



Edington Music Festival Association Newsletter

Summer 2019

Edington Festival 2019—This year the Festival takes place from 18 to 25 August

Laudate Dominum!

IFIRST HEARD Benjamin Britten's *Rejoice in the Lamb* in 1999 or 2000 when the choir of Trinity College, Cambridge visited St Matthew's Church, in my home town of Northampton. Under the direction of Richard Marlow, they sang a varied programme to as high a standard as I had ever heard at the time. Britten's cantata was commissioned by Walter Hussey, for St Matthew's Church, and it was very special to hear it performed there.

Britten sets a portion of Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*, which was composed whilst Smart was incarcerated in St Luke's Hospital for Lunatics, and it depicts 'idiosyncratic praise and worship of God by all created beings and things, each in its own way'. Whilst some of the imagery in the poem—the courageous mouse attempting to wrest its mate from the jaws of a cat, for example—can be taken slightly tongue in cheek, the overriding sentiment is extremely beautiful and very easy to identify with. The penultimate section of the work speaks directly to us as music lovers and Edington Festival participants:

*For the trumpet of God is a blessed intelligence
And so are all the instruments in Heav'n.
For God the Father Almighty plays upon the harp
Of stupendous magnitude and melody.
For at that time malignity ceases
And the devils themselves are at peace.
For this time is perceptible to man
By a remarkable stillness and serenity of soul.*

What better place to begin programming our glorious festival than this?

This year's festival seeks to explore further this idea of all creation worshiping God in its own way. In fact we have slightly developed this into an survey of the connection between worship and different areas—Public Service, Education, Science, Music, Healing and Nature. The final Sunday is to be titled 'Let everything that hath breath ...' and will draw these themes together in a truly uplifting fashion. As ever I am grateful to the large number of people who helped draw together the shape of this year's Festival, in particular Father Andrew Sinclair and Canon Chris Chivers.

We have some really super music lined up—in addition to Britten's masterpiece, there will be works by Vaughan Williams,

Ireland, Palestrina and Sheppard to name but a few, alongside Maurice Duruflé's sublime Requiem. Our commission this year is by David Bednall, who has a real gift for finding the very heart of a text. All in all it should be a 64th Festival to remember!

RICHARD PINEL
Festival Director

Admin at 21: some reflections

FOR ONCE looking back rather than forward, it occurs to me that rather a lot has happened in festival terms since I first drove past the White Horse and into Edington on a sunny Monday morning in late August 1998. However, at that juncture little did I know what that journey would bring!

Originally sold to me as somewhere to sing, it became clear within hours that a cabal of fellow Old Wykehamists had other thoughts in mind. The then new Director, Peter Barley, and the perennial Director of the Consort, Jeremy Summerly, had both preceded me in my house at Winchester, and they completed their ambush by enlisting the services of the Nave Choir Director, David Trendell, for whom I had sung as a choral scholar at King's College, London, and who had been assistant organist at Winchester during my final years there. Some encouraging words from the founder of the festival, Sir David Calcutt QC, who was that Autumn in his role as Master Treasurer of the Middle Temple to call me to the bar, finished the job: 'Keep it young; keep it fun; keep the vision alive.' And a pleasant enough ambush it was too, with seemingly wildly optimistic statements as to my suitability for the role of Administrator being made somehow believable with the aid of the services of the Lamb Inn.

Meeting Sir Jeremy Moore, our Honorary Treasurer from 1997 to 2004, the next morning was a sobering experience. 'Well, it's a lot of fun, but we've got no money!' And, in fact, he wasn't far off the mark. The festival more or less broke even in a 'quiet' year and had a few thousand pounds in its coffers. It was clear to Jeremy, Andrew Carwood, the recently retired Director, and Peter Barley that the festival was in urgent need of a

more secure financial footing. The new Administrator's concern that a more costly and rigorous approach to all aspects of child welfare, publicity and commissioning confirmed their fears.

But what of keeping the vision alive? Multi-faceted, I suppose.

First and foremost, it was essential that we should protect and build upon the legacy of the first forty years and ensure the festival would never suffer from a lack of funds and find itself no longer able to lead the worship in the Priory Church and thereby increase the number of people who understand the value of the choral tradition within the Anglican church. Thus, in 2000, the Edington Festival Association was born with the indefatigable Cookes, Joy and Michael, as midwife and administrator, and Sir David Calcutt as its first Chairman. Their work has been ably continued ever since with Andrew Carwood, Peter McGeary, Jeremy Davies and Sue Lowery leading and encouraging its committee members to ever new heights.

Secondly, strange as it may seem, back in 1998 Child Protection, or Safeguarding as it is termed now, was very much in its infancy. There was no local diocese policy to copy and adopt and one had to be written and its necessary and quietly-administered requirements followed. Throughout, the support of the Benefice's wise and indefatigable safeguarding officer, Joanna Robertson, has been invaluable.

Increasing the festival's reach was vital too. A sea change in the presentation of the festival came in 2003 with Nick Flower taking the lead in producing world-class leaflets and Companions, a task to which he committed himself with gusto for sixteen summers and to whom a great debt of gratitude is owed. In 2005, perhaps over-reaching madly in the midst of the celebration of the 50th festival, we allowed the BBC to film a documentary of the festival as part of its Passion for Churches series. Although this was an intrusion not greeted with universal approbation by some stalwarts of the festival, it proved to be a very good thing and continues to help to attract new visitors to the festival. With Anne Curtis now on the team led so valiantly for so long by

John d'Arcy the festival's communications and publicity have become far more sophisticated and effective.

Then came infrastructure. The one-hundred-and-a-bit-year-old Henry Jones organ was in its decline and would either need a large sum to bring it to standard modern pitch and give it a new lease of life or replacing. Exploratory meetings under two directorships, those of Julian Thomas and Ashley Grote, allowed us to reach a point where the idea that the village might accept a gift of a new organ was welcomed. The mammoth operation of launching and running the Organ Project perhaps encapsulates best what is so special about Edington. Visitor and local alike threw themselves at the task with a commitment that one would rarely find in a commercial organisation. The combined and tireless efforts of Robin Wilson, the village community and the EMFA committee, and the financial and project management expertise of Justin Lowe saw the huge sum of £430,000 raised in fourteen months thanks to the generosity of friends from near and far, the Arts Council, and the Friends of the Priory Church. The dedication of the new Harrison and Harrison organ in 2014 was for all involved a very special occasion indeed.

Underpinning all these advances and achievements, however, has been the real life-blood of the festival, namely its foundation upon a community of self-effacing but hugely committed supporters. It would be hard to find a festival such as this anywhere else, but its continuance is assured by the cheerful manner in which so many put their shoulder to the wheel, be it in the tea hut, the recruitment of host families, the counting of collections and subsequent preparation of accounts, the booking of singers, the choosing of music, commissioning of new works, the running of the safeguarding policy, the booking of caterers, organising of trips for visiting children, the setting of altars, the welcoming of visitors ... the list could go on and on. None of this would be possible were the festival not situated in one of the most extra-ordinary communities one could encounter where size is not considered an obstacle to any task. The village may be small, but its Priory Church is large: happily, the size of its church wardens' and supporters' hearts is too! Ensuring that the festival's progress over the past quarter of a century has not come at the expense of building ever-stronger ties with the parish community upon which it relies has been the one constant throughout.

And what of the vision now that the festival is financially secure, rejoices in leading worship in a church where its singers are soon welcomed as long-lost friends, and are accompanied by a world-class organ?

Back before the Organ Project and with the festival's finances looking secure, David Calcutt's advice, 'Keep it young', continued to play on my mind giving rise to a mad thought that the festival might be able to sponsor choristerships around the country. Fast forward nearly 20 years and that thought's time has come around again: the Association will shortly be able to embark upon this task in conjunction with Friends of Cathedral Music via their Diamond Fund for Choristers.

Mindful that a constant injection of youth is essential to any organisation, and as I move gently albeit perhaps slowly into emeritus status, I look back on the gift of friendship so generously given by so many in the village and beyond. It has persuaded this visitor that Edington, to me as to so many others, will always be a second home. We are sustained by it, and through the festival we are reminded that we each serve as a small part of a larger, ever-changing body of unchanging purpose, one in which, as our founder so ably described it, God is worshipped through beauty—beauty of sight, shown or seen in stone or ceremony, beauty of sound, made or heard in the word sung or spoken.

It has been a privilege to have been allowed to serve my part on such a wonderful journey.

PETER ROBERTS
Festival Administrator

Edington Music Festival Association

THE ANNUAL GENERAL Meeting of the Edington Music Festival Association will be held in Edington Priory Church on Monday 19 August 2019 commencing at 14.30 hrs.

Agenda

- 1 Prayers
- 2 Apologies for absence
- 3 Minutes of the 2018 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 2019/2020
- 9 Any other business
- 10 Date of next AGM

Any member wishing to place an item on the Agenda is asked to notify the Secretary no later than Monday 12 August 2019

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Edington Arts

THE 2019 EDINGTON ARTS season has got off to a great start—our first afternoon concert, with the harp and

percussion of Clare Jones and Chris Marshall, and a terrific choral workshop.

The workshop ended up somewhat different than planned, in that Paul Brough, festival friend and choral conductor *extra-ordinaire*, was suddenly taken ill and was unable to come. (He's better now, thank goodness.) A call from his sickbed to festival Director Richard Pinel, and a couple of hours later we had a deputy, Tom Hammond Davies. He obviously didn't have enough time to worry about the short notice, and of course knew the repertoire (Purcell, Bruckner and Parsons) and proved to have been an inspired choice. For some unaccountable reason Tom has never been to the festival, but is correcting that sad omission this year. Paul meanwhile has booked himself in to run the workshop in 2021! (Simon Carrington is taking next year's.)

Later this year, international guitarist Craig Ogden is coming on Saturday 5 October, and will be playing some familiar and some unfamiliar music, as well as sharing some of his experiences from his quite colourful life.

The Advent concert this year is on Saturday 7 December, when Richard Pinel will bring his mixed-voice choir for a concert of music for Advent and Christmas.

Contact Sue at sue@edingtonarts.org or 01380 871549 for further details or visit our website www.edingtonarts.org. A leaflet will be available in the Church during the Festival giving details of all our concerts through to the end of 2020.

ANNE CURTIS

Festival Tea Hut

A REMINDER to those attending the festival that the tea hut will be open for 90 minutes before Eucharist and Evensong (not on the first Sunday) and also before and after the broadcast on Wednesday. As usual there will always be plenty of home-made cake, sandwiches, chocolate biscuits, tea, coffee etc and those requiring gluten free options will be catered for. Do please support it!

CD Offer

OUR CD OFFER this month is a gorgeous survey of Gerald Finzi's choral works—in stylish performances from the Choir of Trinity College Cambridge under Stephen Layton. Discs are £12 each (inclusive of postage & packing) and won't be in the shops till August. If you would like to receive a copy now, please send a cheque payable to *Edington Music Festival Association* to Sue Lowery, 10 High Street, Steeple Ashton, Wiltshire BA14 6EL (01380 871549).

