducing us to this wonderful music.

Janet Evans