

Hymns and Hymn Writers Tour.

Discover the stories behind many of the hymns that we know and love so well and visit places associated with their writers. At the same time enjoy beautiful English countryside and some attractive small towns and villages as well as three great cathedral cities. We will also experience the great English church choral tradition when we attend Evensong at two of the cathedrals. This tour includes some major tourist sites but also some special places of the beaten track.

Day 1. Yattendon and Stanford in the Vale.

Your group will be picked up from Heathrow airport or your hotel and we will travel to our hotel in Oxford. On route we will make a stop in Yattendon associated with Robert Bridges who made one of the most valuable contributions to hymnody of the 20th Century with his hymns and translations. He published the Yattendon Hymnal in 1899. We visit the Parish church where he was a member and trained the choir. Then we visit Stanford in the Vale and the Parish Church where Rev Christopher Wordsworth who wrote 'Alleluia! Allelullia! hearts to heaven' was Vicar. Overnight in Oxford.

Day 2. The Cotswolds.

Today we explore the Cotswolds which is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We visit Down Ampney and see the Old Vicarage, birthplace of Ralph Vaughan Williams and All Saints Church where his father was rector. Ralph Vaughan Williams composed a tune for the hymn "Come Down, O Love Divine" which he called "Down Ampney" in honour of his birthplace. He was the musical editor of the English Hymnal which was edited by Percy Dearmer and he encouraged Gustav Holst to write several tunes for hymns in it. We also go to Cheltenham where we visit the home of the composer Gustav Holst. Holst wrote the tune Thaxted for 'I Vow to thee my country' and 'O God beyond all Praising' was written by Michael Perry to be sung to this tune. Overnight in Cheltenham.

Day 3 Monkland and Ludlow

We explore the Welsh Marshes along the boarder between England and Wales. First we visit Monkland where Sir Henry Baker was Vicar of the Parish church. He was chairman of the committee responsible for Hymns Ancient and Modern. He wrote 'The King of Love my Shepherd is' and 'Praise ye the Lord. Our lunch stop will be Ludlow a beautiful, typically English market town. Then we continue to Bristol where we visit Charles Wesley's house. The city has connections with other hymn writers too. We End the day with a visit to Burrington Combe which is said to have inspired Augustus Toplady to write 'Rock of Ages Cleft for Me. Overnight in Bristol.

Day 4 Lewtrenchard Brixham. (overnight Exeter).

Today we visit Devon. We start the day with a visit to Leutrenchard associated with Sabine Baring- Gould who wrote the hymn 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. We will see Lew House where he lived and St Peter's Church where he was rector. In the afternoon we go to the delightful fishing village of Brixham. Henry Francis Lyte was curate of the Parish Church in Lower Brixham. He wrote "Abide with Me" and 'Praise My Soul the King of Heaven for this congregation. Overnight in Exeter.

Day 5 Wells and Oxford

We travel first to Wells England's smallest city with one of it's most beautiful cathedrals. There will be a guided tour of the cathedral. Bishop Thomas Ken was Bishop of Bath and Well,s he is best known for 'Praise God from whom all blessings flow' Then we continue to Oxford where we will do a walking tour of this University city and learn about the University, the city and some great hymn

writers who studied at the university. We will also focus on the Oxford movement and its contribution to hymnody. Overnight in Oxford.

Day 6 York

We travel to York, a fascinating historic city which still has its old city walls. we enjoy a guided tour of York Minster and attend Evensong. Another reason for including York is St Michael -le-Belfry Church where Graham Kendrick writer of many worship songs including 'The Servant King' served as Musical Director. Overnight in York.

Day 7 Cambridge and Norwich

Today we visit Cambridge, several hymn writers were educated at Cambridge University. We explore the city on a walking tour. Then we travel to Norwich for a tour of the Cathedral. Timothy Dudley-Smith, recognised as one of the foremost English hymn writers of today was Archdeacon of Norwich and Bishop of Thetford (Suffragan Bishop for the Norwich Diocese) so he knew this cathedral well. We attend Evensong. Overnight in Norwich.

Day 8 Olney and to London

We break our journey to London by visiting Olney and Windsor. This morning we celebrate two great Hymn writers William Cowper and John Newton. At Olney we visit the Cowper and Newton Museum and see the house (exterior only) where John Newton composed "Amazing Grace". Then we continue to Windsor where we will see the parish church where Samuel Stone was rector when he wrote the 'The Church's one foundation' and we also take the opportunity to visit Windsor Castle, official residence and favourite home of Her Majesty the Queen. Overnight in London

Day 9 London

Our final full day is spent in London. We will visit Bunhill Fields burial ground where Isaac Watts is buried. Then we visit St Paul's Cathedral. In the afternoon we can visit Westminster Abbey or the Tower of London or it can be a free afternoon for members of the group to discover London on their own. Overnight in London.

Day 10 For groups from abroad a transfer to the airport will be included for a morning flight.