

WEXFORD CAROL

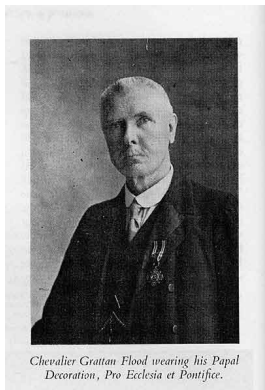
*Traditional Irish carol
arranged by Douglas Mears*

Instrumentation

Flute
Oboe
English Horn
Clarinet in A
Bassoon
3 Horns in F
Timpani
Percussion
*Finger cymbals, tambourine
suspended cymbal, mark tree*
Harp
Celesta
SATB Choir
Violin I
Violin II
Viola
Cello
Contrabass

Notes on the Text

The *Wexford Carol* is among the most beautiful of all Christmas carols and is thought to be one of the oldest still being sung today. The exact date of its origin is uncertain, but it is believed to date back several centuries. It is also not known who originally wrote the carol, but it came into prominence in the 19th century after William Grattan Flood (1857-1928) heard it sung by a local chorister.



At the time, Flood was the organist/choirmaster at St Aidan's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, Wexford. He immediately added the carol to his repertoire to be played for the local community. It was published in 1928, the year of his death, as No. 14 in the *Oxford Book of Carols*, edited by Percy Dearmer, Martin Shaw, and Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Since then, it has become widely known and beloved throughout the world. The text presents a moving account of Christ's birth, beginning with Mary and Joseph finding nowhere to stay in Bethlehem and ending with the Christ child's birth. Set in the mixolydian mode, the carol's tender, haunting melody radiantly complements the telling of the Nativity story.



*Good people all, this Christmastide,
Consider well, and bear in mind
What our good God for us has done,
In sending His beloved Son.
With Mary holy, we should pray
To God with love this Christmas Day.
In Bethlehem upon that morn
There was a blessed Messiah born.*

*The night before that happy tide
The noble Virgin and her guide
Were long time seeking up and down
To find a lodging in the town.
But mark how all things came to pass:
From every door repelled, Alas!
As long foretold, their refuge all
Was but a humble ox's stall.*

*Let all your songs and praises be
Unto His heav'nly majesty:
And evermore amongst our mirth,
Remember Christ our Savior's birth.
That night the Virgin Mary mild
Was safe deliver'd of a child;
According unto Heav'n's decree,
Man's sweet salvation for to be.*