

**President's Message
December 2014**

We need no reminding that the Royal College of Organists has been celebrating its 150th anniversary, having been founded in 1864. Its much desired Royal Charter was awarded in 1893. In recent times, its growing outreach programme developed in 2009 into the RCO Academy (Director: Simon Williams), and this would have been thoroughly approved of by the RCO's first Secretary, Richard Limpus, who wished to establish a body for "elevating and advancing our professional status". The College's celebratory *150 for 150 Recital Challenge* has proved a huge success and all of the recital details can be found on www.rco.org.uk. The official culmination was Martin Baker's at the Royal Festival Hall in December, which included a commissioned work by Simon Holt and the rarely heard Organ Sonata by Edward Bairstow. This was the second in the 2014-15 *International Organ Series*. Look out for Ann-Elise Smoot on 2nd February and Thomas Trotter on 27th April, both Mondays. Meanwhile, we in the EDOA have every reason to feel proud that it was launched in the autumn to much acclaim by our own very distinguished honorary member, Jennifer Bate.

The second of Peter Smith's presentations on 'The Rise of the English Choral Tradition' was well supported by members of the congregation of Ware Parish Church, an indication of the esteem in which he is held for his ongoing work there. It was a shame that the EDOA could only muster a mere handful of supporters for his excellent talk, which has been splendidly reviewed for this newsletter by Mark Harris. We listened agog as Peter revealed some of the appalling musical standards encountered in churches in the early nineteenth century and we savoured with delight such nuggets as that the bass soloist in the first performance of *Elijah* was Charles Stanford's father. Our warm thanks go to Peter and (dare I suggest?) we look forward, in hope, to a third one.

Our AGM will soon be upon us and you are asked to make every effort to attend on the afternoon of Saturday 7th February at St Mary's, Ponsbourne. The timings are simple to remember: 5pm AGM, 6pm recital and 7pm meal and as always details are on the website and in this newsletter. It is so convenient that the restaurant is adjacent to the church, and it is most pleasing that Robert Evans has agreed to be our recitalist.

With my best wishes for a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and a happy and fulfilling New Year,

Terence Atkins