



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Spring 2009

Festival Director's Introduction to the 2009 Festival

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S Festival is based around the *Te Deum laudamus*, a text which has for centuries been both an affirmation of beliefs and also a challenge to the way we lead our lives as Christians. Rather than perform multiple settings of the *Te Deum* through the week though, we will look each day at a theme from within the text—*The King of Glory, Redemption, Sin, Angels*, for example—which will help us to appreciate the *Te Deum laudamus* in a little more detail.

As usual the week's programme will cover as wide a range of music as possible, and we will be giving extra emphasis to the works of composers whose anniversaries fall this year, including Purcell, Haydn and Mendelssohn. Furthermore, I am delighted that, through the support of the Festival Association, we have been able to commission an anthem from Dr Francis Jackson, one of our most eminent living Church composers and musicians.

Those of you who come regularly to the Festival will know that, for the last two years, we have adapted our schedule to the demands of the BBC, but you will be pleased to know that we are back to a live Radio 3 Choral Evensong on Wednesday 26 August (with a Sunday repeat as we all head home). Consequently, the Sequence of Readings and Music reverts to the Thursday evening this year.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Festival. And be sure that you have the dates in your diary: 23–30 August.

JULIAN THOMAS

Revd Maurice Bird

THE DEATH of Maurice Bird last summer, fully 20 years after he had retired as vicar of Edington, leaves a hole in the hearts of us all, for Maurice loved the Festival deeply, and with Eileen he returned year after year to be part of the worshipping community and to contribute actively as required.

Maurice and Eileen came to Edington in 1982 at a point when the Music Festival was at a low ebb; and Maurice's patient, gentle manner did much to support all of us who cared about the Festival and wanted to secure its future. Yet he was also strong enough to implement change in the worshipping life of

the parish community, introducing family-friendly services and encouraging people's gifts in lay ministry. With others undertaking many vital tasks and responsibilities, he was able to devote much time to a pastoral ministry which was much appreciated and is still remembered to this day. He was a deeply compassionate man, humble and prayerful, and a man of vision.

That he was also so young in heart owes much to his energetic and supportive wife Eileen whose loss is immeasurable. She, like Maurice, deeply loved the Priory Church, the people of Edington and the Music Festival, and we were so delighted that she felt able to be with us last August. She will always be warmly welcome at the Festival.

Maurice died at the age of 89 whilst on pilgrimage with Eileen in the Holy Land, a visit that had been a very special time for them both. We give God thanks for his life and will always remember him with affection and gratitude.

An interview with Christine Laslett

FOR TWENTY YEARS now, Christine has been doing one of the most important jobs in the Festival: organising accommodation for the participants, about 70 in number. I started by wondering whether she ever found herself short of beds at the very last moment. 'No, not quite', Christine replied. 'One of the worst things is if you start too early people forget about it, and then you go back to them and say 'Here I am—we agreed this a couple of months ago' and they say 'Oh dear, we hadn't heard from you ...'

I asked Christine about the particular difficulties of placing the boys. 'They have to be in the village, within walking distance of the church, they can't be with single people—it's the Child Protection Act basically—and they must be in pairs. Treble hosts have to fill in the appropriate forms, produce their passports, and all that sort of thing. For a number of years we resisted this because we do so much on a friendly basis in this village that it's almost insulting to say to people 'We have to vet you'; however it soon becomes clear that it is also for their own protection.'

With adult participants, I suggested, there must be different problems because there will be those who want to be in the pub till 2 a.m. and beyond. I wondered if that was largely acceptable to hosts as long as people came

home quietly. 'It is acceptable', Christine responded, 'but there have been one or two incidents over the years. Sometimes hosts are incredibly open-minded and don't say anything, and I only find out six months later.'

More positively I suggested that there must be many cases where hosts and Festival members have got to know each other well and are delighted to see each other again. 'Friendships are formed', said Christine, 'and this is a wonderful thing, marred only slightly by the fact that one might normally ask those who have cars to go further afield! But now we have quite a nucleus of people with cars who stay in the village simply because they've made friendships—and why not?'

With Festival week taking place in the middle of the summer I wondered whether there were villagers who particularly avoided being on holiday at that time so that they could accommodate people—or indeed villagers who deliberately did go away in Festival week to avoid being asked! Christine was not sure about either of these possibilities, but did remark that the Festival effectively went into two weeks and that the Bank Holiday weekend was an attractive time for people to go away. So she lost a few potential hosts at one end of the week or the other.

Christine has been doing this essential job for so long now that I ventured to think it might gradually have got easier. 'The answer has to be yes, because you increase your fund of people to draw on, but there is always a turnover as people move or become infirm or whatever. So I have to be on the lookout when houses are bought and sold to see who is moving in.'

Did Christine ever feel the accommodation job had become a burden, or did she actually enjoy doing it? 'I do enjoy it. I feel that such a lot of information is in my head already and half-planned for next year. You meet and make friends with an enormous number of people, people who were previously complete strangers. I go and bang on their door and they suddenly become someone you know.'

The Festival is indeed blessed in having Christine to do this demanding job which requires a unique combination of efficiency, charm and wisdom. Long may she continue to do it! We are enormously grateful to her.

JOHN BARNARD

Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory on Monday 24 August 2009 commencing at 15.00 hrs.

JOY L COOKE
Secretary

AGENDA

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 2008 Annual General Meeting
4. Matters Arising
5. Chairman's Report
6. Treasurer's Report: Financial Report and Adoption of Accounts
7. Election of Officers
8. Plans for 2009/2010
9. Any other business
10. Date of next AGM

Any member wishing to place an item on the Agenda is asked to submit this in writing by letter or email to the Secretary by 10 August 2009.

JOY L COOKE

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Newton Road, YEOVIL, Somerset, BA21 4HB

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A new Festival Director ... but not quite yet

JULIAN THOMAS has decided that this coming Festival is to be his last as Director. It will be his sixth year in that role, but his involvement with Edington stretches back much further—over twenty-two years in fact. He first came as a treble (from Salisbury Cathedral Choir) at the age of ten, continued as a server, and then became a member of the Schola Cantorum in 1993. There he sang for ten years until promotion to the top job came in 2004. In all that time he only missed one Festival—in 2001 when he was moving from Lincoln Cathedral (where he had been Second Assistant Organist) to Norwich Cathedral (where, as assistant to David Dunnett, he ran the Girls' Choir).

These last two years he has been directing the Chapel Choir and teaching at Tonbridge School, and since September 2008 has been shouldering the added responsibility of running a Sixth Form Boarding House. After many happy years of involvement with the Festival, he feels it is the right time to hand on to someone new, not least so that he can enjoy the last week of the summer holidays with Ellen and Dominic!

Our next newsletter will include an interview with Julian as he reflects on what has been achieved over the past six years, and a tribute to him. Meanwhile we hope that his final Festival will be a happy and sunny one!

And Julian's successor? It is Ashley Grote, the Assistant Director of Music at Gloucester Cathedral and our Festival Organist over the past two years. We are enormously grateful to him for agreeing to take on this responsibility and look forward to his years as Director.

Gift Aid

THERE WERE SOME CHANGES to the income tax rules for the 2008/9 year that may impact members eligibility to give to charities under gift aid. The personal tax allowances have been increased which may mean that some members may now not be paying income tax and therefore are now no longer eligible to donate to charities under gift aid. If you are now no longer eligible to give under gift aid and have previously signed a gift aid form for the Association please can you advise the treasurer, Justin Lowe, so that we can ensure our inland revenue submissions are correct and up to date. Justin can be contacted at j@justinlowe.co.uk or 192A Bravington Rd, London W9 3AP.

Do you have a Companion?

IT SEEMS A HARMLESS enough question as one stands in the porch greeting visitors to the Festival. But it can be mis-understood: 'Er, yes, he's parking the car', or something similar. 'Would you like a Companion?' is even more dangerous as a bright-eyed lady of a certain age replies 'Yes, please' and reaches for your arm.

We feel the Companion is competitively priced at £3 a copy. Nonetheless people find all sorts of ways to avoid buying one. 'My husband is parking the car, and he will buy one when he arrives ... My wife is already in the church, and she will already have bought one.'

Sharing one copy between two is not unreasonable of course, but when three people (or more) want to share one, we can only hope they are saving money for the collection.

'We are only here for this service' is a common one. Well, yes, but you still need to know what you are going to hear, don't you, sir or madam? If that fails, one directs the prospective customer to the translations of the Latin texts. (That only convinces a few people, I fear.) I tried telling one gentleman that he would be a bit lost without a Companion, but he assured me that, as a priest in the Anglican Church, he would know what was going on! He might have had a point.

The person who left me speechless at the 2008 Festival informed me that he had bought a Companion in 2007. (At last! I thought. Someone who has noticed that the

music at one Edington Festival is precisely the same as that at the previous one!) Sadly, although it may be true that he had bought a Companion in 2007, there was no sign of him having it on his person. I was tempted to point this out, but thought better of it ...

JOHN BARNARD

Compact disc offers



CHIRK CASTLE in North Wales was built as part of the English subjugation of a troublesome neighbour, but it became home to a unique musical establishment. But the castle's part-books, diligently compiled over a span of several decades during the mid seventeenth century, were eventually forgotten, lying untouched for hundreds of years before being sold off in the 1960s. Fortunately, Stephen Rice and his Brabant Ensemble, working closely with scholars at Bangor University, have now resurrected and recorded a good selection, including several previously unknown works (among them some exquisite morning canticles by William Mundy). *Music from the Chirk Castle Part-Books* also includes music by Byrd, Parsons, Sheppard, Tye and others—and sleeve notes in Welsh ...

Our second CD this issue offers a sneak preview not only of a CD (again from The Brabant Ensemble) which won't be in the shops till August, but also of music by the vastly neglected Dominique Phinot (whose *O sacrum convivium*—included on the CD—will be sung on the final Sunday of the festival). It's good stuff, and well worth exploring.

We also have a few copies remaining of the eleventh volume of Andrew Carwood's survey, with The Cardinall's Musick, of the complete Latin sacred music by Byrd: 'In short, these performances brings us into the 'heavenly kingdom' longed for by Byrd' (*BBC Music Magazine*).

If you would like a copy of any or all of these CDs, please send a cheque for £12 (per disc) payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to the Editor of this newsletter: John Barnard, 34 Queens Walk, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1XS.