'So that the people can sing together in church': Aspects of the parish soundscape in Wales *c*.1500–*c*.1630

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We can be in no doubt that the liturgy in some Welsh parish churches was enhanced in a modest way with some form of music by the later Middle Ages. Even in smaller churches, priest and clerk (perhaps supported by a chantry priest or two) likely intoned psalms and responses together to simple musical formulae, while in larger ones, a staple diet of monophonic plainchant may have been enhanced on special occasions with polyphony. Some Welsh parishes even subsidized a small choir and an organist by the early 1500s, as was the case at Brecon, Montgomery, Cardiff and Swansea.[1] But in all of these cases, there is no evidence that the congregation themselves were able to participate within the late medieval liturgy by singing together – this practice was to begin only from the 1560s, and probably much later in some churches.

This paper therefore ventures a little beyond the Middle Ages, and a little beyond the period represented by the parish church of St Teilo in its current manifestation. However, it is in the early 16th century that my exploration of the parish soundscape begins, and as we consider the changing experience of an ordinary parishioner over a full century or so, I hope that we can keep in mind the St Teilo's building and the ordinary men and women who attended this church. There are four major questions on which I would like to focus. (1) What chance did these people have to participate within services at a general level? (2) How did that opportunity change as the century progressed? (3) What was the nature of the music that they may have sung? And (4) what difference did it make that this parish was home to a Welsh-speaking community? (In this last respect, there are particular issues of metre and melody to consider.)

[1] For fuller discussion, see Sally Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture before 1650: A Study of the Principal Sources* (Aldershot, 2007), chapters 14 and 15.

Christopher Marsh's highly accessible study of the place of the people in the late medieval parish, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (1998),[2] speculates usefully on the character of the late medieval Sunday Mass that ecclesiastical law would have required the congregation to attend. Around 1520, Mass would have been almost entirely in Latin with the congregation making the occasional response in Latin, though prior to the Offertory the priest did charge them in English to pray for their earthly leaders, for each other and for the dead.[3] Elsewhere in the service, they were required to stand for the Gospel; to kneel at the 'sacring', as the bell rang preceding the elevation of the consecrated host; and to take part in the rituals accompanying the passing of the paxbread before the Lord's Prayer and the holy loaf at the end of the service. They were also expected to pray privately during the confession, the Gloria, the Offertory and the Sanctus: Marsh invites us to imagine a liturgy 'punctuated periodically by the muttering of Aves, Pater Nosters and elevation prayers'.[4] Wealthier (and literate) church-goers may have owned printed primers containing set prayers in English that would have enhanced their devotions, although the communion itself was normally restricted to the priesthood. There must also have been some unwanted noise within this imaginary soundscape: the people of Woodchurch in Kent, for instance, were prevented in 1511 from concentrating on their devotions by one Roger Harlakinden, who 'jangleth and talkithe in the chirche when he is there',[5] while about a century later in the deanery of Wisbech, Edward Brigstock, parishioner of Tydd St Giles, was upbraided for 'unreverently … laughing and Groninge during the sermon'.[6]

Parish churches inevitably witnessed dramatic changes in their Sunday worship as the Latin liturgy gradually receded in favour of new services in the vernacular. By 1552, the official requirement was for services to be in English; there was far more emphasis on the sermon; the parish procession, sprinkling of holy water, vestments other than the surplice, the pax and the holy bread all disappeared; and reception of the communion was no longer restricted to priest alone. At St Teilo's itself the physical appearance of the building itself must have changed too: Episcopal Injunctions of 1547 (repeated several times in later years) enforced, amongst other things, the whitewashing of walls and

[2] Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1998): see especially Ch. 2 'Layfolk within the Church', and Ch. 3, 'Layfolk alongside the Church'. Marsh draws on several other key studies, including Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars* (New Haven and London, 1992) and Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merrie England* (Oxford, 1994).
[3] See especially Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England* (Basingstoke, 1998), ch.2 'Layfolk within the Church'.
[4] Marsh, *Popular Religion*, 33.
[5] Cited Marsh, *Popular Religion*, 47.
[6] Cited Marsh, *Popular Religion*, 3.

removal of images, where paintings were generally replaced by scriptural texts (especially Our Father and the Ten Commandments) and the royal arms.[7] The chronicler Raphael Holinshed, writing in 1577, suggests that parish worship began with morning prayer (in English, of course) with focus on the confession, psalms, and readings: the congregation stood to pronounce the Creed together, and knelt to say the Lord's Prayer together.[8] Morning prayer was followed by the litany and suffrages, and 'This being done we proceed unto the Communion, if any communicants be there to receive the eucharist'. In the absence of communicants, the decalogue, epistle, gospel and Nicene Creed followed, together with 'a homily or sermon, which hath a psalm before and after it'. The morning concluded with baptism where required, and the people reconvened in the afternoon for another sermon with psalms and lessons. And here, at last, we have evidence that the people were finally able 'to sing together in church' – for it seems that the vernacular psalmody that framed such sermons was metrical, strophic, and paired with melodies suitable for congregational participation.[9]

For many parishioners in Wales, however, these English texts could have been little better than the Latin that preceded them. A Welsh prayer book did eventually arrive in 1567 – but that was almost twenty years later than its English counterpart. Let's look briefly at some of the main milestones within the Welsh-speaking parish church:[10]

[7] See the interesting solution at St Catherine's parish church, Ludham in Norfolk, where the royal arms were painted onto a canvas cover (now facing east) over a painted wooden rood. http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/ludham/ludham.htm.
[8] *The Firste Volume of the Chronicles of England, Scotlande, and Irelande....* (London, 1577), I, 232 cited Nicholas Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church*, I (Camrbidge, 1979), 44.
[9] For fuller discussion of this topic within Wales itself, see Sally Harper, 'Tunes for a Welsh Psalter: Edmwnd Prys's *Llyfr y Psalmau*', *Studia Celtica*, 36 (2004), 221–65.
[10] Adapted from Harper, *Music in Welsh Culture*, 358.

Table 1: Progress towards a Vernacular Liturgy in Wales

1541	All churches in England and Wales to obtain the Bible in English
1549	Publication of the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer in English
1551	William Salesbury's *Kynniver Llith a Ban* (Epistles and Gospels in Welsh)
1559	Act of Parliament decreeing use of the BCP throughout England and Wales
1561	St Asaph Injunctions requiring recitation of the Epistle and Gospel in Welsh
1562	Application to the Stationers to print the Litany in Welsh
	Printing of John Day's *The whole book of psalms* (metrical psalms with tunes)
1563	Act of Parliament sanctioning translation of BCP and Bible into Welsh
1565/6	St Davids cathedral buys 3 prose psalters and 3 metrical psalters (all in English)
1567	Publication of *Llyfr Gweddi Gyffredin* (Welsh translation of BCP)
1583	Articles for St Davids diocese requiring Welsh purchase of books 'where Welsh only is used'
1588	Publication of William Morgan's Welsh translation of the Bible

The St Davids accounts indicate that congregational psalmody in English had reached at least one place in Wales by 1565, though the first official collection of metrical psalms in the Welsh language was published only in 1621. Even so, there were important precedents for singing devotional texts in Welsh in a more informal context. One form of particular significance was the 'carol', a term found in Welsh manuscripts from the later Middle Ages, though not always with religious connotations. Many of these texts were certainly 'of the people', with the result that the majority could never have been written down, while those that were preserved rarely note the associated tune.[11]

Nevertheless, we do have two lovely notated carols written in free metres that may indeed be late medieval survivals.[12] Both were recorded retrospectively from oral tradition in the 1950s in rural Cardiganshire. 'Myn Mair' ('By Mary!') pleads for the soul in purgatory and refers to both the mass and the saints, while 'Ar fore dydd Nadolig' ('On Christmas morning') moves between the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection in a manner typical of later Welsh carols, and invokes Mary's assistance in the last verse. Both also have beautifully singable melodies featuring largely step-wise movement; in some ways they are reminiscent of plainchant. The texts themselves are set in rhymed accentual verse with a burden or refrain at the end of each strophe; both could have

[11] For a valuable short study of singing in Wales in the seventeenth century, see Meredydd Evans, 'Canu Cymru yn yr unfed ganrif ar bymtheg', *Cof Cenedl*, 13 (1998), 33–67.
[12] For transcriptions, see *Canu'r Cymru I–II (Welsh Folk Songs)*, ed. Phyllis Kinney and Meredydd Evans (Penygroes, Welsh Folk-Song Society, 1984, 1987).

been sung by a single voice or a group of voices in unison. We need to imagine texts such as these sung outside the context of the formal liturgy – perhaps on occasions of communal eating and drinking, especially at Christmastide, Shrove Tuesday, and Midsummer – the location was perhaps the great house; perhaps the churchyard; perhaps even the church itself on some occasions.[13]

Certain versification patterns within this 'free metre' style became particularly popular, almost to the extent of excluding other metres. One such example is a 'Carol Nadolig' dated 1520, generally attributed to Huw Dafydd, allegedly the priest of Gelligaer, not far from Caerphilly.[14]

[Stanza 7]

Canwn iddo glod a *mawl*	[7]
Y *sawl* sy ddeffoledig;	[7]
Na ollyngwn byth dros *go*'	[7]
I foli *fo* 'r Nadolig.	[7]

It is worth looking closely at the stanza pattern: 4 seven-syllable lines, with regular stresses; lines 2 and 4 employ end rhyme, while lines 1 and 3 rhyme with the middle of lines 2 and 4. This is a simplified form of one of the old Welsh strict poetic metres, the *awdl gywydd*, used by professionally-trained bards.[15] It also relates closely to another metre, the *englyn cyrch*, which in due course became the model for a much lighter type of popular Welsh verse, known as the *mesur triban* – which was used a great deal in the Glamorgan area. An important secondary function of such simple metres was their didactic purpose. Among the devotional carol-like texts that survive, some translate scripture (such as a 'carol' from the 1570s by Siôn Morys on Matthew 4),[16] and others paraphrase liturgical texts: there are late 16th-century free-metre versifications by John Meurig of the Pater Noster, Credo and Ten Commandments, items which the people of the parish were expected to learn by heart.[17] Other carols in similar style commemorate special events: the cleric-poet Thomas Jones of Llandeilo Bertholau in Monmouthshire

[13] See Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merrie England*, Ch. 1 and Marsh, *Popular Religion*, Ch. 3.
[14] Text beginning 'Gwrandewch feddwl dyn o'r byd' in *Cerddi Rhydd Cynnar*, ed. D. Lloyd Jenkins (Llandysul, n.d.), 3–4. The date occurs in the penultimate stanza.
[15] Gwyn Williams gives a clear account of these metres in 'Welsh versification', *An Introduction to Welsh Poetry from the beginnings to the sixteenth century* (London, 1953), 232–47.
[16] 'Carol o'r Pedwerydd Pennod o Fathew', *Cerddi Rhydd Cynnar*, 20–21.
[17] John Meurig, 'Y Pader', 'Y Credo', and 'Y Gorchmynion', *Cerddi Rhydd Cynnar*, 7–11

wrote a lengthy carol in celebration of William Morgan's new Welsh bible of 1588, which he saw as the 'pure bread of life given by God to Welshmen'.[18]

Some, perhaps most, of these texts were surely sung, and there is even a suggestion that free-metre texts were particularly associated with women. An anecdote attributed in *c*.1609 to the antiquary 'old Rhisiart Langford' (d.1586) of Allington, Gresford, records a memory of a gathering in a chapel in the Flintshire area around 1540, where the menfolk – trained bards, it seems – sang professional strict metre poems, including the *cywydd* and the *awdl*, while the girls sang '*carolau a dyrïau*':

Ir ystalm pan oeddem i yn gwilio ynghapel Mair o Bylltyn, ir oedd gwyr wrth gerdd yn kanu kywydde ac odle, a merched yn kanu karole a dyrïe.[19]

[A long time ago when we kept vigil in the chapel of Mary of Poulton [near Chester], the *gwŷr wrth gerdd* [bardic craftsmen] would sing *cywyddau* and *awdlau* and the women would sing *carolau* and *dyrïau*.]

The suggestion that all of this happened as the people celebrated a vigil, in the main place of worship within the township of Poulton, is important; the setting is evidently not the formal liturgy, but it does taken place in a chapel, likely on the eve of a liturgical feast (perhaps a day when it was customary for professional bards to be paid). The occasion may even have been a pilgrimage to a local shrine or well. The poet Siôn Tudur (*c*.1522–1602) in his 'Prognosticasiwn Dr Powel' similarly describes girls gathering to sing free-metre *dyrïau*, each verse ending with the refrain 'Hai lwlian hai lwli' – a reminder of the burden or refrain familiar in many early English carols.[20] In this case there is no suggestion of an overt religious or devotional association, but the Welsh grammar (c.1584–90) of the priest Gruffydd Robert (*c*.1522–*c*.1610), has a more specific reference to ordinary folk singing free-metre songs such as *carolau a chwndidau ne rimynnau gwylfeydd* ('carols and *cwndidau* or festal rhymes').[21]

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[18] 'Diolch am y Beibl yn Gymraeg (1588)', *Cerddi Rhydd Cynnar*, 31–3.
[19] Recollection of 'Old Richard Langford' (c.1540), cited John Jones of Gellilyfdy, Cardiff, Central Library MS 2.634 (Hafod 24), p. 355–6. See also Daniel Huws, 'Yr Hen Risiart Langfford,' in *Beirdd a Thywysogion: Barddoniaeth Llys yng Nghymru, Iwerddon a'r Alban, cyflwynedig i R.. Geraint Gruffydd*, ed M. E. Owen and B. F. Roberts (Caerdydd, 1996), 302–23.
[20] 'A lle bytho llankesse/ vo vydd kanv dyrie/ ac ar ddiwedd pob dyri/ hai lwlian hai lwli': Siôn Tudur, 'Prognosticasiwn Dr Powel', lines 225–8, ed. *Canu Rhydd Cynnar*, ed. T. H. Parry-Williams (Cardiff, 1932), no. 58 (p.198).
[21] *Geiriadur Prifsygol Cymru. A Dictionary of the Welsh Language*, ed. R. J. Thomas et al. (Caerdydd, 1950–2002), s.v. 'cwndid'.

The term '*cwndid*' is apparently specific to Glamorgan and Gwent, and it is often suggested that it derives from the medieval term *conductus*, a composition in Latin that was often sung in a processional context. Those Welsh *cwndidau* texts that survive are mostly religious or moralizing carols, frequently referred to as 'sermons in song'; a number are strongly anti-Protestant.[22] The greatest outpouring of *cwndidau* began around.1550, and extended well into the 17th century. One important group survives in National Library of Wales, MS 13070B (formerly MS Llanover B 9): it was transcribed by the Roman Catholic scribe Llywelyn Siôn (*c.*1540–1615) and includes some of his own carols attacking Luther and Calvin. Several texts by the Glamorgan poet Thomas ab Ieuan ap Rhys (fl.*c.*1510–*c.*1560) similarly display fierce hostility to the Edwardian Reformation, rejecting Protestant teaching and lamenting the passing of the mass, penance, fasting and confession.

If only the tunes for such free-metre texts had been written down! The Glamorganshire poet and antiquary Iolo Morganwg (1747–1826), born in Llancarfan, apparently recorded one such tune, though as with much of Iolo's work, the claim for authenticity needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.[23] His accompanying note reports that he had heard an old woman humming the tune ('ar erddigan') in the highlands of Glamorgan, and that he had also heard other tunes to which texts in the same metre could be sung.[24] Glamorgan, of course, was also the area where that lighter poetic form known as the *triban* came to assume particular importance from the seventeenth century.

None of these texts, so far as we know, had a place in the formal liturgy, it is striking that the metrical versions of Welsh psalm texts eventually sanctioned for parish use did bear some relation to the carol, the *cwndid*, and especially the *awdl gywydd* and the *triban*. The prose version of the Psalter devised for the new services in the vernacular did not lend itself to congregational singing (indeed, these prose texts still present a challenge today for congregations), but metrical texts were much more accessible. At first, as with the prayerbook, Welsh parishes had to make do with English psalm texts: as we have seen, *The whole booke of psalms collected into Englysh Metre* was first published complete with tunes by John Day in 1562. The collection drew mostly on the versifications of two

[22] For some of the extant texts, see *Hen Gwndidau, Carolau a Chywyddau being Sermons in Song*, ed. Hopcyn and Cawdrawd (Bangor, 1910). A valuable survey appears in Ceri W. Lewis, 'The Literary History of Glamorgan from 1550 to 1770', *Glamorgan County History*, vol 4, Early modern Glamorgan, ed Glanmor Williams (Cardiff, 1974), ch. 10, 535–639.
[23] *Hen Gwndidau, Carolau a Chywyddau*, 222, 'Iolo MS 44, p.463'.
[24] 'Y mesurau cyffredinaf yw'r hen gywydd deuair ar ba fesur y mae'n gennyf gôf glywed hen flaeneuwraig yn canu'r mesur hwn ar erddigan agos hyd a'th fy nghof fal hon.' *Hen Gwndidau, Carolau a Chywyddau*, 222.

Englishmen, Thomas Sternhold (1500–49), groom of the robes to Henry VIII, and John Hopkins, a Suffolk clergyman, coupled with lengthy tunes of eight lines each, most of which are by now long forgotten.[25] Day's publication soon achieved a vast circulation – thousands of copies were printed (often with numerous significant errors in both text and music).

By the 1570s Welsh poets were also beginning to experiment with versified psalms in their own language. The earliest attempts were in complex strict metres that could only be sung by one person at a time,[26] but in 1595, Morris Kyffin, a Welsh army-officer, published an impassioned plea for a translation in a metre that could be sung together in unison. Metrical psalmody was by now available, he claimed, in virtually every European language except Welsh:
Gwaith rhediol iawn fydde troi'r Psalmeu i gynghanedd gymraeg …. i'r fath fessur a thôn canghanedd ag sydd gymeradwy ymhôb gwlad … ag fal y gwelir yn y Saesonaeg, Scotiaith, Frangaeg, iaith Germania, iaith Itali, a'r cyfryw: fal y gallo'r bobl ganu y gyd ar unwaith yn yr Eglwys[27]

[It would be very essential work to translate the Psalms into Welsh verse …. into the type of metre and versified tune which is acceptable in every country … as is seen in English Scots, French, German, Italian and the like … so that the people can sing together in unison at the same time in church …]

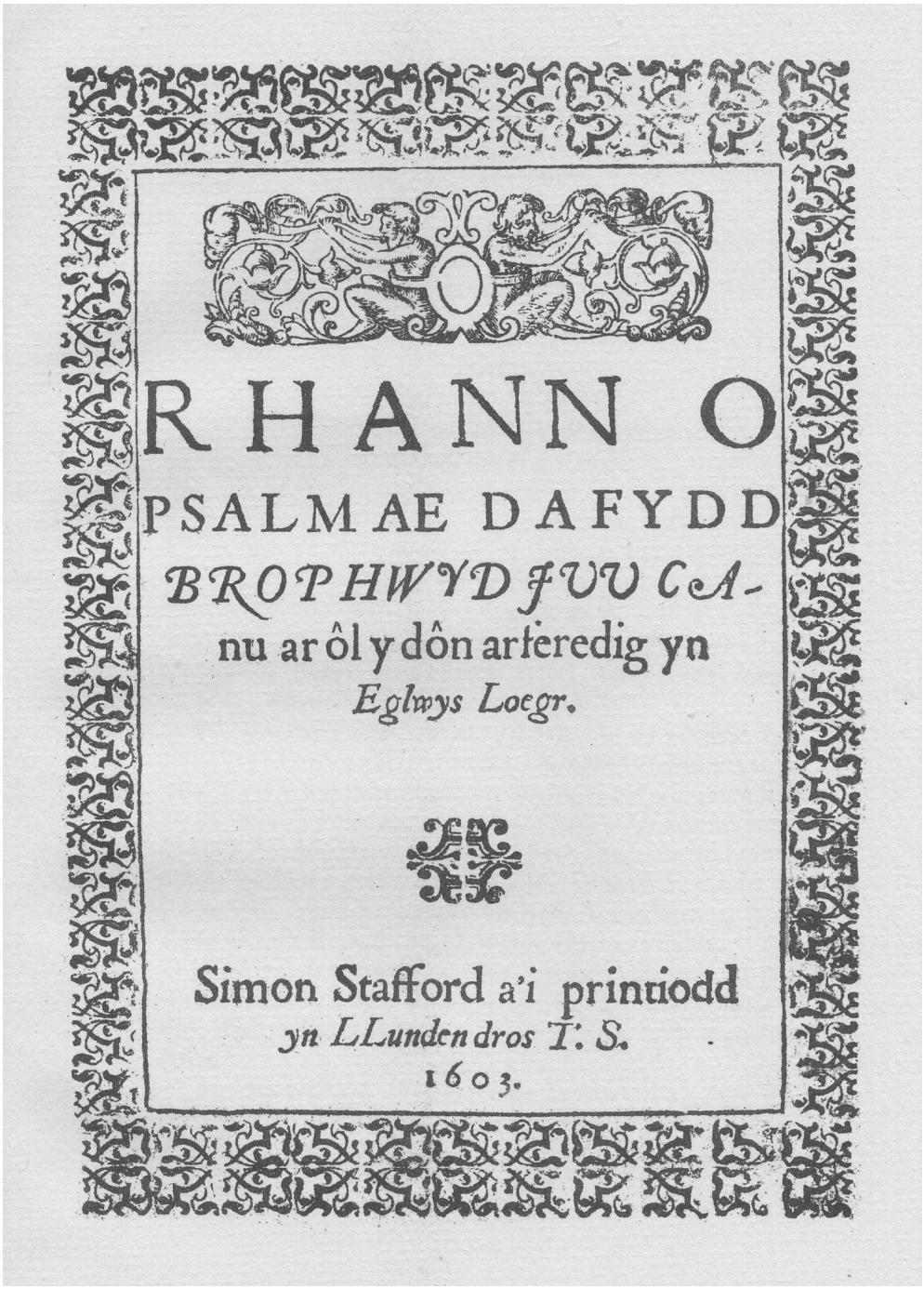
One of the first to respond to Morris Kyffin's challenge was his own brother Edward (*c*.1558–1603), curate of St Martin Outwich in the City of London. Edward died from the plague in 1603, but by his death he had apparently set fifty psalms in simple metre, and the first twelve and part of the thirteenth were printed in London that same year. The sample has a rather attractive title page (Figure 1): *Rhann o Psalmae Dafydd Brophwyd i'w canu ar ôl y dôn arferedig yn Eglwys Loegr* ('Part of the psalms of David the Prophet to be sung after the customary tune in the English church'); it also indicates that the publisher

[25] See especially N. Temperley, *The Music of the English Parish Church* (Cambridge, 1979), and R. Leaver, *'Goostly psalmes and spirituall songes': English and Dutch metrical psalms from Coverdale to Utenhove, 1535-1566* (Oxford, 1991). The complete texts of Sternhold, Hopkins and others contributing to the *Whole Booke of Psalms* may be found at http://www.cgmusic.com/workshop/oldver_frame.htm.
[26] See especially G. A. Williams, 'Mydryddu'r Salmau yn Gymraeg', *Llên Cymru*, 16 (1989–91), 114–32.
[27] Morris Kyffin (c.1555–98), new preface to *Deffynniad Ffydd Eglwys Loegr* (translation of John Jewel's *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae*, 1562). Cited in G. A. Williams, 'Edmwnd Prys (1543/4–1623): Dyneiddiwr Protestannaidd', *Journal of the Merioneth Historical and Record Society*, 8, no. 4 (1980), 349–68 (362).

was one 'T.S.'[28] This was Thomas Salisbury, a London Welshman who had clearly envisaged a publication in Welsh modelled on Day's *Whole Booke of Psalms* that would include some of the tunes already familiar in English parish churches. These same tunes were also referred to in the bilingual preface that Salisbury contributed to another volume that same year, and the wording draws directly on the title page (Figure 2) of Day's *Whole booke of psalms … with apt Notes to synge the[m] with al*:

I haue also begun the printing of the Psalmes in the like kinde of meeter in Brytish as they are vsually sung in the Church of England, and haue prefixed apt notes to sing them withall, which I hope to see fully finished ere long. /
E dharfu i mi hefyd dhechre y Psalmau yn yr vn-fath Dôn-gynghanedh yn Gymraeg, ag sydh arferol ei canu yn saesnaeg yn Eglwys Loegr, ag a rois nôdau yn-nhâl y llyfr, iw canu hwynt, gann obeithio y caf weled ei gorphenniad hwynt cynn y bo hîr.[29]

[28] For a facsimile edition with introduction by J. Ballinger, see *Rhan o Salmau Dafydd Broffwyd* (Cardiff, 1930); also G. A. Williams, 'Edmwnd Prys (1543/4–1623)', 362 and (on Edward Kyffin), R. G. Gruffydd, Thomas Salisbury o Lundain a Chlocaenog: Ysgolhaig-Argraffydd y Dadeni Cymreig', *National Library of Wales Journal*, 27 (1991–2), 1–19.
[29] *Psalmae y Brenhinol Brophvvyd Dafydh ... gann Gapten Wiliam Middleton* (Llunden, 1603).



RHANN O

PSALMAE DAFYDD

BROPHWYD FVV CA-

nu ar ôl y dôn arferedig yn

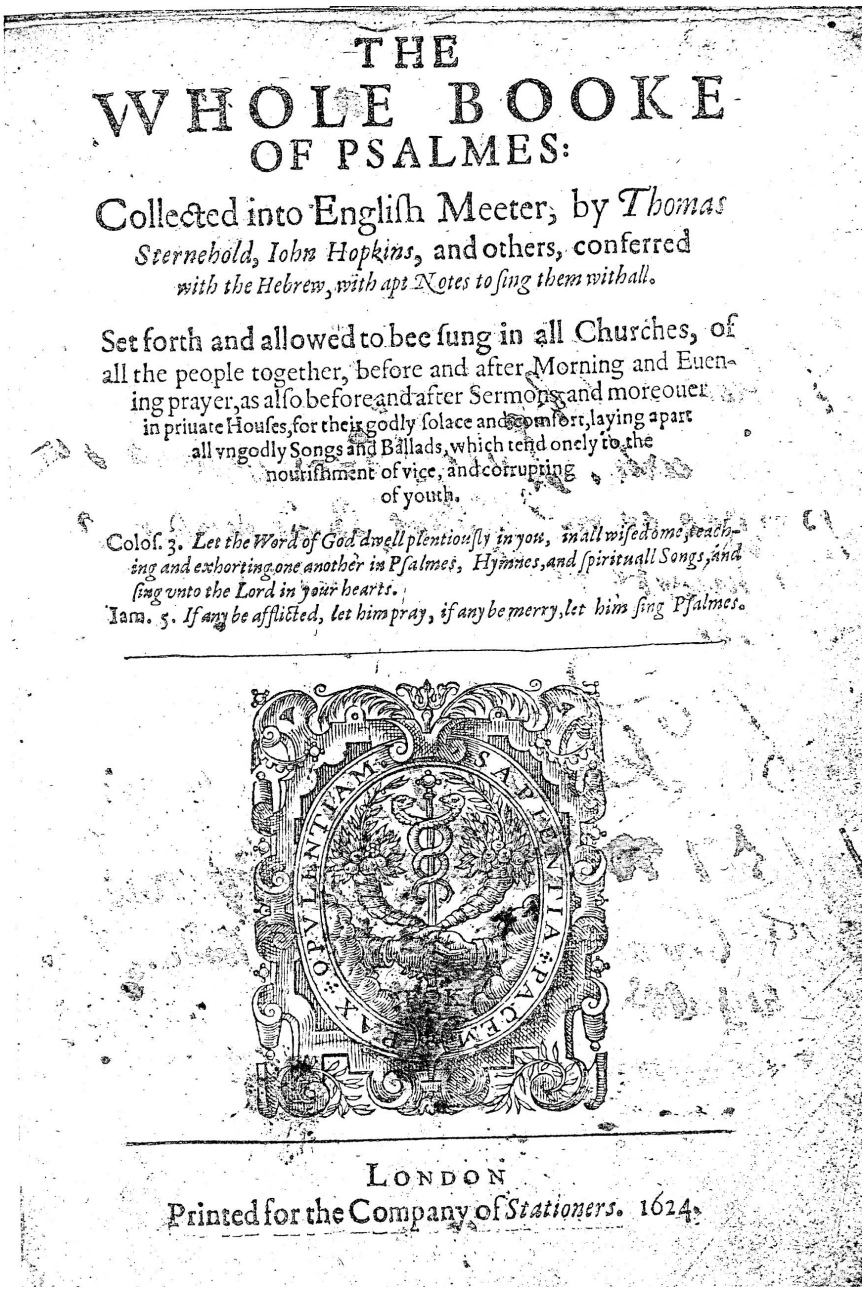
Eglwys Loegr.

Simon Stafford a'i printiodd

yn LLunden dros T. S.

1603.

Figure 1: the title-page of Edward Kyffin's sample, printed by Thomas Salisbury in 1603



THE
WHOLE BOOKE
OF PSALMES:

Collected into Englisſh Meeter, by *Thomas Sternehold, Iohn Hopkins*, and others, conferred *with the Hebrew, with apt Notes to ſing them withall.*

Set forth and allowed to bee ſung in all Churches, of all the people together, before and after Morning and Euening prayer, as alſo before and after Sermons, and moreouer in priuate Houſes, for their godly ſolace and comfort, laying apart all vngodly Songs and Ballads, which tend onely to the nouriſhment of vice, and corrupting of youth.

Coloſ. 3. *Let the Word of God dwell plentiouſly in you, in all wiſedome, teaching and exhorting one another in Pſalmes, Hymnes, and ſpirituall Songs, ſing vnto the Lord in your hearts.*
Iam. 5. *If any be afflicted, let him pray, if any be merry, let him ſing Pſalmes.*

LONDON
Printed for the Company of *Stationers*. 1624.

Figure 2: A 1624 edition of John Day's *Whole Booke of Psalmes … with apt Notes to sing them withal*.

Salisbury never got round to including these customary tunes in the sample, and Kyffin's incomplete work soon disappeared from view. But another much better known Welshman was soon to take up the gauntlet for Welsh psalmody – Edmwnd Prys, archdeacon of Merioneth, some of whose psalms still survive in various modern

hymnbooks. It was Prys who first published all 150 psalms in a form that all could sing together, and in doing so he turned to exactly the same metre that Edward Kyffin had used – that which we now refer to as Welsh psalm metre, or *mesur salm*.

Prys's printed collection appeared in 1621 (Figure 3) and contained just twelve tunes, to be shared between the 150 psalm texts as appropriate. Rather disappointingly none of these tunes seems to be of Welsh origin: eight are psalm melodies that had already been circulating widely in England and Scotland for some years, and they are mostly 'common tunes' – tunes intended to be paired with any compatible psalm text. Nine of the tunes are in common metre (8686) which can be matched very easily with Welsh *mesur salm* – the metre that Prys chose for about 90% of his collection. Although he referred to it as 'y mesur gwael hon' ('this poor metre'), he remarked specifically on its simplicity and its suitablity for group singing.[30] Once again it is characterized by a regular four-line stanza. Prys's setting of Psalm 1, 'Y sawl ni rodia' (Figure 4) has four stresses in odd-numbered lines and three in even-numbered lines. The pattern of syllables in each stanza of text remains constant at 8787, and there is a relatively sophisticated rhyme scheme running throughout, which makes use of both end-rhyme and a mid-line rhyme. This of course is very closely related to that earlier 'carol metre' that we have just been considering – the *awdl gywydd* – already part of the sound-world of the Welsh people. But there is also one further feature that makes *mesur salm* so significant. Not only does it share very similar characteristics with some indigenous devotional verse, but also with an English vernacular metre – the common metre (8686) just mentioned, sometimes known as 'Master Sternhold's Metre'. This traversed England in exactly the same way that *mesur salm* was to colonize the whole of Wales, and it dominates the *Whole Booke of Psalms*. These English psalm texts must have been well known to Edmwnd Prys, who spent almost a decade at St John's Cambridge from 1565, and later moved to Ludlow before returning permanently to Wales.

[30] Edmwnd Prys, preface to *Llyfr y Psalmau* (1621).

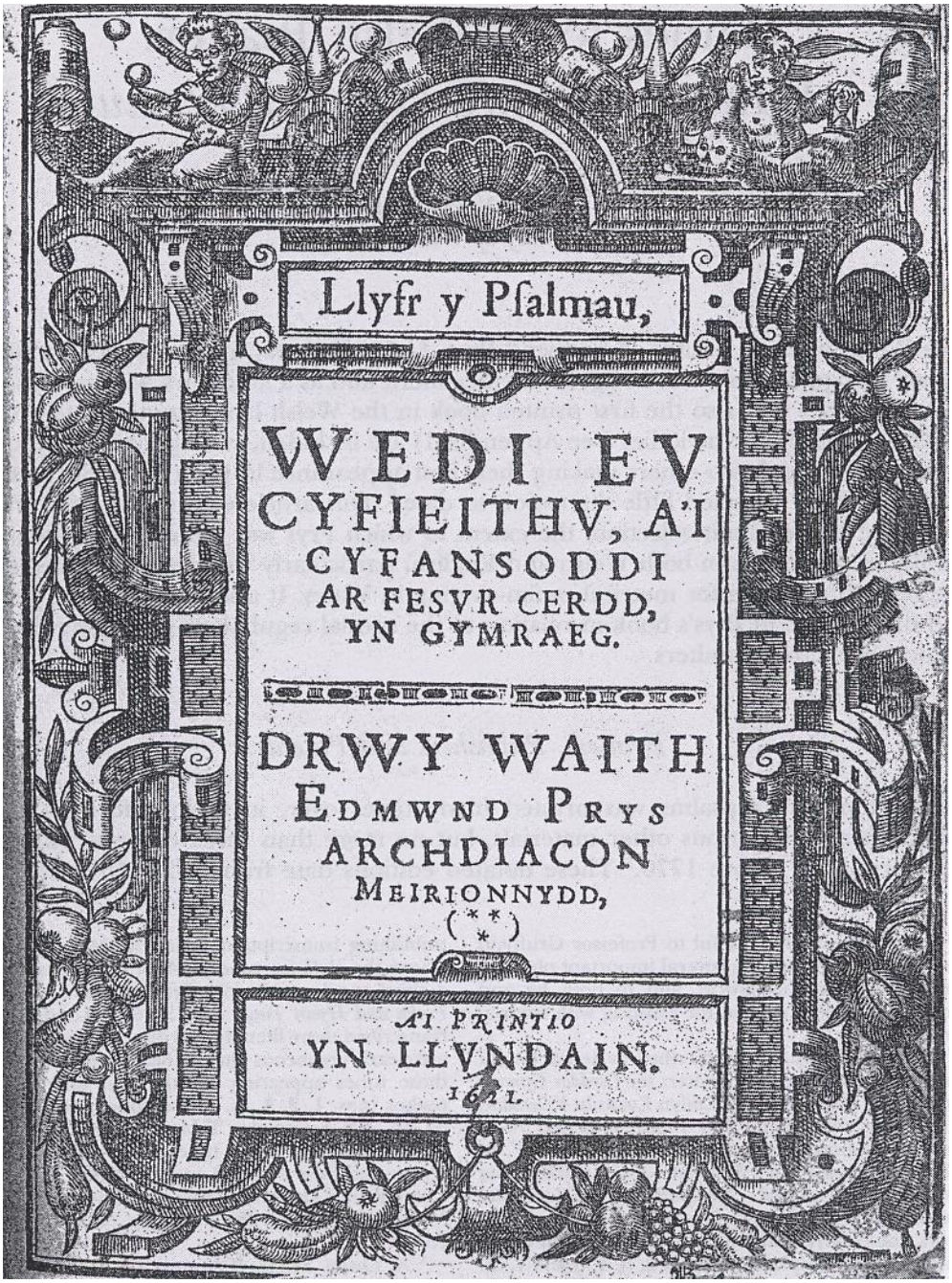


Figure 3: The title page of Edmwnd Prys's *Llyfr y Psalmau* (1621)

Y sawl ni rodia, dedwydd *yw*,	[8]	*Mesur Salm*: Edmwnd Prys, Psalm 1
Yn ôl drwg yst*ryw* gyngor,	[7]	
Ni saif ar ffordd troseddwyr *ffôl*,	[8]	
Nid eiste'n *stôl* y gwatwor.	[7]	
Canwn iddo glod a *mawl*	[7]	*Awdl Gywydd*:
Y *sawl* sy ddeffoledig;	[7]	Huw Dafydd, 'Carol Nadolig'; 1520)
Na ollyngwn byth dros *go'*	[7]	
I foli *fo* 'r Nadolig.	[7]	
The man is blest that hath not lent	[8]	Common Metre:
to wicked men his ear,	[6]	Thomas Sternhold, Psalm 1
Nor led his life as sinners do,	[8]	
nor sat in scorner's chair.	[6]	

Figure 4: Prys's setting of Psalm 1, 'Y sawl ni rodia'. The tune is now usually referred to as 'Song 67' and is attributed to Orlando Gibbons, although it made its first-ever appearance (without attribution) here in *Llyfr y Psalmau* (1621).

We can see from the juxtaposed texts that English common metre and Welsh *mesur salm* are not identical, not least because lines 2 and 4 in the English are one syllable shorter than in the Welsh pattern, and because the rhyme scheme is different. But their overall similarity makes the sharing of one and the same tune perfectly possible. The only modification required is to double the last note of the melody in the second and fourth lines to accommodate the extra syllable in the Welsh. No surprise, then, that Prys's psalter contains mostly very well known common metrical tunes that originated in England (or perhaps Scotland). Several of the tunes are still popular among congregations today – including 'Martyrs', 'Windsor or Eaton', 'Low Dutch', 'Oxford' and 'Cambridge'.

Congregational singing in the Welsh parish church thus surely escalated from the 1620s, though its roots lay a good deal earlier – some Welsh congregations were evidently singing together, albeit in English, from the later 1560s, and metrical translations of some psalms in Welsh seem to have been circulating informally by the mid 1590s, if not earlier. Partly by chance, these Welsh texts had an affinity both with indigenous vernacular folk poetry and with the psalms translated by Sternhold and Hopkins and published by John Day. But the tunes sung by the Welsh people in this context were very largely, if not exclusively, imported from the other side of the border.

In all of this, choice of suitable metre and melody were inseparable considerations if the people were indeed 'to sing together in unison at the same time in church', as Morris Kyffin had requested. The combination of verse patterns and simple melody chosen by Edmwdn Prys and Edward Kyffin before him, suggests that both were driven by the

idea of producing something that would be acceptable both to the unlettered and to a more sophisticated, educated circle. Thankfully, Prys's psalter still has the edge over its English counterpart: he was undeniably a better poet than Thomas Sternhold, John Hopkins and their colleagues, and at his hand the Welsh common metre, *mesur salm*, is transformed into something fine and flexible. *Llyfr y Psalmau* is justifiably seen as a landmark in Welsh literature – indeed it is the first printed book in the Welsh language to contain music – but it also had the potential to transfer parish worship by offering the Welsh people a chance to sing the psalms in their own language.

Fittingly, we conclude by singing Prys's setting of psalm 121, matched with a tune from *Llyfr y Psalmau* that is now usually referred to as 'St Mary's' or 'Hackney' (Figure 5). It is one of only four tunes in the 1621 book that had never appeared in print before, and it was published in no other volume for another fifty years, when John Playford included it in his *Psalmes and Hymnes in Solemn Musick of Foure Parts* (1671).

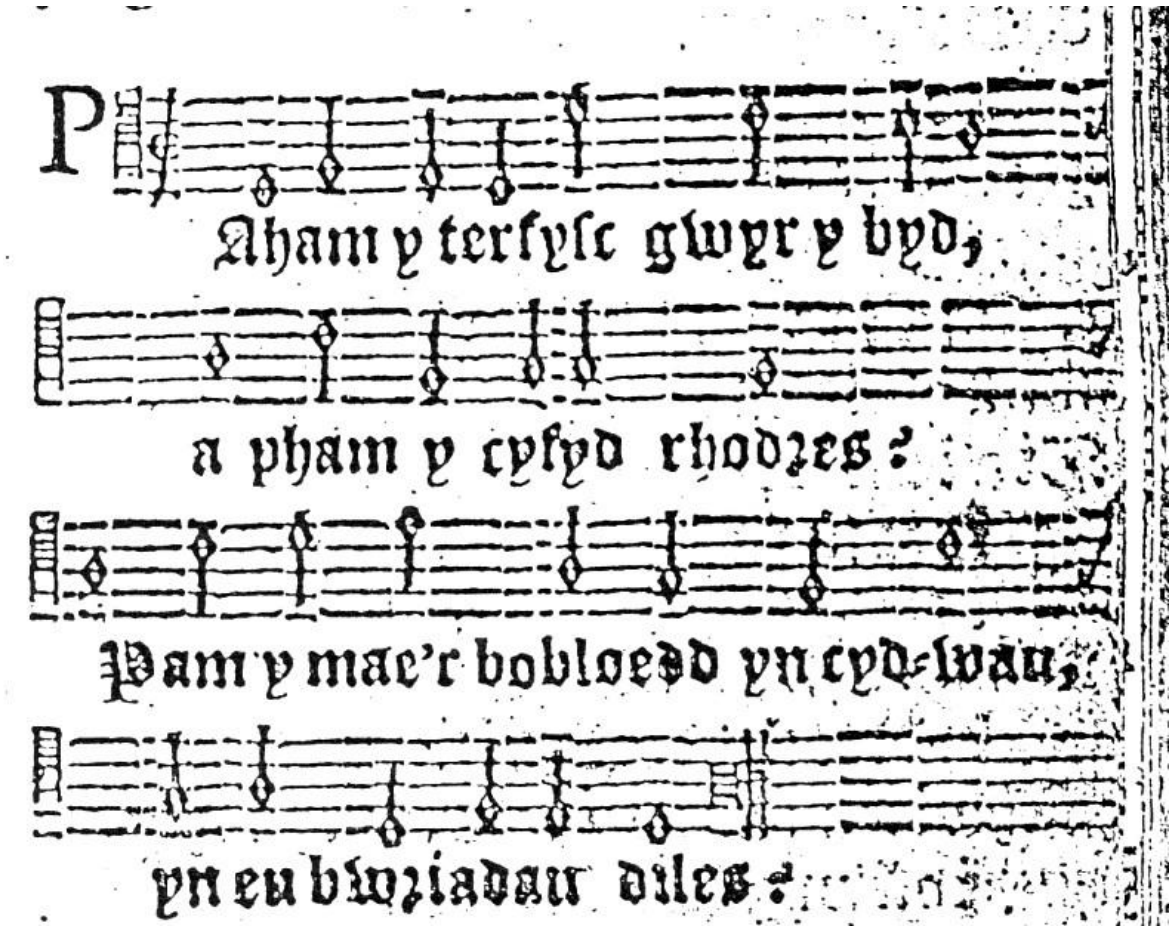


Figure 5: The tune later known as 'St Mary's' or 'Hackney', here making its first-known appearance in Prys's *Llyfr y Psalmau* (1621), matched with Psalm 2.

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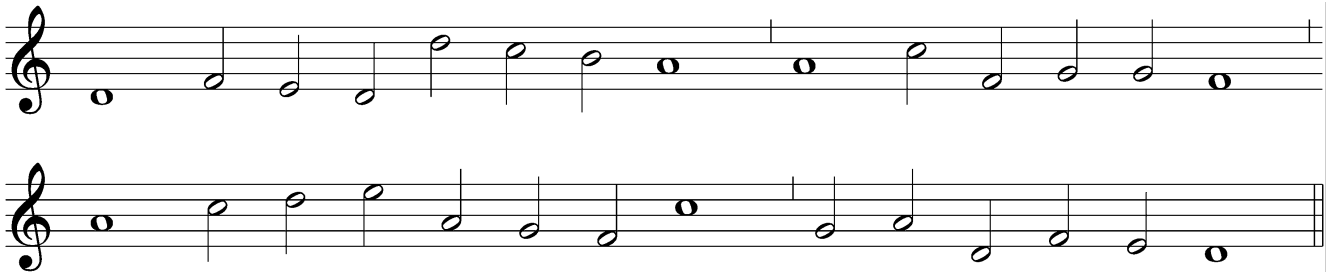

‘St Mary’s’ or ‘Hackney’ (Common Metre, 8686): Tune no. 2, transcribed direct from *Llyfr y Psalmau* (1621)

Salm 121 (Mesur Salm, 8787)

Disgwyliaf o’r mynyddoedd draw:
Ble daw im help ’wyllysgar?
Yr Arglwydd, rhydd im gymorth gref,
hwn a wnaeth nef a daear.

Dy droed i lithro, ef nis gad,
A’th Geidwad fydd heb huno;
Wele dy Geidwad, Israel lân,
Heb hun na hepian arno.

Ar dy law ddehau mae dy Dduw,
Yr Arglwydd yw dy Geidwad;
Dy lygru ni chaiff haul y dydd,
A’r nos nid rhydd i’r lleuad.

Yr Iôn a’th geidw rhag pob drwg
A rhag pob cilwg anfad;
Cei fynd a dyfod byth yn rhwydd:
Yr Arglwydd fydd dy Geidwad.

Edmwnd Prys (1544–1623), *Llyfr y Salmau* (1621)

Psalm 121 (Common Metre, 8686)

I to the hills will lift mine eyes,
from whence doth come mine aid?
My safety cometh from the Lord,
who heav’n and earth hath made.

Thy foot he’ll not let slide, nor will
he slumber that thee keeps.
Behold, he that keeps Israel,
he slumbers not, nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade
on thy right hand doth stay:
The moon by night thee shall not smite,
nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul; he shall
preserve thee from all ill.
Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep for ever will.

The Scottish Psalter, 1929 edition