

# The Wreck of the Deutschland

Thou mastering me  
God! giver of breath and bread;  
World's strand, sway of the sea;  
Lord of living and dead;  
Thou hast bound bones and veins in me, fastened, me flesh  
And after it almost unmade, what with dread,  
Thy doing: and dost thou touch me afresh?  
Over again I feel thy finger and find thee.

**Gerard Manley Hopkins**  
1844-1889



Gerard Manley Hopkins

Gerard Manley Hopkins was one of those poets whose acclaim and fame came posthumously. In his early days, he destroyed all of his poetry to date and only started to write again later. He became a Jesuit priest and a follower of John Henry Newman who offered him work as a teacher.

The first stanza of his long poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland* was one of the songs we sang at the Theological College in Salisbury which I started to attend 40 years ago in 1971. I remember singing it and being impressed both by the words, which by any account are strikingly individual and full of surprises, and the music which was strong, committed and tuneful.

Earlier this year, I tried to find the tune for these words. I looked on the internet, of course, but nowhere could I find any reference to the tune I had learned in Salisbury. So, I started to put down on manuscript paper the notes of the tune as I could remember them. Then, with a special occasion in mind, I decided to try and arrange the music for a choir, with Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass parts.

The special occasion was Holy Cross Sunday, 2011 and so, just before the start of the summer holidays, our church musical director Krystyna Palamarchuk put the notes onto her Sibelius music-writing programme and we printed the results. The Choir had a first run through on 22nd July and it is hoped that the piece will be performed for the first time on Sunday 18th September.

As always with my music writing, I find it a lot more difficult than writing poetry and prose, and I will need perhaps to change the harmonies before the final edition, but I hope that you will enjoy the words and music on the day as I will, feeling the long and strong link with my student days as I started out my long road to 37 years of ordained ministry which I completed on 29th June, 2011.