

Edwin Crusha (1863-1954) – Who He?¹

It rhymes with “fuchsia”, before you ask. Edwin Arthur Crusha was a minor late-Victorian composer. One, I suspect, of many whose works have long since vanished from sight. He is absent from Grove’s *Dictionary*, an omission at least partially made good by his inclusion in John Henderson’s magisterial *Dictionary of Composers for Organ*. Yet Crusha’s long life included nearly forty years as organist and choirmaster at All Saints Edmonton, as well as teaching music locally, organising Trinity College London examinations, and introducing scouting to Edmonton (becoming the first District Commissioner for Edmonton). He was born 150 years ago this year, on 13 December 1863.

This article concentrates on Crusha’s music. I first came across the name of Edwin Crusha when I found two of his double chants (one in C, one in A flat) hand written in the back of *The Anglican Chant Book* in the choir vestry at All Saints. I subsequently found at All Saints copies of his Christmas carols *The True Light Carol* and *A Song of Peace*, published by G. Schirmer.

So who was Edwin Crusha?

The Crushas

The internet and the resurgence of interest in family history have made it fairly easy to put Edwin Crusha into some kind of context. His father, Edwin Herbert Crusha (c.1836-1914) was born in Chelmsford. Through the online census returns we can track his career from publisher’s assistant through reporter on a weekly newspaper (1861) to publisher (employing four men and ten boys in 1881), newspaper editor and, by 1911, also registrar of births, deaths and marriages for Tottenham. In April 1870 he gave evidence at the Old Bailey against two men accused of conspiring to defraud people of money for a non-existent ‘Tottenham Regatta’ or rowing match in 1869. He stated then that for more than seven years he had been the editor of a local newspaper, the *Tottenham and Edmonton Herald*.²

E. H. Crusha married Eliza Cowley (1839-99) in Hertfordshire in 1860. By 1863 the couple were living in Tottenham, where their children were born. Edwin Arthur Crusha was born in December 1863 and eight other children followed over the next 15 years: Emma (1865-82), Elizabeth (1866-1960), Ada (1869-1958), William (1870-1949), Nellie (1873-1949), Henry (1875-1924), Minnie (1877-1963) and Sidney (1879-1962).

In the ordinary course of events Crusha might have followed his father into the newspaper business, which was producing three *Herald*-titled newspapers by 1954. His obituary suggests that he very briefly did, until a legacy from an uncle enabled him to study at Trinity College of Music and pursue a musical career. The obituary also says that Crusha senior did not approve of his son’s piano-playing, nor of his ambition to enter the Church. Paternal disapproval, however, does not seem to have created a permanent rift. Crusha was apparently still living in his father’s house as late as 1901, when he was 37 years old and described in the census return as ‘Professor of Music’, i.e. a music teacher. By the time of the 1911 census he was residing at 19 Church Street in Edmonton, barely a stone’s throw from the parish church of All Saints. Crusha’s brother William, of Lansdowne Road Tottenham, had by now taken over as the proprietor of the newspaper.

¹ I am grateful to the staffs of the Enfield and Haringey local history libraries for their assistance in the course of researching preparation of this article, and to Gladys Rixson and Peter Smith for their time and recollections.

² <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/browse.jsp?id=t18700404-306&div=t18700404-306&terms=crusha#highlight>, accessed on 01 April 2013.

A brief life

An internet search brought up Frederick Thornsby's 1912 *Dictionary of Organs and Organists*³ which says (p.265) that Crusha was born in 1863, educated at Edmonton Grammar School, held the FRCO and LMusTCL diplomas, had been organist at All Saints Edmonton since 1889, was a teacher of music, and had had various pieces of music published. It is possible that Crusha attended the old Latymer School in Church Street Edmonton in the 1870s, but records do not survive from that time to establish the point. His name does not appear among the early lists of the Latymer Old Students' Association, nor an obituary of him in either the school magazine or the parish magazine of All Saints Edmonton. We cannot therefore with certainty count Crusha as an alumnus of Latymer School.⁴ It is more plausible that he was educated in Tottenham, possibly at the then Tottenham Grammar School, no longer in existence.

The second edition (1921) of Thornsby's *Dictionary* is at once more and less helpful. It says (p.328) that Crusha was organist of "St Stephen's Chapel of Ease" in Tottenham in 1882 and of All Saints Tottenham since 1890.⁵ The reference to All Saints Tottenham appears plainly wrong (the church is of course *All Hallows*); and the *Victoria County History of Middlesex* makes no mention of a "St Stephen's Chapel of Ease" in Tottenham. What Crusha's obituary states is that at the age of 20 he was appointed organist and choirmaster of Ferns Chapel in Tottenham, becoming organist and choirmaster of Edmonton All Saints in 1890.⁶ That year the local newspaper reported that Crusha had recently been appointed organist and choirmaster of Edmonton parish church, having for six years been organist and choirmaster at Ferns Chapel.⁷ Tottenham's local historian Fred Fisk says that the original Ferns Chapel was an iron church which was subsequently pulled down and a more permanent edifice, called St Stephen's Church, erected.⁸ Presumably people still referred to it as Ferns Chapel.

There is much we still do not know about Crusha. I have been unable to find a photograph of him, but EDOA member Peter Smith, and Gladys Rixson, Reader at All Saints, recall him in his old age as a rather short man with a white beard. We do not know where he went to school or where he first had lessons on the organ. Possibly it was with James Langran (1835-1909), organist of St Paul's Tottenham from 1870.⁹ We do, however, know that Crusha entered the College of Organists (as it then was) in July 1888, obtaining the Associateship in January 1889 and the Fellowship in January 1893.¹⁰ The College became the Royal College of Organists later that year.

EDOA members may be interested to know that the ACO examination consisted of a practical examination and two 3.5 hour papers. The practical comprised three parts: performing a set piece; playing and transposing a hymn tune; and realising at the keyboard four-part harmony from a figured bass. The morning paper consisted of two exercises in writing counterpoint, two in writing answers to fugue subjects, and three short-answer questions (from a choice of nine). The afternoon paper consisted principally of two harmony exercises (one of them from a figured bass), to be written in four vocal parts. The final part of the afternoon paper required candidates to write out modulations using the fewest possible chords and without entering any other key. Crusha's examination in January 1889 required him to write modulations from C major to B major, E minor to A flat major, and from B flat major via F major to C minor.¹¹ All of the answers required the use of 'proper clefs', i.e. the alto and tenor clefs in addition to treble and bass.

³ Available online at <http://archive.org/details/dictionaryoforga00thoruoft>, accessed on 01 April 2013. I am grateful to David Aprahamian Liddle for first drawing Thornsby's work to my attention.

⁴ I am grateful to Andrew Granath, archivist at Latymer School, for this information.

⁵ <http://archive.org/details/dictionaryoforga00thor>, accessed on 01 April 2013.

⁶ *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 3 December 1954.

⁷ *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 20 June 1890.

⁸ Fred Fisk, *The History of the Ancient Parish of Tottenham*, 2nd series (Tottenham, 1923), p.180.

⁹ A brief biography of Langran is given at http://www.hymntime.com/tch/bio/l/a/n/langran_j.htm, accessed on 10 April 2013.

¹⁰ I am grateful to Andrew McCrea of the Royal College of Organists for this information.

¹¹ I am grateful to Frances Pond of the RCO Library for providing copies of the examination papers.

Having passed both ACO and FCO examinations, it probably did not tax Crusha greatly to obtain Trinity College London's Licentiate in Music (LMusTCL), which he did in 1906.¹²

Edwin Crusha's church appointments

It appears that Crusha held only two church appointments: Ferns Chapel in Tottenham (1884-90) and All Saints Edmonton (1890-1929).

Kelly's Directory of Middlesex for 1899 places Ferns Chapel 'by 641 High Road' and says that it was served by the clergy of All Hallows Tottenham, with services at 11am and 7pm.¹³ The impressive redbrick building that now stands on the corner of Lordship Lane at its junction with Tottenham High Road and Lansdowne Road is the former offices of the Tottenham and Edmonton Gas Light and Coke Company, built in 1901.¹⁴ It is numbered 639 High Road and occupies the site of the houses that stood on Lordship Lane as well as the house called Ferns and the Ferns Chapel. 641 High Road is today a hair salon. There is an unnumbered space between the two, where Ferns Chapel must have stood, and it is occupied by a building which apparently is not publicly accessible.

Fred Fisk tells us that the house called "the Ferns" and land adjacent to the north were both purchased by a private individual and in 1876 conveyed to the vicar of Tottenham for church purposes. It was occupied by his curates and an iron church, known as Ferns Chapel, was erected. This was later pulled down and a brick one, known as St Stephen's, erected. Ferns itself was demolished in 1912.¹⁵ I have not been able to determine when Ferns Chapel was demolished.

Edwin Crusha's published music

Crusha's published output is small and confined to the twenty years before 1914. Though still in copyright it is almost all out of print and, on the basis of my experience in researching this article, the present publisher is likely in most cases to be unknown.

In my view the most significant part of Crusha's work is his four settings of the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis:

- In E flat, dedicated to his friends J. Harman Judd¹⁶ and H. O. Witham¹⁷ and published "at the Office of the Organist and Choirmaster, 9 Berners St. London W." in 1896.¹⁸ This is a four-part setting with very little full unison writing. The Magnificat changes key to E major after "Holy is His

¹² I am grateful to Emma Greenwood of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance for this information.

¹³ Extract from the Directory available at <http://forebears.co.uk/england/middlesex/tottenham#ecclesiasticalJurisdiction>, accessed on 10 April 2013.

¹⁴ See *Victoria History of the County of Middlesex* vol. 5, pp.345-348. Available online at www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=26992 and accessed on 12 April 2013.

¹⁵ *History of Tottenham*, pp.179-80.

¹⁶ *Thornsby's Dictionary* (see n.1 above) contains information on Judd at p. 296. John Harman Judd, of Lamb's Cottage Edmonton (i.e. a near neighbour of Crusha's in Church Street Edmonton) was organist of St Michael's Wood Green from 1861 to 1863 and of Christ Church Southgate from 1864.

¹⁷ The second (1921) edition of *Thornsby's Dictionary* (see n.3 above) says at p.437 that Henry O. Witham (b. 1870) was organist of St Mark's Noel Park from 1884 to 1903 and of St Mark's Hamilton Terrace, St John's Wood, from 1903.

¹⁸ An internet search using OCLC WorldCat suggests that *The Organist and Choirmaster* was published from May 1893 until December 1919.

Name” and the choir immediately enters with “And His mercy” on a chord of B major, returns to the key of E flat as in Ex. 1.

Ex. 1: Crusha, Magnificat (1896), excerpt

The musical score shows a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The vocal line has lyrics: "scat-tered the proud, in the i-ma-gi-na-tion of their hearts." The piano accompaniment includes a section marked "Sw." (Swell).

- In D, dedicated to the choir of All Saints Edmonton and published by Charles Vincent in 1898. A copy is in the library of the Royal College of Organists, the only Crusha work that the College holds. Although the canticles are a four-part setting without divisi, the score is marked “This Service may be sung in Unison throughout”.
- A Magnificat (in G) and Nunc Dimittis (in E flat) in chant form, published by Novello & Co in 1906. This setting is also marked as suitable for unison singing “if desirable”.

In E flat, published by Stainer and Bell in 1911 as number 94 in their “Modern Church Services” series. This setting is also in chant form. It is available from Stainer and Bell, because I was only able to obtain it from the British Library on condition that I in turn supplied Stainer and Bell with a copy.

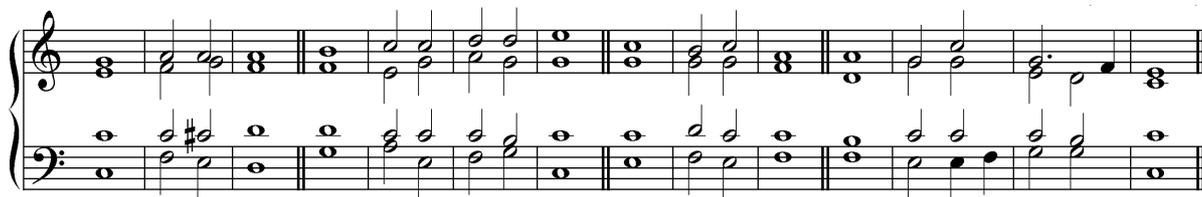
Crusha also composed:

- A setting of the Benedicite in D, published by “the Office of ‘The Organist’” in 1897.
- A set of accompanying harmonies for the Apostles’ Creed and Lord’s Prayer (choir on monotone), published by Vincent Music in 1902.
- A set of two Christmas carols (*Bells Across The Snow* and *O King Of Glory*), published by Vincent Music in 1912.
- A second set of two Christmas carols (*The Rising of the Star* and *A Song of Peace*) published by G. Schirmer in 1913. *A Song of Peace* is dedicated to the then vicar of Edmonton, Prebendary Ernest Sanders.
- A set of seven *Original Compositions for the Organ*, published by C. Vincent in 1898. The seven pieces are entitled ‘Andante in Bb’, ‘Larghetto in E’, ‘Con Moto in F’, ‘Reverie-Meditation in E Flat’, ‘Pastoral and Canon’, ‘An Evening Idyl’ (*sic*) and ‘Matin Song’.

Crusha's unpublished music

Peter Smith has kindly passed to me a hardback manuscript chant book, possibly in the handwriting of Ernest Grove, Crusha's successor at Edmonton. It contains a number of chants attributed to 'E.A.C.' or 'Crusha' together with some suggested uses. Many other chants in the book are unattributed; and of course we cannot know how much Crusha himself may have discarded.

Ex. 2: Crusha's double chant in C.



Nevertheless, we have seven or eight double chants identified as Crusha's:

1. In A flat, suggested for Pss 15, 41 and 119 vv 105-128. The chant opens on A flat (trebles/sopranos and basses at the octave), C (tenors) and E flat (altos).
2. In C, suggested for Pss 29 and 52, and for Ps 85 when sung on Christmas Day. This is reproduced as Ex. 2. The same chant, transposed to D flat, appears as number 6 in this list.
3. In E flat, suggested for Ps 44.
4. In D flat, suggested for Pss 63 and 141.
5. In A flat, suggested for Ps 80. This chant opens on A flat (tenors and basses), E flat (altos) and C (trebles/sopranos).
6. In D flat, suggested for Ps 139, but also given in C without a suggested psalm. In the D flat version the tenors and basses start on D flat an octave apart, while the upper parts start on F and A flat.
7. In A flat, with no suggested psalm. In this chant the tenors and basses start on A flat an octave apart. The altos and trebles/sopranos start on the same notes as in chant 5.
8. In D flat, with no suggested psalm. In this chant the opening chord is D flat (bass) – A flat – F – A flat (treble/soprano).

In the same book there is something I find very interesting. On two staves are sketched out sixteen bars in G major entitled *Let your light* and attributed to 'EAC'. Peter Smith has suggested to me that this is a setting of a communion sentence from the Book of Common Prayer. That is plausible, but there is a top D half way through the final bar which to me hints at something more to come. Sadly, that will remain a mystery.

Crusha's memorials

The best memorial to Edwin Crusha would be that his music is still performed. Two of his chants are used at All Saints Northampton, whose current Director of Music, Lee Dunleavy, took knowledge of them with him from his time at Christ Church Southgate.¹⁹ Peter Smith (organist and choirmaster at All Saints from October 1967 until the end of December 1978), who joined the choir at All Saints under Crusha's successor Ernest Grove in 1952, recalls that in his time as a chorister almost nothing of Crusha's was ever sung at All Saints except, perhaps, occasionally the *Song of Peace*. Peter recalls that at All Saints in the 1950s the canticles were sung to chants and the anthem repertoire contained much Elvey and Barnby and a deal of music by minor Victorian and Edwardian composers. There was no Stanford apart from his chant setting of psalm 150 and no Wesley apart from *Lead me, Lord*. Stainer's *Sevenfold Amen* was a regularly used at Evensong and his harmonisation of Merbecke's communion service was used.²⁰

It is therefore pleasing to record that a visiting choir sang Crusha's D major canticles at Evensong in All Saints in September 2010; and his *Song of Peace* has occasionally been sung there subsequently. It is even more pleasing to record that a commemorative Choral Evensong was held at All Saints on 23 June 2013 (RSCM Music Sunday). The church's choir was joined by guest singers from, among others, St Aldhelm's Edmonton, St Mary's Hendon and St Peter's Vauxhall for a service which included Crusha's 1906 chant setting of the canticles, psalm 98 sung to his double chant in C, and the anthem *A Song of Peace*. His *Andante in B flat* was played before the service. On 3 November 2013 (All Saints Sunday) Crusha's 1911 evening canticles were sung at All Saints together with psalm 148 to a Crusha chant.

Edwin Crusha has a tangible memorial at All Saints. In 1969 an additional section of oak panelling was installed beneath the east window of the church. It bears his name and records his long service as organist and choirmaster. The dedication ceremony was performed, appropriately enough, by Crusha's nephew, the Reverend Edwin Crusha, rector of Charlton-on-Otmoor.²¹ Today the memorial inscription is hidden beneath the Mothers' Union banner, but it can be seen by lifting the banner slightly. In more ways than one Crusha's name has passed—not permanently, I hope—from our sight.

Mark Harris

¹⁹ Personal communication from Lee Dunleavy, June 2013.

²⁰ Personal communication from Peter Smith, 28 June 2013.

²¹ *Tottenham and Edmonton Weekly Herald*, 19 December 1969.