

Westminster Abbey Historical/Musical Tour with the Purcell Club, Saturday 29th June 2019

Ian Godfrey of the Purcell Club, Speaker, introduced the Tour by telling us that a small Benedictine monastery was built on the Thorn Island site in late 960 in the reign of King Edgar. In the late 1000s King Edward the Confessor began to rebuild St Peter's Abbey as a royal burial church conveniently near the Palace of Westminster. In 1245 Henry III started the construction of the current church building and the relics of King Edward the Confessor were placed in a shrine in the new church. William I the Conqueror was crowned there on Christmas Day 1066. Since 1308 the King Edward's Chair, also known as the Coronation Chair, is the throne on which the sovereign sits when they are crowned.

The Purcell Club, conducted by Richard Slade, sang the musical items from the locations listed below. Ian Godfrey spoke on the history of the locations.

From the Nave – West End: Before the ending of the day (Gregorian Plainsong)

From the Quire: in front of the high altar where the cosmati floor dates back to 1268.

Kyrie from *Missa Aeterna Christi Munera* – Palestrina (arr David Overton)

From the Lantern/Crossing: O remember not our old sins – Henry Purcell

The North Ambulatory: contains smaller chapels with the royal tombs of Elizabeth I, Mary I, James I, Charles II, William III, and Queen Anne. The most important and largest is the Chapel of Henry VII, and his Queen, Elizabeth of York, also known as the Lady Chapel, with beautiful fan vaulted ceiling. At the east end is the smaller RAF Memorial Chapel.

From the Lady Chapel: Ian Godfrey declaimed the famous speech from Henry V 'We few, we happy few, we band of brothers'.

Agincourt Song – English Traditional (arr David Overton)

Abendlied – Rheinberger

Holy is the True Light - Simkins

Chapel of St Edward the Confessor: the original shrine was dismantled in 1540. Mary I reopened and partially restored the shrine. The tomb is surrounded by the tombs of Henry III, Edward III, Richard II, Henry V, and Edward I.

From Poets' Corner and Musicians' Aisle: where there are floor memorial plaques for Sir Walter Scott, William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, Charles Dickens, Rudyard Kipling, and T S Elliott.

God be in my head (arr Richard Slade)

Thou knowest Lord the secrets of our hearts – Henry Purcell

Organ Recital: by one of the Abbey Organists on the organ built by Harrison & Harrison in 1937.

From the Nave – East end: The Long Day Closes – music by Arthur Sullivan

From the Unknown Warrior's Tomb: Kontakion for the faithful departed – Russian traditional
'Give rest, O Christ'

Patrick Higham, Visits Secretary