



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Autumn 2006

Edington Parish News

GRAHAM SOUTHGATE is now back in the village having enjoyed three weeks' holiday in Australia ... lucky for some! Given that it must be very hot there, Michael Jones' timing in having a new working boiler in the church is particularly fortuitous.

Industry is a recurring theme in the village this autumn—a party of volunteers from the village and congregation will be clearing much of the overgrowth around Ralph's Seat which should make for better views next year.

The youngsters of the village have been hard at work raising money for Maram, the young girl whose education they fund via the Bible Lands charity. Their Smartie tube collections this year have raised £331, £144 more than the necessary. The extra money will be used to help under privileged children in the Lebanon.

Of the home-team servers, Emma Watts continues at Agricultural college and her sister Amy has now begun her teaching training degree at Bath University. Laura Simms and Emily Peplar continue their studies and Anna has now graduated.

It is with great sadness that we have heard of the death of Betty King at the age of 95. She was the most wonderful supporter of the Festival over the years, and all of us associated with the Festival will count it as a privilege to have known her. Her funeral took place in the Priory Church on November 11th.

Chairman's Report

THE CHAIRMAN was pleased to report that last year had been another one in which the Association had acted as an effective partner to the Festival. He drew attention to the following areas:

Website The Edington Festival website is now up and running and its address is www.edingtonfestival.org. Thanks were expressed to Nick Flower for his work on this project and for his support to the Association in general.

Newsletter The Association newsletter was now being produced regularly in a smart format.

Schola CD The recording of Gregorian chant made in 2003 by the Schola Cantorum had been supported by the Association and very quickly went into profit. All profits from

this recording go directly back to the Association. A second pressing is underway.

New Service Booklets New service booklets were now in place for the 2006 Festival after the prototype version in 2005. They contain orders and full texts for all services during the Festival week. The Association provided funds for the printing of the books and acknowledged the large amount of work which went into the preparation from clergy, directors, and other significant supporters of the Festival.

2005/6 Commission The Association was proud once again to have been able to support the Festival by funding the 2005 Commission by Judith Bingham and had agreed also to provide funds for the 2006 Commission by Antony Pitts. The Association Committee regards this as a vital and important part of the Festival week.

Insurance After careful investigation, the Festival and its participants are now covered by insurance against any potential mishaps. The Association had dealt with the finances in this matter.

News of one of our members

WE OFFER congratulations to one of our EMFA members, Adrian Scott of St Stephen's Church, Bournemouth, who has been appointed High Sheriff of Dorset for 2007.

Edington Music Festival 2006

AFTER THE HIGHLIGHTS of our 50th anniversary festival last year there could have been a noticeable anti-climax but this was certainly not the case. An interesting and challenging theme, the Gospel of St John and Jesus' 'I AM' sayings gave us an opportunity to experience some fine music and preaching of the usual high standard.

The choirs settled to their task quickly, and in particular the trebles of the Nave Choir were of a high standard and enabled Robert Quinney to appear more relaxed during rehearsals this year.

For many one of the highlights this year was the Wednesday Choral Evensong BBC broadcast. The introit *Before Abraham was, I AM* was a very successful Festival Association commission written by Antony Pitts. The anthem *Lord, thou hast been our refuge* by Ralph Vaughan Williams was given an exciting rendition.

This year the BBC recorded the Tuesday evening service of Solemn Evensong for the feast of St John the Baptist, scheduled for broadcast on 27 December. The canticles were the Thomas Tomkins Fifth Service and one of the anthems was the less familiar *All this time* by Sir William Walton.

Another highlight for many of us was another chance to sing John Barnard's hymn tune *Guiting Power*. This year John decided to step out of a singing role after thirty-two years but he was very much in evidence as part of the festival administration team.

This was Robert Quinney's last festival as Director of the Nave Choir. Matthew Martin will take over this role and a new festival organist will be added to the team next year.

Impressions of the festival

William Hare was a new member of this year's Schola Cantorum

IT WAS WITH A CERTAIN degree of trepidation that I arrived for the Edington Festival. Never having been before, I wasn't entirely sure what to expect.

I needn't have worried, of course. From the moment I arrived, the combination of a beautiful church and welcoming people indicated that this would be a fantastic week.

As a participant, I think that the Edington experience depends heavily on which of the three choirs you sing in. From the point of view of a new member of the Schola, the first thing that struck me was how brilliant its rehearsal room is. The belfry is an uplifting place to rehearse, with the sounds of the Nave Choir wafting through the floorboards and wonderful views over the Wiltshire countryside from the rooftop.

As the week went on, I started to get into the daily routine of services and rehearsals. The day starts early for the Schola—the rehearsal for Matins is at 8.30 a.m. (notwithstanding the odd alarm clock malfunction ...) I have developed a new respect for the monks whose music we were singing all week—they had to get up at 2.30 a.m. every day of the year, not just for one week!

Several people have expressed surprise when I explain that I spent a week singing nothing but plainsong for four services a day, and actually enjoyed it. But as I discovered, largely thanks to Andrew Carwood's brilliant leadership, the only way to appreciate plain-song properly is to immerse yourself in it.

Then you discover that, far from being a load of random notes strung together to sound vaguely 'modal', the composers were masters of the art of word-painting and imagery.

I feel very privileged to have taken part in this year's festival. It was a wonderful experience and one which I hope to repeat for many years.

A history of the Schola Cantorum

John Barnard, who sang in the Schola Cantorum for 27 years from 1979 to 2005, recounts the history of the Schola which celebrates 30 years of its existence in 2007

THE SCHOLA CANTORUM dates back to 1978. Peter McCrystal, its first director, had been invited to the festival in 1973 as a tenor in the Nave Choir, an experience which by all accounts gave him limited pleasure; and the following year he became Cantor to the Chancel Choir, a choir of men and boys from St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham which sang at the festival from 1974 to 1977. In 1978 he was invited to found the Schola Cantorum, a group of ten young men whose principal duty was to sing the offices of Matins and Compline.

Up to this point both had been sung by 'all present'. Matins had been a particularly unsatisfactory affair. Sung at either 8 a.m. or 8.30 a.m. (the time wandered back and forth perennially between 1971 and 1976) it eventually moved to 9 a.m. in 1977 and stayed there. 'Those present' were fundamentally the servers who were dragooned into singing. It was hardly a service that upheld the musical standards we associate with the Edington Festival.

Compline had fared somewhat better. Although the custom of singing Compline within a few minutes of the end of evensong was some years ahead of us—in the 1970s the choirs would eat supper in the village school between the two evening services—many festival members returned to the church for Compline in the chancel. It was an honour to be cantor for the evening, particularly on the final Saturday when there would be a particularly large gathering and the singing was lusty, if unrefined. Members of the congregation would sing along too. In some cases this was not a good idea!

In 1978 it was decided that both these offices should be sung by the Schola Cantorum, and the participation of 'all present' came to an end. This was not really an issue at Matins, but it was at Compline. People who had enjoyed singing were restricted to listening, and the quality of what they heard did not match the standard we currently enjoy. John Harper, then Festival Director, had clearly foreseen potential difficulties when he wrote in the Companion for that year: 'In the choral singing of the

offices (as indeed in all music of the festival) it is not the intention to exclude, but rather to involve by opening minds to new thoughts, to ponder in beauty, and so to pray.'

There was a perception amongst the Nave Choir men in those days that the Schola Cantorum was second-rate, and this only reinforced their resentment at being deprived of participation in Compline. For many years to come it was unknown for singers in the Nave Choir (and later the Consort) to attend Matins, and rare for them to come to week-night Compline.

I had been singing in the Nave Choir since 1974, but during the 1978 festival Peter McCrystal asked me whether I would consider joining the Schola Cantorum for the following year. Maybe he had perceived in me someone who was fundamentally 'on side'. Saying yes to Peter is a decision I have never regretted. And I believe it made a useful statement to my Nave Choir friends—that the Schola was deserving of support. (Incidentally, I am the only adult festival participant ever to move from the Nave Choir to the Schola.)

Compline was the first thing to come right. The office had a simple structure, repeated night after night, and we sang only the prescribed psalms for some years—psalms 4, 91 and 134. The Marian antiphon was invariably the simple but very beautiful *Salve Regina* which can be heard on the Schola Cantorum's compact disc of 2003. Nonetheless that gap between the main evening service and Compline—the one at 7.30, the other at 9.30—meant that attendance was not good, and choir and congregation could both be comfortably accommodated in the chancel with its glorious acoustic.

Fate intervened in 1983 when falling plasterwork in the chancel meant it could not be used during festival week. The Schola was devastated at having to sing from the crossing. But the reality was that the size of the Compline congregations rose, and by the end of the week it seemed inconceivable that we could return to the chancel the following year.

John Barnard will continue his history of the Schola, from the arrival of Geoffrey Webber as Festival Director in 1984, in the next issue of this newsletter

A Retrospective by Paul Rose PART III *The CLERGY continued ...*

HUMPHREY SOUTHERN, who contributed much to the Festival between 1998 and 2000 is a local, brought up in a beautiful house in Bratton, which has always been a most hospitable place for festival members. He is currently Team Rector and Rural Dean of Tisbury.

It was through his friendship with Humphrey that GEORGE BUSH first came to the festival in 1992. He was at the time on the staff of St John's College, Cambridge and is now Priest at St Mary le Bow in Cheapside.

JEREMY DAVIES, for many years now Precentor of Salisbury Cathedral, came in 1990 and 1991 and regularly since 1998. He has been anxious in the last two years to adapt the Edington Festival Eucharist liturgy, and its movements in particular, to attempt to make it simpler. For some years he managed a successful juggle by being Canon in residence at Salisbury in August whilst attending the festival several times.

JOHN STREETING came for part of the week from 1998 to 2004. He is both priest and composer, and many will remember his beautiful Responses with their rich harmonic palette.

ANGUS RITCHIE, who came for part of the week from 1999 to 2004, is Team Vicar in Plaistow.

CAROLYN HAMMOND served as curate and was then in charge at Gamlingay in the Diocese of Ely before becoming Dean of Caius College, Cambridge in 2005.

PETER MCGEARY was at All Saints Margaret Street from 1990 to 1995, and is now Vicar of St Mary's Cable Street and a priest vicar at Westminster Abbey.

The Edington Festival has been widely blessed over the years with a talented and diverse team of Clergy who have caught the spirit of the fine old Priory Church and its music and liturgy. Just one interesting note—no fewer than seven of the Clergy have come from the Cuddesdon stable and five from Westcott House—an interesting collection of twelve from Cambridge and Oxford!

PAUL ROSE

Peterborough, October 2005

Compact disc offer

OUR CD OFFER this issue is a most beautiful disc of Choral Music by Hubert Parry, Charles Stanford and William Harris sung by the girls and men of Norwich Cathedral Choir under our Festival Director, Julian Thomas.

Entitled *In Tune with heaven* the repertoire of 17 items is largely familiar, but no less enjoyable for that, and includes Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, Stanford's *Evening Service in G*, and those wonderful 8-part Harris anthems, *Bring us O Lord God* and *Faire is the heaven*. Recording and performance standards are everything one could wish.

If you would like a copy, please send a cheque for £10 payable to Edington Music Festival Association to Julian Thomas at 48 The Close, Norwich, NR1 4EG.

JOHN BARNARD