

The EDOA is 50! - Celebration Event

held at St. James Church, Enfield Highway on 6th July 2013 at 5:00 p.m.



As promised in the last newsletter, this was EDOA's review of its first half-century, held in one of the churches involved in its early history. Our celebration, attended by about 13 members, was followed by a public recital – our annual Members' Recital – by which time the audience numbers had doubled.

The church is constructed in brick, weathered on the outside to a grey finish and in a style sometimes called “Corporation Gothic”. Inside, the area is clear of pillars and obstructions (partly as a result of a fire in 1967) so the painted ceiling and roof beams have their full visual effect. There is little or no stained glass, so plenty of natural light. The chancel and sanctuary areas are defined by being raised above the floor level of the nave and the two-manual pipe organ is sited in the “chancel” against the north wall. In the body of the church, the sound of speech or music is nicely reverberant. However, some sound reflections reach the ears having travelled a long way across the open spaces, so clarity can be lost in the process.

The main speaker was our founder, Eric Pask, whose talk is shown separately. He was supported by Jack Beeson and Peter Smith.

Jack had brought with him the inlay cards for the CDs he has compiled of EDOA Festival Evensongs and other services. He is willing to supply the CDs to interested parties, and having bought a set some time ago, I can say they are worth having.

Peter spoke briefly about research work on Victorian music-making he has been undertaking – and promised a session in the future when he would be able to expound at greater length. He then distributed “A new glossary of musical terms”, a sheet written with tongue very firmly in cheek.

Members' Recital

The recital was as ever an opportunity to hear members play a wide variety of music, and to marvel at the way the same instrument changed personality with each different organist. We enjoyed the ceremonies of Adjustment of the Organ Bench, and Hunt the Light Switch (even though the light above the music desk could not be made to work) and were glad that neither

blower noise nor action noise were noticeably intrusive. In playing order, the contributors were:

Joyce Beaumont – J. S. Bach *Prelude and Fugue in C Major BWV 545*

(listed as “BMV” 545 – Robin Coxon was looking around for the new car ...) The Prelude, as always, was good fun, complete with the slight *rall* just before the last section, then on to the nicely-judged fugue.

Kathy Westwood – W. Boyce *Voluntary in A Minor*

A good English period piece, with lots of the imitative passages typical of the time, nicely played.

Michael Hennin – J. S. Bach *Fugue in G Minor*

Taken at a good pace, but felt slightly bass-heavy (on the receiving end) with both manuals coupled to pedal throughout.



Terence Atkins – Chorale Preludes.

Two contrasting pieces: one, by Dupré from *Le Tombeau de Titelouze* showed off a solo mutation against flute accompaniment with decidedly non-Anglican harmonies in its slow wanderings. The other, by J. S. Bach, was “Es ist das Heil” (BWV 638) from the *Orgelbüchlein*; always, it seems to me, a good test of an instrument's voicing with the way the inner parts intertwine yet need to be heard separately. Dare I say it, but perhaps even more effective with just a little more *maestoso*?

Robin Coxon – *Air and Five Variations* by Hermann Schroeder (1904–1984) – all in under 3 minutes from start to finish! The variations sounded quasi-Hindemith in their harmonic language. The last variation was, I think, the first time in the recital we had heard full organ.

Dr Peter St John Stokes – Three of his own compositions, *Pastorale-Lament*, a Fugue on “Ave Maris Stella”, and a piece based on the *Skye Boat Song*. The last piece arose from an Organ Club visit to Edinburgh. All three were improvisatory in style, born out of Dr Stokes' own distinctive sound-world.

Jack Beeson – “Evensong” by Bruce Steen, from a 1903 book of pieces for harmonium. This was a wholly inoffensive series of chords of the sort that some of us can (and perhaps do) improvise in our sleep – but sounded better on the organ than on the harmonium!

– a *Sortie* by Lefébure-Wely – but not at all either of those the audience may have been expecting. The entertainment was increased by Jack having to deal with repeated escape attempts by some pages of his copy!

Peter Smith – Hanff Chorale Prelude on “Were God not with us at this time”. The highly-decorated theme was brought out on the Sesquialtera against a flute-based accompaniment.

– Lübeck Prelude and Fugue. As might be expected, the Prelude showed a family resemblance to Buxtehude or early Bach. The repeated notes in the Fugue subject offered a well-met challenge, once several parts were under way, to ensure they were kept distinct and clear.

The final section, building up to full organ, brought the piece, and the recital, to an end.

Paul Minchinton

To round the evening off some members enjoyed a meal at a local carvery. *Ed.*

Eric Pask’s talk

Eric began by recalling the Celebration dinner 20 years earlier when he described each of EDOA’s founding members individually. But this talk would just be an outline of EDOA’s earlier years and how he came to found it – with David Felstead’s active cooperation throughout.

Eric began his appointment at St Andrew’s in Enfield at Michaelmas 1962. He had been at St Peter’s Cranley Gardens in South Kensington which had a large 4-manual organ and professional choir. Enfield was attractive because of its fine choir largely of men and boys, in which his own sons could sing.

On arrival he set out in the local papers how he intended to develop the music at St Andrew’s. The traditional choir would of course continue singing Sunday Matins and Evensong (a former Enfield chorister, Nick Holtam, has recently referred back to those choir days in his ‘blog’. He is now Bishop of Salisbury.) He thought he would add a smaller, mixed choir to lead the recently established Sung Communion, but this came later. What paved the way for his musical outreach in the area were the two things he had experienced back in Kensington: (i) starting monthly recitals (widely advertised, with refreshments, mailing list, frequent celebrity appearances by the likes of Thalben-Ball, Hurford, Herrick, Lumsden, etc.); and (ii) drawing together an open choral society based at the church but not limited to its members; indeed, with singers from almost all local churches and none (including some nuns from London Road). This perhaps gave some substance to what became the Enfield Local Ecumenical Project!

The first recital was in November ’62 and the first concert in December (with the orchestra trailing along the road from Winchmore Hill in thick fog following torchbearers to the waiting audience). And these ventures (which were to continue for 25 years, latterly under the direction of Michael and Marion Smith when they took over at St Andrew’s) struck a chord locally, it seemed, filling rather a gap in local standing choruses (apart from the Christ

Church Choral Society) and in a repertoire not yet big on Britten, major Bach, Alan Ridout, etc. In short, audiences were surprisingly encouraging (Peter Smith was brought by his father in the early days!), and there was a lot of interest especially from organists and other like-minded salt of the earth. People gathered and talked afterwards and the cry increasingly was: Why not an organists' association in Enfield? – David needless to say well to the fore.

As organist of the Parish Church, Eric called an inaugural meeting at his house to discuss the idea. A letter was sent to all the local organists known to him, his predecessor Alfred Flower, and David, and it was an enthusiastic and pretty packed gathering that assembled. So in 1963 the EDOA was born. Compared with today's EDOA it was relatively local but included Chingford and Waltham Cross and soon made advances into Herts. One detail of the meeting stands out, perhaps because it anticipated one of EDOA's earlier strengths: John Rippin's insistence that we be affiliated to the RSCM. Three officers were appointed – Alwyn Wright as Treasurer, David Felstead as Secretary, and Eric Pask as Chairman. In addition, Alfred Flower agreed to be President and he was followed in 1971 by George Moore OBE. Not until many years later was the President's other than an honorary position, a recognition of what they had achieved in the field and the affection in which they were held. The chairman continued to run the association until the Great Waltham Abbey Reform.

The main features of the association over the following years were its informality, friendship and mutual support between members, especially in carrying through a variety of choir activities. Foremost among these was of course the Annual EDOA Choirs' Festival, usually with some 150+ singers, organised and performed by members and first held at St Stephen's Church in October 1964.

In those days most meetings were open discussions in a hall or house, rather than organ visits (the general preference then and now). Topics for discussion would include choir management and training, repertoire choice as well as business. Often a notable authority would lead the discussion, as when John Norman guided members through the process of designing a 3-manual organ – and at the end of the evening they found they had arrived at the new RCO organ, which his firm had just built; or when Josef Henriksen spoke on the strict principles of 18th century north European organ use and then, thus educated, a number of members gave the opening recital on Collins' first truly neo-classical organ, at Shellingford. For the best take on the flavour of earlier EDOA meetings, Eric said, read again Joyce Beaumont's piece in the March Newsletter. EDOA's earliest meetings were held in St Andrew's Cranley Gardens choir vestry; then in a parlour at the Queen's Head; and then for many years at the Lamberts' house and at the Pasks'.

At the Great Reform Meeting at Waltham Abbey (President Anne Marsden-Thomas, Secretary John Blaskett) it was agreed, Eric remembers, that the Constitution should be rewritten. The association's aims should be more organ-based than choir- and church-centred, and the annual choirs' festival should cease. Our activities should no longer be led by the chairman but by a hands-on president, who would replace the chairman. This was largely responding to changes over the years in our membership's makeup and also their choirs'. It was at this Waltham Abbey gathering, to which members came from near and far, that all our earlier records were lost (appropriate, really!).

Finally, before running out of time, Eric made a hasty reference to some other things EDOA has done. Under Anne's inspiration a Teachers' Forum of members was instituted, a most

valuable professional resource. Prue Lambert, when she was Secretary, led the association to take 'reluctant organists' seriously, long before most others did. We commissioned an organ suite (the well-known composer however declining to call it the Enfield Suite). Our members led and demonstrated a Series 3 Sing-in for the clergy and musicians of the Archdeaconry. Robert Evans suggested that a St Andrew's chancel organ be built in Alfred Flower's memory, and we finished up sponsoring the 1972 appeal, with six members playing for its opening. The EDOA had some effect on St James' organ after the fire, including a threatened law suit. We have appointed at least one distinguished vice-president with Enfield origins.