

Another Canon Barnard and The First Book Of Selected Church Music 1641

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Originally written for, and printed in, the April 2012 edition of *Three Spires*,
the newsletter of the Friends of Lichfield Cathedral

Amongst the many treasures housed in the cathedral library at Lichfield there exists an historic collection of both manuscript and printed music dating largely from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This consists principally, though not exclusively, of sacred choral works, anthems and services which reflect the nature of repertoire performed by the cathedral choir in those centuries within the daily round of sung services: Matins, Evensong and Sung Eucharist. Much of the collection is in the form of part-books, bound editions of copied manuscripts, organised according to voice parts, whereby individual singers had access to only the voice part they sang, rather in the same way as orchestral players and instrumentalists play from individual orchestral parts today. Full choral scores are a comparatively recent adjunct to cathedral worship.

In addition, and of even greater historical significance in terms of musicology, is the existence in our library of a set of volumes dating from the middle of the seventeenth century whose title is (the) First Book Of Selected Church Music and known to scholars by reference to the compiler, as the Barnard Part Books. Of these, Lichfield Cathedral Library possesses seven of the original ten published volumes and we are indeed fortunate to have the most complete set in existence. They contain the first printed collection of works by composers from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries and thus represent a huge step forward in the evolution of resources available to choirs embracing accurate, legible and authentic performable editions of repertoire from what is often considered to be the 'golden age' of cathedral music.

Works by Gibbons, Byrd, Tallis, Morley, Tye, Batten, Parsons, Sheppard and many of their contemporaries appear within the collection and many of the services and anthems which we hear today are sung from editions derived from Barnard's pioneering work in collating authentic versions of these works. Barnard's selection comprises 15 settings of services, ten of which contain both morning and evening canticles, 42 full anthems and 12 verse anthems, together with sundry settings of psalms, litanies and responses.

The volumes are contained within leather-bound covers embossed with the seal of the Dean and Chapter. The music inside is handsomely printed with distinctive lozenge shaped notes on black unbarred staves, the accompanying texts appearing in a bold, florid ornamental type. Initial letters and tailpieces are gloriously designed and executed to represent personages holding instruments of music. The conclusion of individual works is denoted by elaborate flourishes, one of these forming the initials J. B. and dated 1639, as if to denote the progress then made by the compiler in his work. Thus the edition presents not only musical but also aesthetic rewards to the reader or scholar.

Whilst the Barnard Part Books are justly renowned, conversely, we know comparatively little about their author. John Barnard was not a composer himself, but a member of the choral foundation at St Paul's Cathedral where he held the office of Minor Canon and of his clerical career no further details remain. Barnard dedicated his work to his sovereign, Charles I and published it in 1641 with the subtitle '...Such Anthems and Services Never Before Printed, Collected out of Divers Approved Authors'. The work appears to have been printed by Ed.(ward) Griffin whose legend proclaims it to have been 'sold at the signe of ye 'Three Lutes in St Paul's Alley' Thus the magnum opus was both conceived and produced within the precincts of the great gothic cathedral subsequently destroyed in the great fire a quarter of a century later, to be replaced by Christopher Wren's masterpiece which we see today.

It was in this milieu that John Barnard both heard and participated in the daily performance of polyphonic choral music and was no doubt aware at first hand of the problems caused by performing editions which were in manuscript form, in individual voice parts and frequently hampered by variations within the copies used by individual members of the choir. His preface to the First Book Of Selected Church Music (1641) contains the following rationale:

Such bookes as were heretofore with much difficulty and charges
transcribed for the use of the Quire, are now to the saving of much
labour and expence publisht for the general good of all such as shall
desire them

By collating, editing and publishing his 'First Book' Barnard performed an invaluable service to cathedral musicians as collector of a large number of the best compositions of Elizabethan and Jacobean composers. His published work preserved the text of numerous anthems and services which might otherwise have perished in the period of the Interregnum when puritan sensibilities decreed that such music was unacceptable and in most cathedral foundations the choral establishments were disbanded, singers dispersed and manuscript music libraries together with organs destroyed. Indeed, cathedral music was suspended under the Commonwealth by orders of parliament in 1643, scarcely two years after Barnard's oeuvre appeared. We in Lichfield are only too well aware of the tempestuous and destructive impact caused by the upheavals of that unfortunate period.

From the very title of his work it is clear that Barnard intended to publish a second volume – presumably of works by his contemporaries – having limited the scope of the first volume to works by composers of an earlier era. Sadly the project never came to fruition and neither was any contemporary attempt made to publish organ accompaniment to the choral works in the first collection. The ten volumes which comprise the full set are organised for individual voices, these being designated Medius (treble) Contratenor 1, Contratenor 2 (alto) Tenor and Bassus (bass) *i.e.* five volumes for each side of the choir with Decani on the south side and Cantoris on the north. The Lichfield collection is lacking both Medius volumes and one Contratenor volume. Fortunately, modern scholars can access the missing voice parts which do exist in other collections.

Whilst it is evident that many wealthy individuals and cathedral foundations purchased sets of Barnard's work after the initial publication in 1641, most of these appear to have disappeared during the period of the Commonwealth and many that were salvaged subsequently perished through extensive wear and

tear in the century which followed, though continued existence, in part at least, is evidenced by a large number of manuscript copied part books made by cathedral copyists between 1675 and 1700, notably at Durham Cathedral.

Another great collector and editor of cathedral music, the composer and scholar William Boyce writing in 1760, confessed to his own inability to find a complete set of Barnard part books for editorial purposes. Consequently, we have cause to rejoice in still having within our own library such a unique survival and ponder the reasons for such. This we owe entirely to the generosity of one of Lichfield's justly celebrated sons, Elias Ashmole (1617-72). Ashmole had himself been a cathedral chorister here during the organistship of Henry Hinde, a cathedral musician whose work survives only in a single yet notable 'verse anthem *O Sing Unto The Lord*.

Possibly as a result of his own youthful experiences at singing from inadequate manuscript copies, Ashmole presented the cathedral in 1662 with a set of the full ten volumes of Barnard's work, some twenty years after its publication. The late Dr Percy Young in an introductory essay to the printed music catalogue at Lichfield, opines that Ashmole 'generously came to the help of Wm. Lamb (senior) who became Cathedral Organist in that year, by his presentation of an invaluable set of ten volumes of John Barnard's First Book Of Selected Church music'

It is affirming to think that Ashmole's affection for the cathedral and its musicians prompted his generous, significant and timely donation. For we should not underestimate the post-restoration challenges faced by the clergy and indeed by William Lamb as Master of the Choristers, in recruiting and training both choristers and lay vicars to restore choral services for the maintenance of the *opus dei*. The task of re-establishing a viable music library at Lichfield must have been enormously helped by possession of a set of Barnard's part books, containing as they do the nucleus of the Tudor music repertoire for cathedral and collegiate choirs.

Four centuries later we can marvel at Barnard's endeavours, at Ashmole's generosity and Lichfield's good fortune in possessing this most significant musical resource within our library today.