



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Spring 2011

The 2011 Edington Festival— 'Edington Saints'

MANY OF YOU WILL KNOW already that this year Edington celebrates the 650th anniversary of its beautiful Priory Church, dedicated to St Mary, St Katharine and All Saints. This historic milestone is being celebrated by the Church congregation and the people of the village in July with services and events for both young and old including, I believe, the opportunity for children to recreate the pursuit in 1450 of the Bishop of Salisbury up the hill!

The Church is also a special place for the many people who have attended the Festival during its fifty-six-year history, and it therefore seemed appropriate that we commemorate this important anniversary in our own way during the 2011 Festival. Each day we will explore through word and music what I have called 'Edington Saints'. Some better known than others, these saints are represented in the Clerestory windows high up at the west end of the Church, and each bears witness in a different way to the Christian faith. We begin the week with St Paul and his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, then move through St Christopher, the 'bearer of Christ', St Audon and St Leodegar, the patron saints of the deaf and the blind and St Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. We will then take closer look at the Church's two patrons, St Katharine and St Mary, before concluding with a Mass of All Saints on the final Sunday morning.

To help unpack our Festival theme there is, as always, a wealth of choral music—from Byttering to Britten, Lassus to Leighton and Taverner (the sixteenth-century one) to Tavener (the contemporary one!). We mark this year 400 years since the death of Tomás Luis de Victoria with a complete performance of his *Missa pro defunctis* at Friday's Sung Requiem, and his glorious twelve-part *Missa Laetatus sum* at the final Eucharist of the Festival. We are grateful to Professor John Harper, former Director of the Festival, for composing some new Responses which will be sung by the Nave Choir at Wednesday's live broadcast of Choral Evensong. John has very kindly donated his fee for this commission to the appeal for a new organ in Edington, which will be launched officially following the Eucharist on Saturday 27 August. The plans for the organ are now

complete, and once the appeal is launched we hope that the many supporters of the Festival will consider giving generously to this exciting project which will secure the future of music-making in Edington for many, many years to come.

We welcome back to this year's Festival Jeremy Summerly as Director of the Consort, Matthew Martin as Director of the Nave Choir, and extend a warm welcome to Ben Nicholas who will be directing the Schola Cantorum. Ben already has a busy career as a Director of Music at Merton College, Oxford, and as Director of the Tewkesbury Abbey Schola Cantorum, so we are enormously grateful to him for giving up his time to join the Edington team!

I look forward to seeing you in August at the 56th Edington Festival.

ASHLEY GROTE

An interview with Chris Totney

CHRIS TOTNEY's roots are in the West Midlands. Born and bred in Stourbridge on the edge of the Black Country, it was in his local church choir of St Thomas's under the directorship of Andrew Fletcher that his love of choral and organ music was developed.

Chris first came to the Festival in 2004. He was Organ Scholar at Durham Cathedral at the time and was invited to the Festival for his organ-playing skills, with the particular function of performing organ voluntaries at matins and compline. But he was also asked to sing with the Schola Cantorum, although as he readily admits 'I didn't know how to read plainsong, so that was a fascinating challenge. The organ playing and the plainsong complement each other; and having seen the theme of the Festival in May each year I enjoy planning the voluntaries to reflect the different moods of the individual days.'

I commented that the standard of the Schola Cantorum was very good by 2004. Was it a bit of a fright to join such a competent choir, knowing nothing about plainsong? 'They are a great bunch of people to work with, but yes, it was a bit scary. There are all the different symbols to learn and what they mean and how they can be varied, but it's amazing how you get used to it—not least because of the intensity of the week. What is wonderful about the Festival is

that it captures a certain mood, and regardless of what the theme is, people see past the occasional mistake and realize that into that singing is going a huge amount of expression and feeling.'

Did Chris feel that for the Schola Cantorum matins and compline were the really important services of the daily round? 'Absolutely—many people have commented in the past that those services are the backbone of the Festival. If you catch matins on the right day, with the sun streaming through the windows and the particular acoustics of the chancel, then it's a very special experience. And compline in its own way has a wonderful atmosphere too.'

Chris is one of these Festival participants who comes to everything, even when the Schola is not on duty. He expressed a particular enjoyment of Friday matins. 'Many people can only come at the weekend, and their Festival often begins with Friday matins. I am normally there helping the Festival Organist, currently Peter Stevens.' I wondered whether Chris sometimes thought: 'I'd like to be playing that, rather than turning pages and pulling stops.' 'Most years I play at the Thursday evening sequence. I really enjoy that, and it gives the Festival Organist a break when the Nave Choir is also off for the night. But yes, sometimes I do think to myself: I would not mind playing that; but equally there are times when a Mozart Mass has to be accompanied, and then I am perfectly happy not to be doing it myself!'

I asked Chris whether he had a particularly special memory of the years he has been coming to the Festival, and he mentioned the performance of Tallis' *Spem in alium* at the 50th anniversary celebrations, sung in a great circle around the congregation. 'That was quite a spectacular experience, and of course it co-incided with Tallis' 500th anniversary year.'

Chris now lives in Westbury, teaches music at Dauntsey's School, and has recently taken on the post of Director of Music at St John's Church, Devizes which is giving him much pleasure. So, with his wife Jenny serving on the clergy team in Westbury, Chris looks very settled in Wiltshire for the moment, and we are certainly very grateful for his important contribution to the Festival.

JOHN BARNARD

Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL General Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory Church on Monday 22 August 2011 commencing at 15.00 hrs.

Agenda

1. Prayers
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 2010 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. Organ Appeal Launch
9. Plans for 2011/2012
10. Any other business
11. 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 Administrator by 12 August 2011.

SUE LOWERY

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A Sequence of Music & Readings for Advent

THE EVENING of 10 December 2010 was wet and cold, but this was no deterrent to many people from Edington and further afield from filling the Priory Church for a celebration of Advent in both word and music.

In his introduction to the programme Ashley Grote wrote that the purpose of the event was two-fold. Firstly, it was a way of expressing the thanks of all involved in the Festival to the people of Edington for their welcome and generous hospitality during the annual Festival week. Secondly, it was an opportunity for the musicians of the Festival to gather together both to renew friendships and to perform some of the wealth of church music composed to mark the Advent season. He also thanked all those involved for giving freely of their time and talents at such a busy time of year. All the funds raised from the evening went directly to the Church community to support them in their mission and in the upkeep of the beautiful Priory building.

The music was performed by members of the Consort and Nave Choirs directed by Jeremy Summerly, and by the Schola Cantorum under their new director Benjamin Nicholas. The organist was Peter Stevens.

The Sequence of Music and Readings reflected the liturgical ethos of the Advent season through both well-loved and lesser known choral music, plainchant, hymns,

scriptural readings and poetry. Plainchant included *The Advent Prose, O Adonai* and *O Emmanuel*. Amongst the choral compositions were Byrd's *Rorate caeli*, Britten's *A Hymn to the Virgin* and Stanford's Magnificat in G.

At the conclusion mulled wine and mince pies were served in church by members of the Priory congregation—a fitting end to a wonderful evening. Many present were heard to express the hope that this event might be repeated in the future.

JOY COOKE

*There will indeed be a further Advent Sequence this year.
It takes place on Friday, December 9th at 7.30 p.m.*

The Paulet Arms

THE 2010 FESTIVAL had the dubious distinction of being the only one in living memory when there was no pub in Edington, but things have changed for the better. Earlier this year, refurbished and renamed, The Lamb (as it was previously known) opened again for business.

The lengthy closure—we had at one point hoped that the pub would have been ready for last summer's Festival—has given time for very substantial changes to the building and its décor; and like so many pubs these days, food is a major component of what is on offer. For instance, they are currently offering a two-course lunch menu at £10 (three courses for £13), and reports on quality and friendliness are positive.

Incidentally, the Paulet Arms was the name of the pub back in the eighteenth century.

An interview with Ruth Brooks

THE NAME OF RUTH BROOKS will not be familiar to many members of the Association but she is a very important part of the Festival, for Ruth heads up Caring Catering based in Frome, and she provides in the parish hall lunch and supper for Festival participants throughout Festival week.

Ruth was working for Wiltshire County Council when she was made redundant in 1997. Her department was dissolved, but the Wiltshire education training courses in Melksham needed a caterer and Ruth was fortunate to pick up that substantial business right from the start of her independent operation. There are no courses during the summer break, so the Festival comes at just the right time of year.

I asked whether Edington week was popular with Ruth and her staff. 'Yes, it is. We look forward to seeing people again every year. I don't ever have a problem getting staff—anybody will do it. The one thing I love about everyone at the Festival is that they all say 'thank you'. They are polite, they mop up their spills, they have been really well

brought up. You don't hear bad language—and we love seeing all the babies!'

I wondered whether the rather cramped parish hall kitchen was not something of a frustration to Ruth and her team. 'Not really. I have worked in worse. We have got it down to an art really; there is plenty of hot water and we have two cooks even if they are small ones.'

As to the food itself 'We offer fresh vegetables, fresh potatoes. I don't like ready-prepared things. In your fish pie tonight you have prawns, fresh salmon, eel, a little bit of sole, and there's cod with spring onions—all in a nice sauce. Tomorrow in the game pie you've got venison, pork, quail, partridge and pheasant.'

Ruth really does us proud. She has learned what goes down well with Festival participants, and organizes the menu such that favourite meals do not appear on a day when some people might be missing. We are all tremendously grateful to her for the high quality (and considerable quantity!) of the food she serves, and for the unfailing helpfulness and friendliness which she and her team show towards us. Long may it continue!

JOHN BARNARD

650 years of the Priory Church

THE WEEK-LONG CELEBRATION begins with a Solemn Eucharist on Sunday 3 July at 11 a.m. The preacher is Bishop Humphrey Southern. Choral evensong at 4 p.m. is sung by the Edington Music Festival Singers directed by Jeremy Summerly. From Thursday until the following Sunday there is an exhibition in church entitled 'Impressions of Edington Priory Church'. On the Saturday morning a peal of bells will be rung, and from 2 p.m. that same day there will be a Medieval Fair. On Sunday 10 July Canon Neil Heavisides presides at the 9.30 Eucharist, Compline being sung by the church choir at 8 p.m.

Compact disc offer

OUR CD OFFER this issue presents a new recording of Herbert Howells from Winchester Cathedral Choir. The programme includes the *Winchester Service* and a range of lesser-known late works—which turn out to be a revelation. One can only wonder why many of these pieces are so neglected today; perhaps the difficulty of Howells' mature writing has put people off, but these challenges are as nothing to this expert choir under the direction of Andrew Lumsden.

Discs are £12 each. If you would like to order, please send a cheque payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to the Editor of this newsletter: John Barnard, 34 Queens Walk, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 1XS.