



THE  
EXPERIENCE  
OF WORSHIP  
IN LATE MEDIEVAL  
CATHEDRAL AND  
PARISH CHURCH

ENACTMENTS OF  
PROCESSION OF THE HOLY NAME,  
JESUS MASS AND COMPLINE  
AT ST TEILO'S CHURCH  
12-16 SEPTEMBER 2011

ST FAGANS NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM, CARDIFF

**BRIEFING NOTES  
FOR PARTICIPANTS**



## *Preparing for the week in St Fagans: some notes by way of background & briefing*

The Research Team is very much looking forward to working with you at St Fagans in the week beginning Monday, 12 September.

This is the second major week of liturgical enactment in St Teilo's church. As in June, there are two main groups: those participating, present for the whole period; and those who observe and reflect with us, arriving on Wednesday evening and leaving at the end of the period on Friday at lunchtime.

In all we shall number about 30, of whom 18 were present in June. It may be useful to rehearse our main purpose, especially for those who have not been before; and then to go on to specific features of the September week.

### **1. Broad research intentions**

The liturgical enactments represent one substantial element in a research project which combines a whole range of disciplines and methods, with an equally large range of outcomes from edited texts and published studies to artefacts, videos and web resources. In the enactments we are using practice-led research, and specifically enactment and its observation, as a means of gaining insights into the experience of worship in the late Middle Ages.

We want to start to engage with the medieval mindset, at however basic a level, and to consider the experience – and especially the non-verbal experience through physical encounters, the senses and the emotions – of being part of liturgy around 1530. And the experiences of clergy, servers, singers, and laity are different – as are experiences in different buildings. (We shall be celebrating two of the liturgies in the very different surroundings of Salisbury Cathedral in October – see details below.)

### **2. Specific context and general type**

St Teilo's is a tiny medieval parish church, moved from its original location at Llandeilo Talybont south of Pontardulais on the banks of the Loughor River, and now reconstructed as it might have been c. 1520 at St Fagans National History Museum outside Cardiff.

There is scant evidence about church life at Llandeilo Talybont, but with a transept, south aisle and at least three altars, it must have been quite active. It may have been a church frequented by pilgrims at a river crossing point on the way to St Davids. So far as the project is concerned, however, it is being treated as a type (insofar as any one church was the same as any other), and not specifically Welsh – simply a church that followed the liturgical Use of Salisbury.

### **3. Liturgies**

In June we celebrated Lady Mass as a solemn Saturday observance with three clergy and four servers, and four male singers with limited use of the organ. In the afternoon we sang Vespers of Our Lady, followed by the Antiphon of the Blessed Virgin Mary, with eight women dressed as nuns.

This time the focus is on the Holy Name of Jesus (see further below). This is to be celebrated at the altar in the south aisle, which by the early 16<sup>th</sup> century was being used as a Jesus altar. Jesus Mass will be celebrated as it was in many churches on Friday – as a low Mass (priest with parish clerk as server), with high voices (inauthentically six women – see below on

gender) and organ. It will be preceded by the Procession for the Feast of the Holy Name (priest, clerk and five other servers, four male singers). In the afternoon the men will sing Compline (of the Cross and of the Holy Name, according to the day) and the related Antiphon. As before we shall principally use chant, but there will be some composed and improvised polyphony both for voices and for organ.

A small group of laity, dressed in contemporary costume and with assigned social status and role, will attend all the liturgies.

#### **4. Artefacts**

One of the key features of the project has been the making of artefacts: medieval organ, vestments, stools, cruets and bowls, incense boat, and Pax board for June; and now for September, more vestments, a holy water bucket, a painting of the Arma Christi with the five wounds to serve as a reredos, and a commemorative brass. Working with craftsmen and artists has been a particularly revealing (and unexpected) part of the research process. In all these cases we have researched originals and used them as models (where they exist), but nothing is a slavish copy – as in the Middle Ages, the craftsmen have been free to be creative.

#### **5. Intentions**

In June we tried to focus on the Virgin, the Rood, and salvation through Christ's birth and crucifixion – doing our best to take on board the medieval teaching on purgatory. We build on these themes in September, with additional focus on the Cross (14 September is Holy Cross day), the Wounds of Christ, and the Holy Name of Jesus – a focus of devotion that became increasingly popular from the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Britain.

That period was also a great period of benefaction with extensive provision made for intercession for the deceased. Praying for the dead around their place of burial will be part of our exploration. Our chosen figure is the fictitious Sir Thomas ap Rhys, by whose will the Jesus Mass was endowed – an act not untypical of gentry and successful merchants of the time (whether individually or collectively through a guild or fraternity). Further to this, his widow and children have increased the endowment to provide music at the Mass. (The widow and second son are part of the congregation.) Though brasses are rare survivals in Wales, we shall have Sir Thomas's brass (derived from two English brasses) on the floor before the Jesus altar to provide the physical focus for intercession.

#### **6. Sir Thomas ap Rhys**

As those who have been before will know, I believe that medieval liturgy (like medieval music) only exists when it is being performed and that it is therefore a present and living act of worship. How can we reconcile this to prayer for someone who is not only 'located' 500 years ago, but is actually fictitious (even if there were men named Thomas ap Rhys)? Sir Thomas has to be the emblem of those who give for the benefit of others, and those whom we 'know but see no longer' – including those we only know through the memory of others.

#### **7. Two layers of constructed community**

The 'construction' of Sir Thomas brings up two areas of artifice. We gather as a community in 2011 to engage in practice-led research: although a number of us have worked together in some capacity for a period, we are no more a community than those gathered for a research conference – though we have an opportunity to establish a stronger group identity by working together. We then go a stage further: most of us are asked to become part of a parish community 500 years ago, stepping in and out of historical role, and also being asked to reflect on the experience of engaging in worship within the role. (The observers will be watching people in the role of other people.)

## 8. Issues of past and present

Questions of community and role raise issues about past and present, and also of Christian identity and practice. The great majority of those participating are practising Christians. The tension between worship in historical role and worship as modern believer came to a head for some in June when we enabled all who wished to receive communion on Corpus Christi. Was it the historical character or the modern person who communicated, and how did that affect their preparation, reception and thanksgiving? In the Mass, historical event is narrated in the Eucharistic Prayer (Canon of the Mass). In some theologies Christ is present in the bread and wine. The tension can be both less critical (because Christianity always exists in at least two time periods and two cultures, even transcends time) and more critical (because of the issue of personal identity in the encounter with the divine).

We do not expect to have a communion of the people in the coming week, but the underlying issues are still there to be thought through, and to be grappled with.

## 9. Gender

Our original intention in the project was to exclude women from the chancel and sanctuary. However, after comment and reflection, we decided to include women as nuns at Vespers (after all there were about 800 religious institutions in England and Wales where women conducted the office daily before the Reformation). This time we go one further: women are to take the part of boy choristers. High voices were characteristic of the Jesus Mass, especially in cathedrals, larger monasteries with Lady Chapel choirs, and larger collegiate churches: there is ample evidence of the choristers with their master singing Jesus Mass with the organs at the Jesus altar (often in the nave) on Friday.

The use of women for a boys' role represents another critical point in the research process: we are enacting a liturgical reality not reconstructing a historical event. This perhaps distinguishes two levels (even kinds) of authenticity: we are exploring that which takes account of actualities, but is being selective in focusing on certain of them which may best reveal aspects of the experience of worship in the late Middle Ages.

## 10. Timetable and deployment of people

The timetable will be much as in June, though we hope that there will be less pressure (especially on the filming day). The details are provided in the timetable, but this is the broad outline:

**Monday:** 13.30 meeting and briefing, with rehearsals thereafter. 16.15 Blessing of new artefacts and vestments with Antiphon.

**Tuesday:** 9.00 Morning Office, then rehearsals, 11.30 procession, 11.50 Jesus Mass, 14.00 rehearsal, 16.00 Compline and Antiphon.

**Wednesday:** 9.00 Morning Office, then filming of all four liturgies; arrival of observers by 18.00.

**Thursday:** as for Tuesday (though less rehearsing and more discussing).

**Friday:** 9.00 Morning Office, then reflection and discussion: finish by 13.00.

The public will be able to attend the Procession, Mass, Compline and Antiphon on Tuesday and Thursday. Do invite anyone you think may be interested.

This time there is clearer delineation of roles, and fewer people will be asked both to sing/serve and take a lay role at the other services. This should allow more time for

observation and reflection by the participants. There might even be time for some to consider life outside church, by visiting some of the late medieval domestic buildings in the museum.

### **11. Observers**

Four additional observers will join us from Wednesday evening until Friday lunchtime:

Dr Roger Bowers (Cambridge University, musicology): medieval choral institutions, polyphony and church history

Dr Rob Lutton (Nottingham University, history): devotion to the Holy Name of Jesus

Canon Christopher Irvine (Canterbury Cathedral [theology]): sacred art and symbols

Dr Beth Williamson (Bristol University, art history): sensory experience of worship, with new project relating to the West Country

In addition Andy Brice will again film informally on Tuesday morning, Thursday and Friday; Karen Whiteside (psychotherapy and facilitation) will be with us again from Wednesday to Friday, and both will be part of the filming team on Wednesday.

All being well Christopher Hodkinson (Cambridge, medieval chant and liturgy) will be able to observe the whole week, together with his wife, Tina. (The caveat is that their first child is due at about that time.) So too will Paul Barnwell as a member of the core Research Team.

### **12. Preparation**

We shall provide you with some texts to reflect on – and these will be discussed at some of the initial sessions. Unless you are clergy or singer, you will not have a text of any of the liturgies: those who are in roles where that kind of person may have been literate will have access to some texts in the services, if you wish. A small group of texts is appended for you to consider. We are also sending copies of additional texts about the Mass for those who are new to the project in September.

*John Harper*  
*2 September 2011*

*Footnote: Salisbury Cathedral liturgies*

Thursday, 6 October: Jesus Mass at 5.30 pm

Sunday, 9 October: Procession of the Holy Name at 9.30 am