

Eric Pask 1928-2020

The passing of Eric Pask at the ripe age of 91 marks the end of an era. He was a man of extraordinary energy whose life was dedicated to the service of Church music.

Eric was born some ten years after the end of the First World War. These were difficult times and the effects of the great depression made life challenging for everyone. When World War Two began, Eric was evacuated to the King Edward VI boarding school in Bury St Edmunds which was situated a stone's throw from the Cathedral. He spent much of his time there and developed a love of church music which stayed with him for the rest of his long life. On the completion of his schooling he returned to London and began work at the Bank of England, a position he held until his retirement at the age of 59.

Eric was organist at a number of different churches. His first position was at St Mathias', Caledonian Road, a building in a particularly run down part of London and in close proximity to Pentonville Prison. His second post was at St Michael at Bowes, Wood Green (now demolished), the church where he married his wife Pam. His third appointment at St Peter's, Cranley Gardens boasted a very large four manual Willis organ and the luxury of a professional choir. In the early 1960s he applied for and was offered the post at St Andrew's, Enfield before finally moving to St Nicholas', Harpenden.

During his time at St Andrew's he founded the EDOA and was tireless in his efforts to make it a lively enterprise. I have already made mention of Eric's extraordinary energy and it seems difficult to believe that at one point he was running four choirs simultaneously. These were the Bank of England Choral Society, the St Andrew's Communion Choir, the main Parish Church Choir and the St Andrew's Singers. The latter was a society which ran for many years and put on regular large-scale concerts in the church (with orchestra) including the Bach St Matthew Passion, Christmas Oratorio, St Nicholas Cantata by Britten and Elgar's Music Makers.



Eric Pask at St Nicholas' Church, Harpenden

From 1965 to 1968 I was Eric's assistant at St Andrew's and got to know him well. A regular activity on a Saturday morning was to leave the organ bench and walk across the Market Square to go and play the three manual Compton in the deserted auditorium of the Rialto cinema. His enthusiastic rendering of *The Dam Busters March* still rings in my ears.

Although Eric is no longer with us, the reader of this article will find much evidence of Eric's extraordinary skill as a calligrapher. Numerous framed documents displayed on the walls of St Andrew's church bear witness to his talents.

Eric was for ten years the chief accountant to Esther Rantzen's Childline charity as well as being the Hertfordshire Organ Adviser overseeing countless activities in organ building. At the end of last year a composite opening recital on the rebuilt organ at St Andrew's church was given. I was privileged to have played and Eric generously provided dinner for us afterwards at the Royal Chace Hotel. It was the last time I saw him.

The passing of such a colourful and dedicated individual is a source of much regret. He is survived by his three children Margaret, Philip and Andrew.

Robert Evans

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**An appreciation of Eric Pask
by Joyce Beaumont**

I was sad to hear of Eric's death recently and have thought a lot about his influence on me. When I joined the EDOA many years ago I did not have much confidence. Eric was a great encouragement to me, possibly helped by the fact that I was organist at the Methodist Church where he spent a lot of his early years with his family.

Eric did so much to encourage me and build up my confidence. He invited me to accompany anthems for a forthcoming concert by his singing group. I was quite daunted by his organ at EPC - Enfield Parish Church, or, as I privately named it, 'Eric Pask's Church'. He spent time and effort advising me on registration so that I was confident enough to play and to benefit from the experience. I had a very high regard for his playing and musicianship and I feel I owe him a great debt of gratitude for encouraging me to grow in confidence and for giving me opportunities.

I am sad that he has died but I am very glad to have known him.

Joyce Beaumont