

Early history of the EDOA as remembered by Eric Pask

May I add a little to David Felstead's interesting note in the last Newsletter about the origins of the EDOA. It was good to be reminded of so many past members, not all of them of course in at the very beginning. He mentions me several times but acknowledges being a bit vague as to whether or not I was already Organist of Enfield Parish Church when we started. In fact, it was just because I was in that post that I was in a position to found the new association, with David's active encouragement.

I arrived at St Andrew's at Michaelmas 1962 and started the monthly organ recitals that November, the St Andrew's Singers' choral and orchestral concerts following in December. Both series were to run uninterruptedly for a quarter century, latterly under the direction of Michael and Marion Smith, my successors when in 1985 I left Enfield for Harpenden. It was the focus which these recitals and concerts provided for local organists and music lovers that led directly to the suggestion that we should form an organists' association. I therefore invited organists over a fairly wide area to come and discuss the possibility. (The list of contacts mentioned by David was actually provided by himself for me, though he may have sought help from my predecessor Alfred Flower.)

This inaugural meeting was held at my house and the EDOA was duly launched. Alfred Flower (much-loved organist at St Andrew's for 32 years and before that at St James') accepted the presidency, an honorary position until John Blaskett's constitutional revision some 25 years later. As David says, he himself was our first secretary. Alwyn Wright was appointed treasurer and I chairman. John Rippin proposed that we be affiliated to the RSCM, which was to prove a most significant move, our active cooperation and mutual help in choral matters during the earlier decades being a notable and perhaps unusual feature (and incidentally of practical help to me personally as the RSCM's local deanery, and later archdeaconry, representative). This emphasis on choirs as well as organs diminished with the later constitutional changes, the choral festivals largely ceased and the valuable Teachers' Forum was introduced by Anne Marsden Thomas.

The first of our quite large-scale annual Festival Services was held at St Stephen's, Bush Hill Park in October 1964 and this was the occasion when John Cooke introduced himself following his arrival at St Paul's, Winchmore Hill.

The EDOA's 30th anniversary was celebrated with a gala luncheon at Queenswood (Anne Marsden Thomas presiding, who also that year shared with me an EDOA anniversary recital at St Andrew's). Some may remember my over-long talk at the lunch on our history to date, which included an individual description of each founder member, all those who had been at the inaugural meeting.

At the risk of again being over-long, I'll just recall two unusual past EDOA initiatives. When the C of E Series 3 prayer book was authorised with its new translation into modern English, all our churches had to find fresh musical settings (shades of the Reformation). We thought it would be helpful to invite all the organists and clergy in the archdeaconry to a demonstration of excerpts from six of the new settings, introduced and sung by our own members, the whole evening put into context by the Liturgical Commission's chairman, Canon Jasper. We also provided a panel to discuss questions as they arose. This 'Series 3 Sing-in' was held at Edmonton Parish Church in March 1973 and clearly met a particular need, one that had recurred after half a millennium! That certainly was one long evening, which for Pam also included entertaining our distinguished guest.

The other memory concerns the Chancel Organ in Enfield Parish Church which was built, at Robert Evans' original suggestion and as proclaimed in letters of gold on the case at impost level, in memory of our first President, Alfred Flower. Given the west end position of the main organ and therefore the practical need for an organ at the front for choir accompaniment and concert continuo work, together with the proposed new instrument's popular dedication to Alfred (who since the return of the organ to a west gallery had always hoped for an east end section playable from the same console), money was not really a problem. But the Vicar's anxiety about likely local reaction to our acquiring a second organ in those hard times was. So we suggested that the new organ should be provided, not by the church, but by the local organists' association, in whose name the appeal would be launched. Everyone was happy with this and we now have this delightful little instrument by HNB, its gable-topped case, with folding wings and carved pipe shades clear of natural-length speaking pipes, designed by Herbert Norman; its gothic style and John Norman's classical voicing contrasting with the famous eighteenth century organ at the other end of the church.

This chancel organ was opened in May 1972 with a recital given by six EDOA members: Peter Smith, John Flower, Robin Coxon, Robert Evans, Jeremy Spurgeon and Eric Pask. And while reviewing these few aspects of Enfield's musical history, I'll just add that Alfred Flower was only the seventh Organist of Enfield since the Bridge/Hill organ was first built in 1752.

Eric Pask