

## Dr Charles Burney and Hymn Tunes

by A. P. Woolrich

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Dr Charles Burney wrote only a small number of hymn tunes and other sacred music despite having been a parish church organist at St Dionis's Backchurch, London 1749-1751, St Margaret's, King's Lynn, Norfolk 1751-1758 and organist at Chelsea Hospital London from 1783<sup>1</sup>. These are to be found in Nicholas Temperley's *Hymn Tune Index*, 1997<sup>2</sup>

1) He wrote nine tunes for the Revd Martin Madan, *The Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes Sung at the chapel of the Lock Hospital*, 1769<sup>3</sup>

*Cirencester*

*Dartmouth*

*Dialogue Hymn* — This may be found on Burney links page. Scroll to No 6 for the piece.

*Fordwich*

*Mansfield*

*Milbank*

*Nativity* — This was arranged by W. H. Kerridge, and featured in the Burney Bicentenary celebration concert at Chelsea Hospital (11 April 1926). This may be found on Burney links page.

The Australian National Library has a lithographed score *Hymn for Christmas Day*, published 1864 and ascribed to "Miss Burney", which is in fact the Nativity Hymn in the *Lock Hospital Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes*.<sup>4</sup> Thanks to my friend Frances Webb of Bridgwater, for checking the scores.

*Wickham*

According to Frances Burney, *Burney Memoirs*, 1 p 202, A Dr Hawksworth wrote a hymn for the children of the Foundling Hospital which CB set to music. This has not been traced, but is presumably among those listed here.

2) Thomas Williams, musician. *Psalmodia Evangelica: a collection of psalms & hymn-tunes, in three parts, for public worship; with words adapted to each, comprehending every metre in use, properly arranged, & the whole correctly figured for the organ. To which are prefixed, a complete introduction & an historical essay on church music.* — Edition II, corrected. 1789 .

Hymns by Burney

*Fordwich*

*Milbank*

This hymn book included *Truro* anonymously, but Dobson and Gauntlett erroneously ascribed it to Burney in 1864<sup>5</sup> and this has been repeated in numerous hymn books since.

3) Rev. George Hay Drummond and Edward Miller Mus. Doct, *The Psalms of David for the use of parish churches*, 1790 the words selected from the version of Tate and Brady

Hymns by Burney:

*Lynn*

*St. Margaret's*

4) Samuel Tenney, *The Hallowell Collection of Sacred Music*. Hallowell: E. Goodale, 1817.

Hymns by Burney:

*Chelsea*

*Harborough*

All the above hymn books have been digitised, and the relevant pages have been copied and reproduced on this website.

5) Burney also wrote in John Bland, *Bland's Collection of Divine Music*. . . . *The words chiefly from*

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*D<sup>r</sup> Watts*. London: J. Bland, [c.1794].

*Before Morning Service*

*Before Evening Service*

These words were composed by Burney's friend Revd. William Mason, (1724-1797), from 1762 Canon and Precentor of York, and first published in *The Protestant Dissenters Magazine*, May 1796. p 194 <sup>6</sup> Dr Lonsdale noted a letter in the *Gentlemans Magazine*, December 1803 where the hymn was mentioned and the words included but no score.<sup>7</sup>

They were later published titled *Sabbath Morning Hymn* and *Sabbath Evening Hymn* in James Philo (of Swaffham, Norfolk) *A Selection of Psalms & Hymns for the Use of Country Congregations*, [Swaffham?]: [c.1817] This also included *Sibton*, which has been ascribed to Burney in the Hymn Tune index.

Neither of these hymn books have been digitised.

According to the *Hymn Tune Index*, Burney's hymn tunes appeared 168 times in a series of British and American hymn books printed before 1820. They would have been further used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and perhaps even now, but to what extent is not known. They do not appear in modern hymnals used in Anglican parish worship, such as the latest edition of *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, newly titled *Common Praise* (2001). The false ascription of Burney to *Truro* has now been dropped from it.

Temperely noted <sup>8</sup> *Of all the composers represented Burney is the most operatic in melody. He does not shrink from theatrical gestures or elaborate melismas approaching coloratura. Unlike most, he pays attention to the later verses of a hymn sometimes providing alternative notes to accommodate irregular stress patterns.*

It is a pity that Burney's hymn tunes have been forgotten, for the two that have been placed online in recent years are interesting <sup>9</sup> Maybe something might be done to resurrect them in time for Charles Burney's Tercentenary in April 2026.

## Notes

- 1 Samuel J. Rogel, "Charles Burney and Sacred Music", *The Hymn*. New York: Hymn Society of America, 1975-76, pp. 50-56.
- 2 Nicholas Temperley, *The Hymn Tune Index: A Census of English-Language Hymn Tunes in Printed Sources from 1535 to 1820*. With the assistance of Charles G. Manns and Joseph Herl. 4 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997. Online at <https://hymntune.library.uiuc.edu/default.asp>
- 3 Nicholas Temperley, "The Lock Hospital and Its Music", *Journal of the Musical Association*, 1993, Vol 118, No 1 (1993) pp. 42-77.
- 4 Burney, Charles, 1726-1814 & Degotardi, Johann Nepomuk, 1823-1882 (1864). *The hymn for Christmas Day "Hark, the herald angels sing" / by Miss Burney*. W.J. Johnson & Co., [engraved by]. Degotardi
- 5 Dobson and Gauntlett, *Tunes Old and New* 1864. c.f. Scholes *The Great Dr Burney*, 1948, II p 349-50
- 6 Online: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=chi.097643661&view=1up&seq=207&q1=mason>
- 7 *Gentleman's Magazine*, lxxiii (Dec 1803), p. 1140
- 8 Nicholas Temperley, "The Lock Hospital and Its Music", *Journal of the Musical Association*, 1993, Vol 118, No 1 (1993) p. 70
- 9 *Dialogue Hymn and Nativity Hymn*, from the *Lock Hospital Collection of Psalm and Hymn Tunes*.