

PROGRAMME

Reading: **Mellstock Gallery**

Under the Greenwood Tree by Thomas Hardy

Quire: **Psalm 100**

Joseph Watts of Fenny Compton (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **Dick in Love**

Under the Greenwood Tree by Thomas Hardy

Quire: **Deryn Du**

Trad. Arr. Paul Guppy (*Folk*)

Reading: **The New Pa'son**

Under the Greenwood Tree by Thomas Hardy

Quire: **Giberalter**

W. J. White of St. Albans (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **Gallery vs Nave**

Under the Greenwood Tree by Thomas Hardy

Quire: **Psalm 40**

Joseph Watts of Fenny Compton (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **Fancy Makes Her Debut**

Under the Greenwood Tree by Thomas Hardy

Quire: **The Good Old Way**

Trad. (*Folk/West Gallery*)

Reading: **Enclosure is Mooted**

Hawthorn Hedge Country by Fred Archer

Quire: **Psalm 9**

William Knapp (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **The Effects of Enclosure**

Hawthorn Hedge Country by Fred Archer

Quire: **Jordan**

Trad. (*Folk*)

Reading: **Bredon Hill**

A E Housman

Quire: **Psalm 15th** (Bishop's Castle - Funeral Psalm)

John Symons (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **Richard Surman Ties a Knot**

Hawthorn Hedge Country by Fred Archer

Quire: **Burton Bradstock** (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **From the Diary of Parson James Woodforde
1740 - 1803**

Quire: **Spanking Rodger**

James Nuttall (*West Gallery*)

Reading: **From the Diary of Parson James Woodforde
1740 - 1803**

Quire: **Old Sye**

Thomas Healey (*Catch*)

Reading: **Saturday 7th May 1870**

The Diary of Francis Kilvert

Quire: **One May Morning Early**

Trad. (*Folk*)

Reading: **Sunday**

Cider with Rosie by Laurie Lee

Quire: **Hail Shining Morn**

Trad. (*Folk*)



Music and story-telling to take you back to a bygone age

with actor Phil Smith

About the Show

"The gallery of Mellstock Church looked down upon and knew the habits of the nave to its remotest peculiarity, and had an intensive stock of exclusive information about it; whilst the nave knew nothing of the gallery folk, as gallery folk, beyond their loud-sounding minims and chest notes. Such topics as that the clerk was always chewing tobacco except at the moment of crying amen; that he had a dust-hole in his pew; that during the sermon certain young daughters of the village had left off caring to read anything so mild as the marriage service for some years, and now regularly studied the one which chronologically follows it; that a pair of lovers touched fingers through a knot-hole between their pews in the manner ordained by their great exemplars, Pyramus and Thisbe; that Mrs Ledlow, the farmer's wife, counted her money and reckoned her weeks' marketing expenses during the first lesson – all news to those below – were stale subjects here."

So wrote Thomas Hardy in *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Tonight's programme views life in the rural parishes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries from the lofty vantage point of the church singing gallery. All human life is here: love, enmity, longing, regret, religion, politics, nostalgia and gentle rustic humour.

Please check our website for events, concerts & workshops, or ring 01497 847676

www.villagequire.org.uk

© 2010 The Village Quire

About the Music

West Gallery Music – is energetic, joyful, no-nonsense stuff that is great fun to sing. This is what you would have heard in rural parish churches in the 18th and early 19th centuries. West Gallery music was associated with the singing schools that sprang up all over the land at this time. Church authorities had become dissatisfied with the way in which the psalms were sung by congregations. These singing schools were intended to set matters to rights in this respect. Why is it called 'West Gallery' music? Well, at this point in history much of the floor space of the typical parish church was either rented out or owned by more or less wealthy parishioners. Where, then, to house the choir? The answer was to build a gallery at the tower or west end of the church, hence: 'west' gallery.

Folk Song – the oral tradition is very difficult to pin down, tunes being learnt by ear and passed on from one singer to the next. The tunes in our programme have been arranged for choirs to sing by modern arrangers writing in a style not unlike that of West Gallery music.

Catches – a catch is a type of round. They were popular in glee clubs where catch singing was: '... unthinkable without a supply of liquor to hand.' Catches were sometimes rather rude!

About the Quire



The core repertoire of The Village Quire is West Gallery music but with forays into other related styles of folk polyphony from time to time, singing without instrumental accompaniment.

We sing 'three-to-a-part' SATB like so many of the 18th century village quires. We do not sing in costume but do include readings intended to set the music in a social and historical context.

Our concerts are typically for church, chapel and charity fundraising events, village feast days, beer festivals, folk clubs ... and one reception for the Archbishop of Canterbury!

The Village Quire



About the Readings

Our readings come from the pens of a rather diverse group of authors.

Fred Archer was described as 'The plain man's historian of village life'. The local history of the Vale of Evesham was Archer's area of research. This he presented in novels written in warm, humorous prose. Vivid characters act out their roles in a setting which, whilst undeniably nostalgic is never cloyingly so.

Parson James Woodforde held the living of Weston Longeville in Norfolk from 1774 until his death in 1803. He was a disarmingly unselfconscious diarist, presenting the minutiae of his thoughts, feelings and actions without varnish or 'spin'. We get to see Woodforde, 'warts and all', and we cannot help but like the man.

Thomas Hardy wrote about rural parish life in the early years of the nineteenth century – years just before the novelist's birth. Hardy is a particularly apt addition to our list as his Father, Uncle and Grandfather were all members of the Stinsford Parish Quire. West Gallery music was in his blood!

A. E. Housman is probably best known for his fin de siècle collection of poems: *A Shropshire Lad*. The verse is, for the most part, melancholy in tone which seems to have suited Edwardian tastes. Cover-to-cover, *A Shropshire Lad*, is a pretty gloomy read. If you just want to dip in, however, and you fancy 'a bit of a weepy', then *Bredon Hill* is hard to beat.

Rev. Francis Kilvert was curate at Saint Michael's Church, Clyro, near Hay-on-Wye, between 1865 and 1872. Since the Village Quire practice only a stone's throw from Kilvert's old parish, we had to include him in our programme. There are passages in *Kilvert's Diary* that have a self-consciously literary feel to them. These are flights of stylistic fancy which one supposes must have been written purely for his own entertainment. Be this as it may, our excerpt here is truly rhapsodic. We couldn't resist the local reference to the great stone of Llowes Churchyard as Phil only lives about five hundred yards away. The great stone lives in the church nowadays. Perhaps the idea of it wandering about is not so fanciful after all!

Laurie Lee grew up in the Cotswold village of Slad. Although he was born some seventy years after the demise of the last of the west gallery quires, Laurie Lee writes about a way of life which would not have seemed so very strange to the ancients who once inhabited those old galleries. Laurie Lee's prose is delightfully vivid and as jam-packed full of images as poetry.