

March 4th

Memory Verse:

Gather my saints together unto me;
those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

Psalm 50:5

For notes about this verse see the lesson for March 1st.

Keeping up your diary¹

I hope that by now you are confirmed diary writers and journal keepers. If not start today! If your diary has lapsed take it up again – don't worry about the gap. To inspire you here are two diary entries for today. The first is from the American wildlife artist John James Audubon. We will be finding out all about him in the lesson for 27th May. In 1827 he was staying in Edinburgh where on **March 4th** he had a disagreeable ride through the snowy streets. He wrote:

I was trundled in a sedan² chair to church. I had never been in a sedan chair before, and I like to try, as well as see, all things on the face of this strange world of ours; but so long as I have two legs and feet below them, never will I again enter one of these machines, with their quick, short, up-and-down, swinging motion, resembling the sensations felt during the great earthquake in Kentucky.

More about John Audubon on 27th May.

We have had extracts from the diary of John Evelyn in January³ and there is more to come in June and August.⁴ On **March 4th** 1656 Evelyn was invited by a friend to hear Thomas Baltzar (1630-1663), from Lubeck in North Germany, give a violin recital. He noted the event in his diary, remarking on the fact that the young musician, when confronted with pieces of music he had not seen before, did at first sight, “with ravishing sweetness and improvements, play them off, to the astonishment of our best masters.”

So well did Thomas play that the other musicians present, “flung down their instruments as acknowledging victory”. Evelyn concludes: “I stand amazed that God should give so great perfection to so young a person.”

Baltzar made his home in England and was employed by King Charles II as one of his “Four and Twenty Violins”. Those of you who learn to play musical instruments: notice the importance of good sight-reading. It is hard work to achieve skill in this area but very rewarding when you can eventually “play off” anything you are given. I do not recommend, however, especially in ABRSM⁵ sight-reading tests, that you add “improvements” as you go along! What did Evelyn mean by this?

In Thomas Baltzar's day, composers expected performers to add ornaments and embellishments to the music they wrote. This is especially the case in slow movements where the notes provided by the composer could be little more than a skeleton for a skilled performer to decorate according to well understood patterns. Today performers of music from this period have to learn how to do this in the style of the time.⁶

1 Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today* Volume 1, available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive. <https://motherscompanion.weebly.com>.

2 See the lesson for 11th January for details of sedan chairs.

3 See the lessons for 18th and 24th January.

4 See the lessons for 3rd and 16th June and 8th August.

5 Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music.

6 If you are interested in finding out how this is done, there are some examples played here:

A musical rediscovery to listen to⁷



Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1741) was born on 4th March. His music is very popular today and there can be few people who have not heard at least part of his set of concertos “The Four Seasons” – if only by accident as sections from these works are often used as “hold” music for frustrated telephone callers! If you have never heard one of these four concertos properly find a *good* recording and listen today.⁸

In 1703 Vivaldi became music teacher at the *Ospedale della Pietà* in Venice. This was an orphanage and school for girls which had a famous choir and orchestra. For over thirty years Vivaldi helped train the girls and wrote music for them to play. Many of the girls were talented musicians and for them Vivaldi wrote solo concertos and concertos for groups of soloists. Vivaldi died in 1741 and his music was forgotten. We do not even know for certain now if the old picture on the left *is* Vivaldi or not! The *Ospedale* eventually closed and today no one even knows where exactly it was in Venice. What happened to all that beautiful music Vivaldi had written when the *Ospedale* closed?

In the 1920s a boarding school in Piedmont found itself short of money for a building project. In the school library was a dusty collection of very old bound volumes of music. Could they perhaps be sold for some cash that would ease the situation?

To find out what they might be worth the school contacted the National Library at Turin and were put in touch with Dr. Alberto Gentili, professor of music history at Turin University. Dr Gentili naturally needed to see the volumes before he could make an assessment and so the school packed some of them up into crates and sent them off to him. When he opened the first crate Dr Gentili was staggered by what he found: volume after volume of music by Vivaldi! He was looking at a national treasure.

Almost shaking with emotion, Dr Gentili wondered what he should do. If he put a figure on the scores and the school sold them on the open market to collectors, the collection would be dispersed, perhaps sold abroad and might not be available to musicologists for transcription, publication and performance. At all costs, he decided, the precious manuscripts must stay in Turin. What about the government? Could they help?

At this time, Italy was ruled by the Fascist dictator, Mussolini. Dr. Gentili was afraid that if the government got involved the manuscripts would not remain in Turin. If the government bought them, the government would select the institution to house them.

Luigi Torri, head of the Turin Library was very keen to have the manuscripts for the library but it had no funds with which to purchase them from the school. Dr Gentili therefore, preserving at the same time the utmost secrecy, for fear of losing the manuscripts to another buyer, looked round for a private donor who might put up the money as a gift to the library. He found a rich gentleman, Roberto Foà, recently bereaved of a small son. He was willing to provide the funds and the collection would bear his son's name.

The purchase was complete and in due course the 97 volumes of music made their way to the library where Dr Gentili could examine them in detail. As he did so he made a disturbing discovery. The volumes had been bound haphazardly. They often ended in the middle of a piece or,

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtsH4Yi_r38&t=1s

7 Information from <https://ibmp.it/en/the-history-of-manuscripts/>, <https://www.baroquemusic.org/bqxvivaldi2.html> and other sources.

8 Winter is performed well here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZPdk5GaIDjo>

frustratingly it appeared, just *before* the end. It became obvious that there were volumes missing from the collection and many of the pieces of music were incomplete. Where were the other volumes then?

As he worked his way through the collection, Dr Gentili discovered that it had formed part of a larger library owned by the Genoese Count, Giacomo Durazzo (1717-1794), Austrian Ambassador in Venice. He set to work to try to find any surviving members of the Count's family. Perhaps the library had been split up between the Count's heirs on his death. He eventually tracked down a survivor who had the volumes in his possession but it took until 1930 to persuade him to sell the volumes and to negotiate a price – not to mention once more trying to raise the sum of money involved for the library to make the purchase. This time an industrialist, Filippo Giordano, came up with the funds. The volumes were reunited once more as the Foà-Giordano Collection. But the difficulties were not over yet. Study and publication of the music was begun but then the Second World War intervened and the project was put on hold.

At the end of the war Italy was in chaos. Mussolini was dead – shot by Italian Partisans – Italy was invaded by Germany and then liberated by the Allies.⁹ Nevertheless, after the liberation of Italy, Antonio Fanna, a young businessman who was fond of Vivaldi's music, financed the setting up of



an Institute for the promotion of Vivaldi's music with the help of Ricordi, Italy's foremost music publishing firm. Ricordi's presses had been bombed, and their warehouses burnt down but slowly but surely Vivaldi's music was republished and began to be heard first in Italy and then more widely in Europe.

Then in 1951 came the Festival of Britain. This was a cultural event designed to raise the spirits of the country despite the austerity and rationing which continued after the war. The brand new Royal Festival Hall was opened on the South Bank of the Thames and presented a whole season of Vivaldi's music. London concert goers were charmed. Vivaldi had come to stay – at last!

Map work and something to make¹⁰

Get out your atlas for this next story and look up all the places highlighted in green. Before you start looking at Scotland, you could look up Venice, Piedmont and Turin (the capital of Piedmont) to trace the travels of Vivaldi's music.

On March 4th 1890 a new bridge opened in Scotland. It carried the railway line from Edinburgh to Aberdeen. If you look at the map you will see that between these two places, just north of Edinburgh, is a wide river estuary which the railway line must cross. If you are observant you might notice that there is another great estuary to be crossed between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, the mouth of the River Tay. The construction of *that* bridge and what befell it is a story in itself worth looking up in your own encyclopedias and reference books. All we need to note here is that the original designs for the bridge across the Firth (as the Scots call an estuary) of Forth were made by an engineer called Thomas Bouch (1822-1880) but due to

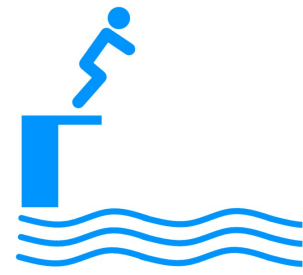


⁹ We had a story from this period of Italy's history on 24th February.

¹⁰ Information from *Oxford Junior Encyclopedia* (1951) Vol. 4 pp. 162-3 and other sources.

what happened at the Tay Bridge which he designed, his plans were abandoned and a new design was adopted.

The Forth Bridge still stands today (unlike the one over the Tay) and is a monument to Victorian engineering. It consists of three huge cantilevers, which, with their connecting girder spans, make up a total length of just over a mile.



and so on.¹¹

But what is a cantilever? A Cantilever is a beam attached only at one end. A good example is a diving board. A cantilever is something you can have fun making at home. You can use Lego or plain wooden construction blocks (the type that come in a Jenga or “tumbling towers” set would be good) or any other construction materials that you are allowed to use round the house. The challenge is to see how far you can extend you cantilever. You can place a flat beam (such as a wooden ruler) projecting over a table edge and weight it at the other end, for example. Then you can extend the beam by laying another beam on top of it projecting beyond it, add more weights

When you have done this experiment you may think it does not look much like the Forth Bridge! This is partly because in the Forth Bridge, and others like it, each pier carries a *double-armed* cantilever. These are linked by a connecting girder. The links are constructed in such a way that no weight is transmitted from one cantilever to another.

To give it strength, the whole structure of the bridge is braced from end to end by a latticework of steel girders. This gives it its instantly recognisable shape.

Your atlas might also show, in the middle of the Firth, **Inchgarvie** Island. The exact siting of the bridge was designed so that the centre cantilever could be built on this island. Here many of the construction workers lived and here too was the site office for the work. For the bridge pillars many stones from the old castle that had been on the island were used. The other two Cantilevers had to be built in the water. This was done by means of caissons. These are large water-tight containers or cases in which the concrete foundations are laid under the water.

The Forth Bridge was also famous for being painted continuously to prevent it rusting. Since the process of painting the bridge takes three years, as soon as the painters were finished they had to begin again! However the continuous painting stopped in 2002 when a new type of paint containing glass was introduced. Further work, undertaken in 2011, meant that the bridge is not due to be repainted now for another 30 years.¹²

11 This is explained (rather breathlessly but at least without background “music”) here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=goMUBdIQrVA&t=4s>

12 For details see: <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/stories/safeguarding-the-forth-bridge/>