

THE ESSEX ORGANIST



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ESSEX ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION
FOR ORGANISTS AND ORGAN ENTHUSIASTS

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2011

Apologies to our readers for having sent out in error the wrong edition of the last Newsletter. This was due to incompatible software being used at the printing stage. The online version was accurate. It is hoped that use of colour will be resumed for our next issue.

EDITORIAL - RECORDING

When FM radio first arrived I was keen to be able to record music from the Third Programme, so I decided to build a tape recorder incorporating a Brennel reel to reel tape deck, to be later replaced by a Ferrograph deck, both of which enabled off-tape monitoring. The finished recorder gave good results when played through a hi-fi amplifier and speakers.



A few years later transistors began to replace valves and I decided to replace my home built equipment with a ready made recorder that incorporated stereo channels. At about the same time FM radio started to broadcast in stereo.

The next development was the arrival of the cassette in 1965. At first these machines were only satisfactory for recording speech. A few years passed and very gradually these machines improved and recording music became a real possibility. They also began to incorporate off-tape monitoring. The top flight recorders could produce high quality music. There was also a further development, the digital audio tape (DAT). The cassette recorder had a long innings, beginning a decline at the beginning of the present century.

There were inherent problems using tape. One was hiss; this was largely overcome by using the Dolby noise reduction system. Tape had a tendency to break, become twisted, and even stretch. Improvements in cassette design overcame these problems to a large extent. Various improvements in coatings on the tape itself lead to improvements in quality with fewer drop-outs. One thing however that was never really solved was the debris left on the heads and other parts of the machine that had to be cleaned from time to time. More seriously every time a tape was played there was a degradation of sound quality due to tape wear. Eventually the analogue tape became replaced with the CD.

There are several interesting developments which never really took off. There was the 8-track cartridge recorder popular in the mid-1960s through to 1970. In 1976 Sony created the Elcaset which was completely dead by 1980! The minidisk (MD) was created in 1992 and targeted as a replacement to the analogue cassette recorder, but that met its demise by 2011. There were other formats which were similarly short lived.



Nowadays it is possible to purchase a CD recorder and even possible to record using a PC. Today we are spoilt for choice. There are many ways of recording and storing music: CD, MP3, iPOD, iPAD, even the mobile phone.

S David Sandercock

THE EOA INTERVIEW

It had to happen – the interviewer has become the interviewed. John and Beryl Dean are interviewed by John Utting.

JU People with musical interests and abilities have often got music in their families. Is this the case with you?

J Yes, my aunt was a concert pianist who performed with orchestras in places like Llandudno, and my son has had success as a jazz keyboard player and composer.



B My father enjoyed singing in choirs and could play the piano.

JU What about your early life?

J I was born in Pendleton, Manchester, but very soon moved to High Leigh, near Knutsford, Cheshire (Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*), where my early schooling took place. At the age of twelve I was sent to Rydal School in Colwyn Bay, which two of my cousins had attended earlier, but I was not happy there because of bullying. I did however have a wonderful headmaster who fostered my love of English literature.

B I was born in Woodford Green. I went to school locally and became interested in the choir and in sport. I went on to Walthamstow County High School and studied three languages. I have had a Christian faith all my life, initially Methodist, but as sometimes happened in those days, I was taken to the Anglican church because it was closer.

JU What happened after school?

J I was taken out of school at sixteen because I was wanted in my father's furniture business. Because people don't buy furniture very often I had a lot of time during the day to read, mostly English literature, but also translations from other languages. I also developed an interest in cinema.

The biggest change in my life came because of National Service. I joined the Royal Air Force and was taken on to learn photography. I spent seventeen months in Cyprus during the EOKA uprising. During this time I was converted to Christianity by a combination of Bible reading and the example of two men, one of whom worked for the Bible Society. I soon knew that I wanted to work in the Bible Society in London, so I applied to them and was taken on as a junior member of the finance department.

In my early life as a Christian I was rabidly fundamentalist, but over the years my views have modified significantly. I have come to believe that God gives quite different gifts to different churches, whether they be Pentecostal, Catholic, Orthodox or whatever. I was confirmed in the Church of England at the age of 25.

B My mother didn't think that my interest in languages would get me very far, so I left school and got a job in a travel agency, where languages were of some use in helping people to book their holidays. I had friends in Denmark so I went there as an *au pair* to a family with one child. I learnt Danish, but never took a full part in the local Lutheran services, which I now regret. After returning to England I got a job at the Bible Society, so you can imagine what happened next. After some months we were engaged, and we married in 1962.

J I worked in the accounts department of the Bible Society and took an interest in the subject, studying it at night but never sitting for formal qualifications. After a few years I realized that Bible Society accounts were not properly integrated with annual budgets either in the British & Foreign or American Bible Societies, so I devised a new set of budgeting and accounting forms. Senior management accepted this and I was sent to the New York to harmonize accounting and personnel policies and procedures for the two Societies.

We lived in the USA for two years. Soon after my return to the UK I was appointed by the United Bible Societies (the umbrella organization) as world service officer for Africa and Europe, and later for Africa and the Americas. This involved a great deal of travelling, and dealing with Christians of all confessions. I always wanted to speak directly to my associates so I studied French, German and Spanish as opportunity offered.

Perhaps the best and most interesting part of my career followed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. After so many years of repression, the new era of religious freedom led to a huge demand for Bibles from every Christian denomination. I had the task of helping new Bible Societies to come into existence, which meant bringing people together from all these varied backgrounds. In those days few people spoke English in that part of the world, so I decided that I would have to learn Russian. I was granted a sabbatical for five months during the Moscow winter to have formal instruction and practical experience in the Russian language. This helped me greatly as I tried to understand the needs and attitudes of the people I was working with. After nine exciting years of working in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union I retired in 2001.

B After our two children were born I did no formal work but did a lot of voluntary work for the church and for the Mothers' Union. Once my children got a bit older I looked around for more formal work and ended up training as a tennis coach.

JU Tell us more about your children.

J Our son Tim, who is now 47, is a very competent jazz pianist, and obtained a PhD on the subject of jazz notation. He also makes musical instruments out of everyday materials such as biscuit tins, broom handles etc. His wife Eme is a high-flying business executive while managing to be at the same time a delightful person. We have three extraordinary grandchildren: Josie, Nat and Millie. Our daughter Judith is an artist and teacher who has won the Jerwood Sculpture Prize and has exhibited in many parts of the world. She is currently a senior lecturer in fine arts at the University of the West in Bristol.

JU We haven't said much about music, so tell me when and how your musical interests began.

J My family were musical and artistic. My father loved Gilbert and Sullivan as well as classical music. I remember a '78' of Bach's G minor Fantasia and Fugue which I played incessantly and which had a strong effect on me. I was sent for piano lessons from the age of eight, and between twelve and sixteen was able to accompany Evensong, but not, I'm afraid, as competently as I would have liked. During my working life I took what opportunities I could to play the piano, but it wasn't until retirement that I came back to the organ and for some years played at Great Waltham.

B Next year I will have been accompanying hymns for 60 years! I started piano lessons at the age of eight and my first playing for the church was on the harmonium. I was also in a choir. I wanted to get more formal lessons and to make progress on the pedals, so I joined the CDOA which at that time was offering lessons with Gillian. These were very helpful, but I never became fully confident with the pedals. I continue to play regularly at Ford End.

JU What are your musical likes and dislikes?

J I like the Beatles but no other form of pop music. I also like most forms of jazz. I have a great interest in less familiar music and obscure composers, so I particularly enjoy *Composer of the Week* on Radio 3. The works of people like Chausson, Pfitzner, Spohr, Zemlinsky, etc. deserve to be heard a lot more. Although there are a few good modern hymns, all too many are doggerel both in words and music.

B I don't much like pop music or jazz. I do like religious music and music from the classical period is most to my taste. I too dislike some modern hymns.

JU Lastly, are there any aspects of your life which you feel might have turned out better? Anything you regret?

J No, I have had such an enjoyable life. Having said that, on days when I go to Cambridge to do research in the Bible Society library, I sometimes think that I would have liked to have studied there for a degree, if I could have got in—but then I probably wouldn't have had anything like such an interesting career. In 44 years I visited about 90 countries in the service of the Bible Societies, and worked with some remarkable people.

B My only regret goes back to my days in Denmark, where I missed the chance to learn more about the Lutheran Church.

JU Thank you both very much, and where's the tea?

Members are reminded that subscriptions are due on 1 September:

£20 joint membership, £15 individual membership, £5 students.

Please make cheques payable to Essex Organists' Association (or EOA).

Send to: Hon Treasurer Michael Little, 11 Long Brandocks, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex, CM1 3LT

Forthcoming EOA Events

NB All events are open to non-members unless indicated.

Sunday 18 September, 2.30 to 4.00pm. 'At Home' at President's new home. Please bring carpet slippers and music to play. Teas will be served. Please complete the reply slip overleaf.

Saturday 15 October, 2.30pm. St Nicolas', Witham. Workshop for Advent and Christmas music. Music from Daces' will be available at discounted prices.

Sunday 20 November, 1pm for 1.30pm. EOA luncheon at Church of the Ascension hall, Maltese Road, Chelmsford. Guest speaker will be IAO President, Alan Thurlow. EOA members only.

Provisional Dates for 2012

February. Music by an anniversary composer. Date and venue to be announced.

Saturday 10 March, 2pm. EOA Organ Competition at New Hall School, Chelmsford.

April. Visit to St Marylebone Church, London and one other church. Date to be announced.

Saturday 12 May, 2.30pm. Shenfield Parish Church. 'How to listen to the organ', an illustrated talk by Dr Gillian Ward Russell.

Wednesday 27 June, 7.30pm. AGM. Venue to be announced.

Other Forthcoming Events

Saturday 10 September 3 pm St Katharine Little Bardfield *Into the Tardis Off we Go with Doctor Who? With Dr Gillian Ward Russell* Time Travel through Organ Music. Tickets £12 from Charles Thompson 01371 811130 Peter Wood 01371 856382

WORKSHOP ON ORGAN MUSIC FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS.

Saturday 15 October, 2.30-4pm at St Nicolas' Witham.

It might still be summer time but organists need to be planning their music for Advent and Christmas. I shall be leading a workshop and suggesting a mixture of old and new, simple and more challenging music for this season. Come along with your own ideas (and scores); be ready to play informally, or to just listen. I shall bring scores from Daces who have kindly agreed that they can be purchased at discounted prices.

Gillian Ward Russell

Please fill in the tear-off form below

To Dr Gillian Ward Russell
15, The Heights Danbury Chelmsford CM3 4AG
Telephone: 01245 226551
Email g.ward.russell@O2.co.uk

'At Home': Sunday 18 September 2.30pm to 4.00pm

I shall/shall not be attending the 'At Home'

I shall be bringing ... guests.

PRINT NAME

Signature