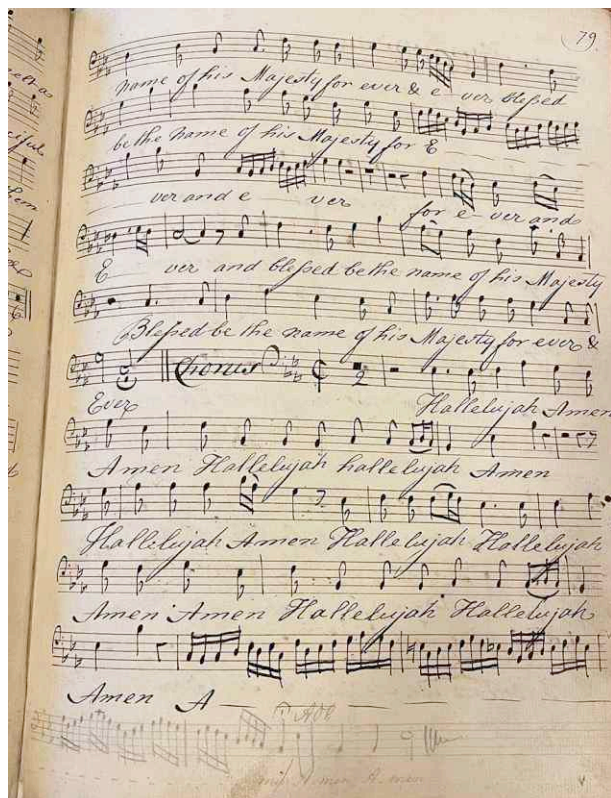


FACT SHEET 345

Choir Music in the Southwell Minster Historic Chapter Library**John Sheppard****Pepperpots, Spring 2024**

Although there has probably been a choir in the Minster since its construction what they sang and the books from which they sang in the period before the eighteenth century are unknown. Nowadays the choir sing from scores showing what all the voices are singing, but up to well into the nineteenth century it would have been usual for singers to use part-books, that is, books in which only the music sung by a particular voice would be written. Normally sets of books would consist of treble, alto, tenor and bass, with at least one copy for each voice line for each side ("Decani" – the Dean's side, and "Cantoris" – the cantor's side). Anthems or Services would be written ("pricked") into individual books, often by the Rector Chori or a member of the choir who would be paid by the Chapter for this work. The Chapter's Account Books list these payments in detail.

The Library has examples of part-books used from at least as far back as the eighteenth century. They were subject to heavy use so that the few that survive are often in very poor condition, with covers and pages loose or damaged and with the writing no longer legible. Only a minority of the items are dated, the earliest being from 1721. Although printed music became available relatively cheaply in the mid-nineteenth century music was still being copied into part-books as late as 1907, possibly as a way of supplementing the income of the lay-clerks or Rector Chori. That any survive today is due to prompt action by Paul Hale when he was appointed as Rector Chori.



Typical page from a part-book

The music included in a particular part-book was usually divided into Anthems and Services, starting at opposite ends of the book. Morning Services predominate, with fewer Evening Services and still less Communion Services. Certain items were clearly staples of the choir's repertoire, as they are repeatedly copied out in later books, and sometimes even duplicated in the same book. Each book has an index to its contents but no two books have the same contents, or even include them in the same order. Many volumes contain over 100 items. The collection includes a few items not known elsewhere, mainly music by local composers such as Humphrey Brailsford (1658-1733) and Edward Heathcote (1796-1835). The former was a chorister at Southwell Minster. After he was ordained, he wished to be Precentor at York Minster. This came to nothing as the lay clerks at York sent a round robin to the Dean pointing out that they did not want to work with such a quarrelsome man. Instead, he became a Canon at Southwell. It is not known what the lay clerks here made of him. The Library has his "Grace before Meat" in full score in a Purcellian style. The song "Full of wrath" was for many years attributed to Henry Purcell before scholars decided that "HP" was really "HB", and that the song was not as good a composition as they had thought previously. Perhaps he is better known today as an ancestor of Mary Anne Brailsford who planted the original Bramley apple tree.

Another local composer is Elizabeth Becher, a cousin of John Thomas Becher. The parts for her sweetly innocuous "Sanctus" are incomplete but could easily be reconstructed. She may well be the first female composer whose music was sung in the Minster. Her scrapbook, part of the

library collection kept at Nottinghamshire Archives, contains her poem written in August 1824 when the Minster was closed for Services due to whitewashing of the walls.

One important item in the manuscript collection is a Morning Service in D by the Chichester composer John Marsh. He had provided money for his sister, Mary Williams, to set up a school in the former Archbishop's Palace. On a visit to Southwell in 1817 on Sunday 14 June he records in his Journal that "in the morning a Sanctus and Commandments of mine were put up by Mr Becher the vicar general and one of the residentiaries, who seeing me with my brother thought I might be the composer of them". Later he notes that "having mentioned to Mr Becher that I had the score of a service of mine in D which I co'd leave behind me ... he told me that if I wo'd let him have it, he wo'd himself copy it in 2- or 3-days' time, which he accordingly did". In July 1819 he records that "on Monday 26, [I] played the organ for Mr Heathcote & in the evening tried my morning service in D with him, my nieces & Mr Thompson, which Mr Becher intended now having put in rehearsal in the choir, now Mr Heathcote has got the boys into an improved style of singing." On 14 August 1827 he records that "my service in D was done & anthem, Psalm 150, which last was rehearsed after service, by the choir". Later during that visit there was a "choir day at the Residence at which the men and choristers sang catches etc – in all 55 persons, at the parlour table 15, Singer's table 12, in the kitchen 15, children 7, additional ladies at tea,6."

The Minster Library contains a manuscript volume of Services labelled "Collegiate Church Southwell" containing John Marsh's Morning Service in D, a Sanctus and Responses to the Commandments.

Several volumes of part-books contain interesting marginalia including lists of Lay-Clerks and Clergy, as well as such comments as

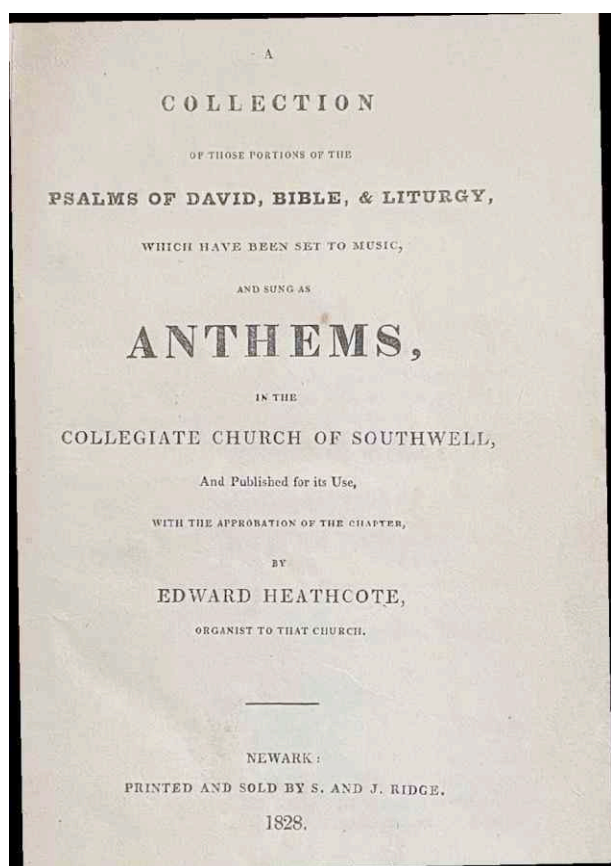
"Jack Spray took French Leave Feb 1785 ha ha ha",

"A canting lying Methodist
Was lately from his place dismiss
They wisely thought he'd stay'd too long
So paid him well to hold his tongue"

"Hen. Clay quitted his earthly tabernacle Oct 28 1789
He bore the virg (poor man) while he was able
Then laid it down upon the vestry table
And now grim Death hath maim'd his feeble legs
Old Charles has tain his gown from off the peggs
He reached the heavy age of Eighty-Two
And then (God rest him) bade the world adieu"

In addition to the manuscript part-books and organ scores the collection includes many printed volumes. Some, including collections of music by Hayes, Camidge, Nares and Samuel

Wesley, were subscribed for by the Chapter. The condition of the collections of Cathedral Music edited by William Boyce and Samuel Arnold show that they were clearly particularly well used. In 1828 Edward Heathcote, the Rector Chori, published a slim volume containing the texts of all anthems sung in the Minster and listing the various composers represented. This gives a useful indication of what was sung in the Minster at that date. Heathcote also published a set of Chants for the Psalms appointed for each day in the month. One of his Evening Services, including a very showy part for the organ in the "Gloria", exists in manuscript and has been given a single performance in recent years. One of his successors, Herbert Irons, published a set of hymn tunes including "Southwell" which is played daily on the Minster bells at 12.00 and 16.00.



Title page of Heathcote's book of words of anthems

Other musical items in the Historic Library include a full set of Samuel Arnold's edition of the works of Handel. This was donated by Sir Richard Kaye, Prebendary of Southwell and Dean of Lincoln, who subscribed to the edition and gave the entire set to the Library as soon as Arnold ceased publication of the edition. Complete sets are very rare. Other books include Thomas Mace's "Musick's monument" (1676), Granville Sharp's "A Short Introduction to Vocal Music" (1777), and the ten volumes of the Carnegie Trust edition of Tudor Church Music from the 1920s. There is also music commissioned for the Minster from Paul Patterson, Andrew Carter and Guy Turner.

(3)

ANTHEM *The King shall rejoice*

N^o 171. Allegro

Part of Handel's *The King shall rejoice*

Less obviously expected in a Library are a set of reel-to-reel tape recordings of organ recitals given in the Minster in the 1960/70s and video recordings (some transferred to DVD) of broadcasts of Songs of Praise from the Minster. Together all these items give a tantalizingly incomplete picture of music in the Minster during the past three hundred years.