

# REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS AND OBSERVERS

ENACTMENTS AT ST TEILO'S  
CHURCH, ST FAGANS:

12-16 SEPTEMBER 2011



THE  
EXPERIENCE  
OF WORSHIP  
IN LATE MEDIEVAL  
CATHEDRAL AND  
PARISH CHURCH

## Miscellaneous comments offered by participants during the course of the week

*These comments were made by individuals and groups on the evening of Monday 12 September and during Tuesday 13 September, affecting planning and refining for the following day in each case. Many of them are concerned with process.*

- [Monday evening] Resolve to abandon the choir benches in the Jesus Mass tomorrow
- The organ dominates the space and Magnus masks the altar for the singers, forcing singers westward and laity onto one side
- Can we encourage people to go round the singers?
- The huge lectern currently up by the altar also masks the picture of the Five Wounds
- Singers can go behind organ a bit – boys out of sight (as in the Galilee chapel at Durham)
- Huge dominance of the organ in a parish church like this does make music the centre of attention
  
- [Tuesday, during the day] Gender separation – not needed for Jesus Mass in the side chapel. Hierarchy dominates (ap Rhys family in front). But keep gender balance in procession
- Lady of manor should have stool (and also a book)
- Procession – the laity can follow priest in, though the procession itself takes up a third of the nave (so this needs sorting out when it arrives at the rood)
- Get lay people to come up alongside the procession
- Bow to the cross and to the priest as the procession passes; then choristers tag on first
- Hard to know how full the church would be – different for different times of year (and on Friday laity would probably not have filled church – a seventh of the village population might be tacked onto another Guild service)
- Automatic response to ‘magic’ words Oremus etc – we need to make quick responses
- Humming along slightly after the note sung by the celebrant is OK – but don’t manufacture this

*Comments made on the evening of Tuesday 13 September (following the first full day of rehearsals and enactments). Comments from Canon Christopher Irvine (also present on Monday and Tuesday) are recorded separately in the IRG notes.*

## **1 Comments from the boys and their Master**

- Response to the shared lectern, introduced that day, was positive for all concerned
- An improvement on the benches at all levels: in terms of moving together; a better ensemble; better synchronicity;
- ‘Comforting – like being given a big hug’ [Rosie Buggins]
- ‘Music-ing’ within – highlights this as a collective worshipping process
- The sense of shared endeavour is much stronger
- Better connection to the altar – the lectern becomes a focus to the altar rather than a barrier

## **2 General comments from all musicians (on the Mass and the Office)**

- Bowing – felt natural for some; contrived for others. Becomes a compulsion!
- Problems of becoming over-familiar with the copy – not needing to look – but we were not here long enough to become completely bored!
- Unvarying formulae must have become boring
- Breathing, passing notes from side to side, eye contact - the group of singers becomes ‘locked’ into the Compline psalmody
- Still unsure whether to split the Sanctus and Benedictus, or to match the Benedictus to the elevation of the chalice [in the end we seemed to favour running on from the Sanctus here, but split at the Salisbury Lady Mass]
- The men are becoming more at home in the chancel – again relating to [physical] closeness
- Would be interesting to experiment with organ and singers in the loft [generally, not specifically St Teilo’s] – but wouldn’t have had lectern or light here
- The shared lectern again – made us feel ‘ more like one lung; one organism; less confrontation’
- Position of Master in relation to boys: standing between the singers and the altar becomes a barrier; standing behind them feels more supportive
- Matthew Salisbury observed the whole of the Mass today: looking from the west of the nave upwards to the altar through the various layers – one gets a view of ‘stern’ surplices from behind; all action focuses on something far away – issues of exclusion, based on not ‘being in the space’; not seeing, not being a ‘participant’
- More generally, the intention behind witnessing an act counts for a lot
- For Agnes Osborn, wandering around in Compline gave the greatest freedom to observe
- But the movement from the chancel into the nave after Compline in terms of sound (as the men moved) – into polyphony – was enormous, ‘like being in the middle of an orchestra’

- General constraints of ‘having a job to do’ – being a musician – correctness – becomes a contrast. Level of responsibility for the outcome is a definite contrast
- ‘Little Boy’ element hard was for Agnes, when being deeply responsible at same time – though noted that the model of the contemporary cathedral chorister a good one – cf new probationer and older chorister
- Jane Flynn felt the same responsibility singing as a boy chorister as she felt being the Lady of the Manor in June – being seen as a role model
- Though one has to ask whether choirboys were different? Did they turn off?
- Comments on mistakes: Agnes observes that even in community, the different psalm tone endings in the Office can cause the psalms to go wrong!
- What do you do when the celebrant fluffs the versicle? Copy him, or correct it? [The Flynnns gave an anecdote about practising a ‘wrong’ response to the Celebrant’s versicle in their own church, since he was likely to get his note wrong!]
- Singers and lectern and organ as group were probably a default position; cf Ludford Lady Mass model – 1 lower voice, 2 upper voices.
- How much singing does the Master do in addition to playing? Feels odd for Magnus to both intone and play (as in the Sanctus)
- Did the Master sing chant with the children? Probably not?

### **3 Comments on the lay congregation (led by Paul Barnwell)**

- Still a need for laity to take greater ownership of church at present – standing up at the beginning etc
- The procession – this involved bowing to the rood at end; again a medieval congregation would have been aware of ‘their’ local antiphon
- ‘Barriers’ – our use of the bench in the nave marks a ‘screen’, but what are the rules on who can go where? (remember that the choir in this instance are children, not cathedral singers!)
- We need to work on that feeling that we are part of one community, relating together
- Existence of a Guild implies more people passing into the Jesus devotion; ap Rhys family as a focus
- Questions as to who in the church can be counted as part of the Mass congregation – the laity would probably be limited to nave and side chapel (where in this case the Jesus Mass is being celebrated)
- Rule – if you are not in the chapel, then you are not at the Mass – so the pax stays only in chapel rather than being taken out into the nave on this occasion.
- Pushing up to the altar was typical in the Middle Ages
- One part of the church [i.e. the side chapel] is therefore ‘active’ during the Mass – and we need to work out how we could all feel part of it
- Even so, it is still possible that some would be visiting the rood and the BVM for devotion, even during the procession or the Mass itself. This could involve lighting a candle (for the rich), or taking a tallow candle – or looking through the screen to the statutes of the BVM or St Teilo at the main altar. Or using a simple woodcut prayerbook, or leaving small wax effigy (e.g. body part) as an offering

- Downside of ‘public mingling’ in the enactments means that the costumed laity find it harder to ‘act’ parts
- We can assume all sang Amen and Et cum spiritu tuo – OK to sing the response if you know it (including the refrain of Salve festa dies)
- Notes that the congregational responses still sound a bit laboured at present

*Additional comment from Revd Marja Flipse, attending as an observer on Tuesday*

- Felt an outsider – bit of an identity crisis – wanting to be a convincing part of the laity, but not enough knowledge to do it
- Who am I? Where am I? These questions apply to all (not just those in costume)

*seh Sept 2011/rev April 2012*

**Final summing-up comments from  
members of the International Research Group  
of the Experience of Worship Project**

Prof Linda Woodhead, Dr Therese Smith, Dr Nils Holger Petersen, Dr Roger Bowers  
[Karen Whiteside]

*Prof Linda Woodhead – comments addressed to research team*

- Individual participant responses on film and in diaries:  
Bear in mind that in filming individuals, the film crew have not gone in with a story to tell; they are not responsible for ‘casting’ in advance, so the end product will be softer round the edges. Each person has their own narrative – different stories to tell.
- In term of the vulnerabilities arising within the week – particularly with the Eucharist and questions of receiving the sacrament. Related questions we might ask:
- Whose experience is it? Can it be constructive?
- Methodological issues – could we use an adviser from another R&S project to help us here? [Not something we followed through]
- There is an important bridge between the experience of the ‘here and now’ and that of 500 years ago
- Knowledge-oriented aspect of the project – there are obvious and immediate gains here
- But the ‘now’ aspect of the experience is more difficult to analyse
- Knowledge – a range of responses
- What kinds of experience would be possible historically? Needs theoretical thought as to how to bring this forward
- Who is leading the project and its enactments? Not just a theoretical group.
- Noted that the experience of the clergy was in danger of being ‘the same’ as it is today – they didn’t always feel they were doing anything different
- How would it have felt with actors taking on the role of clergy?
- [Compare C Edge’s perspective as a practising RC – important part of past/present experience.]
- Status of the action itself – e.g. baptism – at what point do rites actually become valid?

*Prof Nils Holger Petersen*

- Knowledge – there are great gains to be made from reconstruction
- The emotional aspect – important and difficult
- How to relate personal experience to role, and have application to emotional responses 500 years ago?

- Need for vast theoretical and hermeneutical reflection

*The following comments were addressed to the whole group*

*Prof Therese Smith*

- This was a spectacularly difficult project – very hard to re-enact in terms of personal experience and faith, roles, and responsibilities
- Feeling of isolation - space between performative and worshipful – people are not always at the same place
- Complex project with great outcomes
- Amount of self brought to it has been very impressive – faith and identity addressed with great thoughtfulness

*Prof Linda Woodhead*

- Commitment and orchestration – great achievement
- This has been a learning period
- Learning about methodological issues – base for future researches – landmark project
- People today taking what they want in/from religion – those with stakes [i.e. stake-holders?] and those without – easier in medieval church and very impressive

*Dr Roger Bowers*

- Huge admiration in success of reconstruction – no substitute for the visual experience, and ‘being there’
- Experience of modern people doing experience of worship as it was ‘then’
- Simple half as historic – an appropriate Mass in an appropriate building
- Shock when the music stops – things rising to a different level behind the screen; one can see why people crept forward
- Not entirely dependent on emotional responses of people 500 years later – lots of contemporary documentation. There is a platform to be built on that in terms of experience
- Admiration for the parish clerk – many churches just had a priest and clerk – so he needed to be musical, literate, multi-tasking

*Karen Whiteside*

- A project ‘made’ by a group as research – so how do you articulate being a group?
- Goodwill and effort are essential – contributing integrity and thoughtfulness
- Valuable in inviting a diverse group of people to come together
- Another possible narrative to consider – those who came to the Museum to see what we did (did they feel intrigued; curious; shocked ...?)

*sh June 2011 / revd April 2012*

## **Additional comments from Revd Canon Jeremy Davies, celebrant**

*Offered on evening of Thursday 15 September – unable to stay for final feedback session*

- Much enjoyment of discussion of musical and liturgical etc, but theological reflection is also needed.
- What is the ecclesiology of the church in the Mass? Importance of the priest who seems so central to what is going on, yet is at the same time so detached.
- Assembly ‘gathers’ at various points: the Dominus Vobiscum greeting – perhaps these are the points at which we should still gather today. This is still an appropriate ‘way in’: beginning with ‘The Lord be with you’. Did the medievals think in a more corporate sense – just by being there, with ‘The Lord be with You’ signalling that? (Rather than our modern ‘Good morning’?)

On the use of the pax board

- JD struck by the delivery of the sacrament by the pax board rather than by bread and wine
- Bread and wine seen as a gathering to heaven, but here prohibited, since people are not receiving.
- The priest performs Christ’s actions, wears the seamless robe – but made the way into salvation
- The assembly is drawn together to be drawn into the bread and wine – though here via the pax board

General

- The enactments started as a ‘performance’ at one level – yet the Latin can become a worshipful experience – and more than just Jeremy’s own interior journey.
- The whole must be offered with integrity – the intention specifically matters
- Texture – use of organ and polyphony becomes significant. End part of the sequence was powerful in this respect

The didactic

- Sense of stories on walls – the ‘way in’ for the medieval people – though where was the teaching and preaching done? At preaching crosses outside?
- What was the narrative in which it belonged, and how were people prepared? Through plays? Such preparation was apparently not done in the Mass.
- Gesture, vestments, silence – many different levels at which we could get into the Mass – part of our own story

[JMH’s response to Jeremy – never a hint this was an acted-out performance – always tremendous solidity]

*seh Sept 2011/rev April 2012*



## **Closing comments from group representatives on the morning of Friday 16 September**

[This session was also filmed]

### **1 From Clerk and Sexton**

(Group reporting by Judith Aveling on behalf of the clerk, Sam Erlandson, and sexton, Huw Bryant – both ordinands in the Church in Wales)

#### *How did it feel?*

- Rather like being in a training placement with different texts and personnel (so it involves the usual process of formation)
- Use of the pax might be taken back to our own parish communities today
- Issue of coming as a 21<sup>st</sup>-century worshipper rather than a late medieval worshipper: a lot of ‘duties’ to learn – simple, but multifarious (e.g. when to move a book)
- This can be distracting, but once used to it, this frees you up to engage

#### *Comments on space*

- There was a difference between when the laity were milling around the church and the more enclosed altar area
- Huw was very conscious of going up into the chancel from the nave with the elevation torch
- Sam enjoyed taking the pax out into the nave rather than staying in his ‘own space’

#### *Comments on text*

- Use of the vernacular now – has it made us complacent? (If you don’t actually understand the text, are you more sensitive to the rest of the worship?)
- Didn’t always seem natural to use a text [i.e. book]
- Increase of volume of sound during the procession – sound can include people (when in the nave)
- Latin as a sacred language – tensions between words said silently and ‘secret’, or sung aloud and inclusive? One exception was ‘Orate pro me’ (as the priest turns to the congregation) – this became heightened (although in fact this should have been done silently in accordance with the rubrics!)

## 2 From the male singers

(Group reporting by Magnus Williamson)

### *Parallels with what we do today*

- This was a group of specialists putting a rite together – so how familiar was it all? Most of the singers do Compline regularly already (albeit not necessarily in Latin) so the form is familiar, and fairly comfortable on that basis
- Sense of a job to do, and to do well

### *Issues of movement and space*

- Physical difficulty of singing on the hoof – either while walking or after arriving (the antiphon by John Norman - not very good - provoked scepticism)
- Coming into the nave more means you see others; going back into the chancel means you become a private group engaged in the rite
- Is there movement built into the music per se? Does it tell us to move?
- Different spaces we are called to occupy – Jesus altar, chancel etc – being ‘incorporated’ by/into the congregation, since we can see people doing their devotions – the costumes may have helped this
- Realization that some were not participating in the enactment as worshippers – though who knows what people are thinking?
- Occupation of open space raises interesting questions

### *General issues*

- Participation is not the same as vocalisation
- We need to recognize the ‘polyphony’ of the event itself
- ‘Freedom’ from rubrics – is what is written down enforced, if it is simply impractical?
- A rigid rite seems to bring expectations ...

## 3 From the female singers

(Group reporting by Paul Barnwell)

### *Impressions of community*

- Essentially a community comprising boys and their Master/observer – different ways of interrogating this
- (With reference to the Mass): Tina (not singing) felt ‘outside’ on Tuesday just after arriving, but became sucked into participating in some way
- Having a tiny baby was good – a point of reality which has not changed – same sounds / distractions – the ‘real’ community
- Community of boys as a ‘singing choir’ – pre-rehearsed, so already acting together; by the last day there was freedom to act as one round the lectern
- Rosie H. had to use her own book on the first day since she was too far from the lectern – this made her feel out of the choir community, but more related to the laity
- Laity being enveloped by the ‘ministers’ (including choir) – created different dynamic of community

- Different stages of engagement for different people – beginning to understand the power of the dead community (i.e. those once part of the parish) still being ‘present’
- Amount of responsibility the boys were carrying for the worship of whole must have been huge

#### **4 From the lay congregation**

(Group reporting by John Moss)

##### *More impressions of community*

- Relating this to one’s ‘own’ parish church – similar issues of ownership
- Being able to make links with one’s role at home
- Those coming to participate in the enactments for the first time feel drawn into ‘our’ community
- Returners – comparative comments – ownership – this church is now like a living church community

##### *Reanimation of St Teilo’s*

- We as a group have gone on ‘re-animating’ the church – and not just with the artefacts
- Church being used as a building for worship from the first – now beginning to do its job (comment from Dr Maddy Gray)
- Those in the medieval church were constantly ‘doing things’ to their church – making it more elaborate etc. Sense of ownership of those things where money has been raised collectively

*seh Sept 2011/rev April 2012*

**Closing comments from individual participants  
on the morning of Friday 16 September**

[This session was also filmed]

Matthew Salisbury

Enactments as acts of worship – they command by their ‘function’. The only problems were ‘usual’ ones – church musicians needing to pay attention; laity illuminating that – sometimes distracting; sometime confusing – musicians therefore enable. Questions arise as to what is participation? Is the vernacular in conflict with this?

Beth Williamson

Struck by said Lauds – distinction between said psalmody and sung psalmody – singing smooths individualism of our accents and becomes more ‘corporate’

Huw Bryant

Preconceived idea of medieval exclusion of laity from Mass and focus on priest – but it is possible to be included, and to participate

Jane Flynn

Pleased to be a boy – not just the mechanics of singing that particular repertory in such a group, but also understanding the relationship with organ, the master etc

Sam Erlandson

Comparison with modern liturgy – difference of antiphonal liturgy (the psalmody) and polyphony – allowing connectedness between participants

Rosie Buggins

Sense of community – participating as a boy this time was much stronger than in June; the community itself was somewhat ‘bizarre’ – though we are all individuals within this

Judith Aveling

Prayers still in ‘another’ language – but there is a sense that our senses are heightened when we don’t understand.

As singers we have a duty to do, bringing freedom and construction – no time to worship, but enabling others to do so

Paul Barnwell

The observer does not become [remain?] detached – there is a ‘sucking in’  
Easy to over-intellectualize and ‘get into’ the culture – but the emptied mind is often open to more – we are taken to somewhere else

Can interpret this experience more readily in the light of medieval culture than 21<sup>st</sup>-century culture

What is the method / what are the limits in our understanding of previous experience?

Tina Hodkinson

Struck constantly by the nature of building – the riot of colour; variety of spaces – and reaction to the different spaces is different

Chris Hodkinson

Stuck by several different issues of engaging with the text:

Physicality of where the text is in relation to you

Distinction between remembered text and read text

We were provided with texts summarizing what we ‘do’ – we haven’t had to decipher the rubrics for ourselves

Singing in procession – if we had partbooks this would have been different

Accessibility of different texts – priest’s text etc

Awareness of the edges of the text – doesn’t tell us what to do during the prayers; nor exactly when to bow

Agnes Osborn

Continuity – what was happening then is still happening here now in some contexts – so not alien

Sense of space – feeling involved while wandering around the church, even when not in a role

Community of boys – enabled a sense of ownership of the church

‘Discovery’ of how it felt to be singers round the lectern – like one organism

Keith Beasley

Silence – did we include enough in the enactments?

Compline – felt the singers were rushing things – gaps not long enough between pieces?

Highlight of session on Monday evening – as we came together for the first time as a community

Maddy Gray

Impossibility of getting under the skin of ‘characters’ – it can’t be done

Yet thinking of how different people would have engaged with / responded to changes of the period – we can to some extent measure this by our own reactions

Andy Hughes

Joy of seeing the church itself becoming more animated

His role this time (as son of the Manor) was privileged – so more engaged with what was going on

But still feels we can’t put ourselves into that mindset

Sally Harper

Sense of ‘homecoming’ – ownership of space/building/organ; of belonging

Dynamic of different spaces – chancel, Jesus altar, main altar, screen – raises issues of what feels most like ‘prayer space’, and what not

Collectivity of worship is striking - last time felt she got more from Compline

(leadership role – no option but to become part of a community) than in the Mass

(where just one member of a lay congregation); but Mass was different this time

Boundary between solid concentration (when singing) to when that concentration becomes part of how we worship (similar to the contemporary experience)

Authority of singers – carrying of whole for others  
'Community' of Lauds – felt comparable with community attending Morning Prayer at Salisbury Cathedral as part of daily liturgical pattern

Ann Duthie

'Community' aspect of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was very strong – we have developed a huge sense of trust – allows you to explore different areas  
Difference of roles this time – as Lady of the Manor, she was freed from text, yet close to altar – so a new liberation to worship  
Use of different spaces – antiphon in the nave felt very different; lighter; more space  
Different sensation round lectern  
Stuck by the 5 Wounds picture – in the darkness, the hands and feet protrude

Rob Lutton

Immense privilege to be present – what learned here will be really useful to him  
Struck by Name of Jesus in sequence [bowing of heads]  
Role of observer – felt he was coming as an anthropologist in one way – observing human beings 'doing stuff'  
Had not realized the effort involved in putting together a re-enactment prior to this!  
What we do in moving between fragments of the past is what we do as historians all the time – that is the method!  
Difficulty joining in – what do you do as an observer?

Bill Flynn

Multiple roles – much harder this time – so better not to ask perhaps – but the steward's role was a good one – felt right age; endowment that bestows (?) felt very strongly.  
Role playing therefore was good this time – made him think through altar, family of the parish, memorial brass  
Sense of connection in Jesus Mass made the whole thing work better – communication between altar and choir was much stronger

Roger Bowers

Imagination plays a main role but must still be founded on evidence – so congratulations for care with artefacts, editions, etc – hard to imagine this being done better  
Mass – move from constant singing to silence [at Canon]. Contrast must have struck them every time.  
Disjunction between those at the altar and those in choir – few moments where this has to be synchronised  
Boys round lectern – a new insight – Lady Chapels had choir stalls; Jesus Mass did not (?) – and only 1 Gradual tends to be listed in inventories  
Ranworth desk – has up to now been a puzzle – but using one side for organ and the other for choristers does seem to make sense

Karen Whiteside

Sensory meaning: especially in the silence; loved the sound, including when it moved past, behind screen etc  
This community has parallels with the medieval – coming from distinct places, but one with hierarchies, loyalties, relationships; its own complexities

Magnus Williamson [Needs checking]

Next time – we should try the Office of the Dead; facsimiles of polyphonic choirbook and singing from a Gradual without rubrics

Said – last of 2 (?)

Achievement and reflection on value of people – 1200 ? this week alone

What people invest within the project is very impressive – yielding infinite[?] results

John Harper

General comment - profoundly moved – so many things mentioned in this session.

This was not a medieval community, but it has become a real community in the sense of common people and interdependence of each – a learning role

We saw a church with a ‘real life’ situation

People committing; coming with a baby

Willingness to commit and take seriously

On his verger role – freedom to be anywhere in church

Boundaries were special – created at the Jesus antiphon especially – very concentrated sounds and people kneeling close – defining spaces; fluidity with which group moves

How we use modern space maps onto this

Continuity of practice – represented both by the organ and by Jeremy

Bangor conference in February – would be an opportunity to try different things – e.g. lay devotion, also experiments with organ

Great range of engagement in the group, and great level of commitment – can we get St Fagans and Salisbury to see themselves as a research base?

*The following comments were not filmed, but followed on from the above discussion*

**Other comments to take forward:**

- Recommendation that we get the advisory group together again (as at Coleshill in Sept 2010), including Chris Irvine on space and symbol if possible
- Consider the possibility of a separate EoW publication with a contemporary focus Can address our understanding of medieval buildings in the now
- Can compare medieval buildings still in use / 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings on the same pattern

*seh Sept 2011/rev April 2012*