



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Winter 2011

Edington Organ Appeal

THIS MAILING includes a letter devoted exclusively to the progress of the appeal. Please read it with care!

Newsletter—Special Edition 2011

AS PART OF OUR AIM to make known the advantages of Edington Music Festival Association membership to as wide a public as possible, we created for this year's Festival a special edition of the newsletter which was distributed free of charge to those attending the various services.

The special edition contained no new material, rather a miscellany of items—often just snippets—which had appeared in recent years. Whether our initiative has proved successful is not easy to judge at this stage; but a copy of the special edition is enclosed here, as some of you will not have been able to attend the Festival itself and might be interested to read it.

Edington Music Festival 2011

THE THEME of the 2011 Festival was 'Edington Saints' and Ashley Grote devised a most interesting sequence of services based on six saints depicted in the clerestory windows of the Priory Church. This link with the building was particularly appropriate for the year in which the people of Edington have been celebrating its 650 years' history, and the working out of the chosen theme in readings and music was unfailingly successful.

The Nave Choir was on fine form, with several new adult singers and a particularly impressive treble line. Highlights included a very fine performance of Vaughan Williams' *Valiant-for-truth* (which was apparently new to all the trebles), and three excellent performances of works by William Walton: his Chichester service at Monday evensong, his Jubilate Deo at Friday matins, and most impressive of all *The Twelve* at Saturday evensong. (If memory serves aright, two sopranos from the Consort had to be brought in to sing the demanding treble duet the last time *The Twelve* was performed at the Festival, but not this time when two excellent boys managed it superbly at the sharp pitch the Edington organ requires.) This year's commission was an imaginative set of Responses by our former Festival Director

Professor John Harper, who most generously donated his fee to the Organ Appeal.

More new faces were to be seen in the Schola Cantorum. Under its new director Ben Nicholas the quality of the Schola's singing remained at the very high standard to which we have become accustomed, and the singers excelled themselves in a ravishing performance of Cornysh's *Ave Maria, mater Dei* at the conclusion of the final compline.

The Consort offered Neil Cox's beautiful *Keep me as the apple of an eye* at the opening compline, and gave exquisite performances of Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* and Stanford's *Beati quorum via* at the Thursday Sequence. Two excerpts from Rachmaninov's *All-Night Vigil*, heard at Sunday compline and the Monday Eucharist gave much pleasure, as did the Consort's beautiful rendering of Boyce's *O where shall wisdom be found?* at the Thursday Eucharist. Philip Moore's settings of *Cantate Domino* and *Deus misereatur*, sung at the broadcast evensong, brought rewarding yet unfamiliar music, and at Friday Matins we had the pleasure of getting to know Matthew Martin's recent setting of the Responses.

All three choirs combined to sing Victoria's *Te Deum* at the conclusion of the Radio 3 evensong—a thrilling and fitting end to a most excellent service to celebrate the 650th anniversary of the Priory church.

As in 2009 and 2010 the weather during Festival week was decidedly autumnal with significant rainfall on Tuesday and Friday, but Saturday saw warm and sunny conditions for the launch of the Organ Appeal. Altogether the 2011 Festival was yet another happy and musically successful one.

JOHN BARNARD

Chairman's Report to the AGM for the year 2010–11

THE MAIN TASK of the Association is the administration and appropriate distribution of money. During the past year the following grants have been made by the Association: core costs of the 2011 Festival (printing, mailing, organ tuning, catering, hiring of facilities and insurance), a grant for the 2011 Festival Commission—Professor John Harper generously waived his fee which went to the Organ Appeal—and a grant for the hire of a chamber organ for the 2011 Festival. The arrangements for a standing

grant to be paid by the Association upon receipt of a request from the Festival continue to work smoothly.

In the past year, the Edington Organ Project has begun to take much clearer shape, and the Appeal for funds to pay for the new instrument is to be officially launched at the end of Festival week. Many generous donations and loans have been received already, but there is a long way to go if the necessary money is to be raised. I would ask all members of the Association to consider a donation to the project if they have not done so already. The new instrument will be a fitting and long-lasting 'thank you' to the parish from all who have gained so much from the Festival over its history.

Needless to say, the organisation required to launch the Organ Project has been huge. The Executive Committee of the Association has met more frequently than in previous years, and a great deal of its time has inevitably been taken up with discussion of various aspects of the Project launch.

I must again record my thanks to all the members of the Executive Committee for their dedication and hard work during the past year, with perhaps a particular mention of thanks to Mrs Sue Lowery, who was co-opted last year as Secretary. We are all in their debt.

PETER McGEARY

Graham Southgate

THOSE OF YOU unable to attend this year's Festival may be unaware that it was Graham Southgate's last as vicar of Edington. After eight years in that role he moved at the end of September to become Team Rector of the Nadder Valley benefice.

Graham's welcome to Festival participants has been unfailingly warm; and he has always been willing to share the limelight with a range of priests who come to the Festival as part of the clergy team or as guest preacher.

We shall miss Graham greatly. He is a man with considerable spiritual gifts, and the Nadder Valley is indeed fortunate to have attracted him for the next stage of his Christian ministry. Meanwhile, given that he will not be so very far away from Edington, we do hope we shall have the privilege of seeing him again at future Festivals. He will always be welcome.

The 650th anniversary celebrations of the Priory Church

SUNDAY 3 JULY dawned a glorious day. The 11 a.m. Solemn Eucharist at which the presider and preacher was the Bishop of Repton, the Rt Rev. Humphrey Southern, began with a procession round the exterior of the church during which the hymns *Ye that know the Lord is gracious* and *Ye watchers and ye holy ones* were sung. At the communion the parish choir sang Tchaikovsky's *Hymn to the Trinity* and the service concluded with choir and congregation joining together in Stanford's famous setting in B♭ of the Te Deum.

Afterwards a most delicious buffet lunch was served on the field below the graveyard; and at 4 p.m. we gathered once again in the Priory Church for choral evensong sung by the Edington Music Festival singers conducted by Jeremy Summerly with Matthew Martin at the organ. The canticles were the setting by Sir George Dyson in D, and the anthem Stanford's stirring *For lo, I raise up that bitter and hasty nation*. The service ended with the large congregation joining the choir in that great hymn *Thy hand, O God, has guided thy flock from age to age*.

Further celebrations were held during the following week.

Chris Totney

CONGRATULATIONS are due to Schola Cantorum singer Chris Totney on winning first prize in the King James Bible Composition competition. His work *The Mystery of Christ*, intended for non-professional choirs, sets texts from the books of Isaiah, Revelation and Colossians, and is published by the Royal School of Church Music.

An interview with Professor John Harper

JOHN HARPER, President of the Edington Music Festival Association and Director of the Festival from 1971 until 1978, was with us for the launch of the Organ Appeal at the end of the 2011 Festival. The opportunity to talk with him about the Festival's early years was not to be missed.

John came to Edington in 1960 as a 13-year-old treble from King's College, Cambridge, singing again the following year, and then joining the team of servers in 1962 at a time when the ceremonial was, for the first time, being taken seriously.

'That was a life-changing experience, and I wouldn't have written the *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy* book without having done that, because it changed my perception of music being the thing to the liturgy being the thing—of which music was a part.'

John tells of having fallen out with the then Bishop of Kensington who arrived on the Saturday of the 1962 Festival. 'There was a live TV broadcast on the Sunday, the only time there has been a live TV transmission from the Festival—never again!—and he felt everything had to be simplified. Looking back, and it's 50 years ago now, I can see where he was coming from. To say I had a row with him would be exaggerating, but he knew that I was deeply upset. I wasn't popular with David Calcutt either and wasn't invited back to the Festival for a couple of years.'

I wanted to explore how David Calcutt found boys for the Nave Choir in those early years. Were they largely from King's? 'It was rare for King's boys to come. David had better connections with Exeter, Salisbury and Winchester, so that was the network he used. I came because Simon Preston was conducting—that was the link. The back row, however, was very heavily King's in those days.'

We moved on. 'The Festival has become very much a village/church event. Ralph Dudley kept the village and the Festival separate. He always insisted that the parish routine should carry on unbroken. This was partly because in the early years the Festival did not run for a whole week, and initially there was no Eucharist. 1962 was the first year in which there was a daily sung (plainsong) Eucharist.'

'Nicholas Hinton (Director from 1965 until 1970) was insistent that the Festival should not become a comfortable, polite, middle-class affair. We should be experimenting, he felt, and that was very much the spirit I took on in 1971. It is also where the Church was at that time, knowing that the Book of Common Prayer was not working; and it is interesting that the current pattern of services was first established in the early 1980s, just after The Alternative Service Book was introduced. Incidentally, one thing that has stuck from my time is the notion of a theme for the week, which ties things together.'

I wondered whether, looking back on those early festivals, John thought things had become a bit too sedate these days. 'The Festival has become so much more embedded. I seem to remember that the turnover in my early years as Director was about £700. We floated the next Festival on £100. This afternoon Justin Lowe was saying that we keep £10,000 in reserve. Well, look at the difference! It's a different scale.'

'And since Festival and village were kept apart, Ralph would not allow us to approach any villager about accommodation—which was a nightmare, because he had never got all

the beds by the Friday before the Festival; and on Saturday afternoon you were driving around saying 'Would you be happy to have so-and-so?''

'Nonetheless, you look back at Ralph's courage and his vision for this church: the state of decay it was in back in 1954, the chance fact of him being here, David Calcutt having helped him out as a choral scholar, and the realisation that the Priory Church needed music. The amount of money that the Friends, with Festival support, have raised through the years is simply stunning.'

John moved on to another aspect of the Festival's early years: The Group. 'David Calcutt realised that ex-choristers and ex-servers—and nearly all the servers had been choristers—for whom this place was extraordinarily important couldn't come back. Then the question arose: Has everything got to be first-class or should there be a group offering people opportunity? I did the same bringing people from Bluecoat School, from St. Chad's (Birmingham) and King Edward School who would never have come here otherwise. One of the important things about Edington is that people who sing in choirs listen to other choirs, which they very rarely do and don't know how to do.'

And then the Edington organ. 'It's been on the agenda for fifty years. There were drawings of a new organ in the basement of the vicarage that long ago.' In those days there were plans to put the organ on the screen and Ralph Dudley was in favour of that. 'But you could not have had more than a couple of stops up there, which forces you into all sorts of compromises.'

I suggested that John must feel a certain pride, having put so much effort into the festival in the 60s and 70s, to see it thriving decades later. 'Yes, and it's been really nice that first Edward and particularly Joe have been able to be part of it. I don't find it easy going back to places I have left, but it is always a pleasure to be here; and it's been a real thrill to write something for this year's Festival—even if it was something as hard as the Responses.'

And a final thought from John as I threatened to switch off the tape recorder: 'This Festival is still of its kind. There are lots of chamber choirs going around singing, but the opportunity for senior trebles to sing together and to hear a good chamber choir as well, and to sing with a really good back row—for some of them it will simply depend on what the latest lay vicar is like—is unique.'

We all have reason to be deeply grateful to John for what he accomplished in Edington in earlier years, laying such firm foundations for the Festival we now know.

JOHN BARNARD

Sequence of Music and Readings for Advent

Friday 9th December 2011 at 7.30 p.m.
Edington Priory Church

IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR musicians from the Festival reconvened in Edington one cold Friday evening to put on a 'Sequence of Music and Readings for Advent'.

Edington Priory Church is of course beautiful in the daylight; but as those who attend the first Compline of the Festival each year will know, it takes on a particularly special feel in the flickering shadows of candlelight. So, gathering in the candlelit church to hear just some of the wealth of choral music for Advent, followed by warming mulled wine and mince pies, proved a huge hit for all involved.

We are delighted that the event will be taking place again this year, on Friday 9 December at 7.30pm. If you attended last year, then come again: if not, come along to see what you missed! Tickets priced at £7.50 are available from Clare Norfolk-Brown (01380 830733) or Robin Wilson (01380 830566), and all proceeds go to Church funds.

ASHLEY GROTE

Treasurer's Report to the AGM for the year 2010-2011

THE FINANCIAL YEAR 1 May 2010 to 30 April 2011 has been another good one for the Edington Music Festival Association. We started the year with £52,351 in the bank and finished with funds of £73,209, an excess of income over expenditure of £20,858.

Our membership subscriptions are in line with previous years and the vast majority of these are paid by standing order. The collection plate income remains healthy and is slightly up on last year. We would like to thank the Joyce Fletcher Charitable Trust for their kind donation towards supporting youngsters for the 2011 Festival. The Association no longer benefits from high interest rates and this is expected to continue given the current financial climate. CD sales from the Festival week and newsletter remain at a background level. £6,280 was received from Gift Aid claims.

The Association's running costs continue to be very low and are lower than usual this year. However some expenses are likely to fall in the next financial year. During the financial year 2010-2011 monies were dispensed as follows: the 2010 Festival standing grant (£10,000), the 2010 Festival Commission (£300); a donation towards the Schola tour to Paris (£3,839); and a donation to the Organ Project (£25,000).

The Association maintains a reserves policy as recommended by the Charity

Commission. The Executive Committee has reviewed this policy and has agreed to reduce this to £10,000.

This year has seen the launch of the Organ Project which represents a significant change in the way the Association manages its assets. We are treating the Organ Project as a separate restricted fund under the umbrella of EMFA. We have established dedicated Charity Aid Foundation accounts to keep the funds segregated from our general funds. By 30 April we had secured £42,393 towards the expected cost of £400,000. Raising the remaining funds will be a challenge, but the trustees are confident that this is achievable and we implore everyone to support this worthy cause generously.

Once again I would like to thank all members of the Association and other donors for their continued support and generosity. I would also like to thank Allan Edwards once again for so kindly organising the collections during the services.

JUSTIN LOWE

Association Treasurer

An interview with Peter Stevens

PETER STEVENS has been our Festival Organist these last two years. In January 2011 he took up the post of Assistant Master of Music at Westminster Cathedral, an amazing achievement for a man still in his early twenties.

Peter's secondary education up to GCSE was at a Catholic comprehensive school in Bury, near Manchester, about which he had warm things to say: a good music department, several choirs, an annual musical; and then he moved to Chetham's for his sixth form studies. 'I was taught the organ by Christopher Stokes, organist of Manchester Cathedral. He was a wonderful teacher, and did a lot for me.'

Peter then applied for and got the organ scholarship at King's College, Cambridge, but first he had a gap year to fill. This he spent at St. George's Chapel Windsor working with Timothy Byram-Wigfield and Roger Judd. 'They were very generous with lots of help because I was new to the whole Anglican choral scene. At the time I was still learning what psalms were!'

We talked about being in the spotlight at King's. 'Stephen Cleobury said that the only way to be able to do the Christmas Eve service well is to treat every day as if it were the Christmas Eve service. The standard has to be exactly the same.'

Peter particularly enjoyed services in King's Chapel when there were few people in the congregation. 'A rainy Tuesday in January or February, a nice miserable psalm, a little Mag and Nunc, and *Love Bade Me Welcome*. Absolutely wonderful!' And on Stephen

Cleobury: 'There is no one better to learn one's trade from. He is very generous with his time. He expects high standards, but if you give it your best shot he'll back you to the hilt.'

It was Peter's dream to move on to Westminster Cathedral—the only non-monastic foundation in the world with daily Sung Mass and Vespers, he enthused—and he got the organ scholarship from September 2010. 'It's a very different repertoire—lots of chant and polyphony. A five-line stave is something of a luxury there! And you're not registering fifty verses of psalmody, a Mag and Nunc and an anthem every day.'

One of Peter's first duties at the Cathedral was to play a part in the Papal Mass of September 2010, but unfortunately—unlike members of the choir—he did not get to meet the Pope as he was playing a voluntary at the time.

Then Matthew Martin resigned, and Peter beat a large field in being appointed Assistant Master of Music—within little more than two months of having arrived as organ scholar!

I asked about playing the Edington organ. Was he warned it would be a challenge? 'Yes, Ashley was very honest about it.' Peter rehearses from 7.30 to 8.30 a.m. and sometimes does some practice in the afternoon. 'In the evening it's the agonising decision: do I go to the pub, or do I stay here and practise? Or do I do both, and if so, in what order?'

Peter enthused about the Festival and its atmosphere. He enjoys what Matthew Martin once described as his annual 'fix' of the Anglican repertoire.

Peter is the latest in a long and distinguished line of talented Festival Organists. He is a most genuine and personable young man, and we are so lucky to have him as part of the musical team. We hope he will be with us for many years to come.

JOHN BARNARD

Compact disc offer

THIS ISSUE's CD should win a place in every Edington-lover's heart. Parsons' *Ave Maria* has had pride of place at Edington since 1963, first as the concluding piece of the opening Compline, and since 1972 as the finale to the festival as a whole. Andrew Carwood and his glorious Cardinal's Musick present this, and all of Parsons' other Latin church music, in a recording which is already winning significant critical praise.

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.