



Bexley District Organists' &
Choirmasters' Association
NEWSLETTER

Website: <http://bdoca.org.uk>

Patron: Daniel Moulton

IAO

Affiliated to the
Incorporated
Association
Of Organists

Diary Dates 2026

Please do support these events - the more the merrier!

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 9th September, 2026 at 7:30pm

All Saints' church, Rectory Lane, Foots Cray, DA14 6BX

Members are warmly invited to attend our Annual General Meeting.
The meeting will commence with a composite recital from some of our
members and be followed by light refreshments.

Please contact Reg. if you wish to participate in the recital.

BDOCA Singers Choral Evensong

31st October at 5pm

Please see details below

August 2026

Last issue April 2026

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Memories of BDOCA over the years.

2028 is the 70th Anniversary of the association and the committee would like to put together an exhibition of your memories of past events. Please contact Reg. or Linden with your contributions.

2026 Events.

Please see the diary on page one for the events that are being planned for 2026. Attendance to events by the membership can, on occasion, be rather low. Events are planned for the whole membership, not just for the enjoyment of the committee members, so please make every effort to attend as much as possible.

Please let the committee know if you have any ideas for events.

Members of other associations are also very welcome to attend events.

BDOCA Singers Evensong

This will be at All Saints' church, Sydenham on Saturday 31st October 2026 at 5pm. The theme continues with music by SS Wesley, and celebrates All Saints' Day. All members and friends welcome to attend the service, and please advertise it to your respective congregations.

Introit: Nares - *The souls of the righteous*

Preces and responses: Sanders

Psalm 1 – S. S. Wesley chant

Magnificat + Nunc dimittis: Brewer in D

Anthem: S S Wesley - *Let us now praise famous men*

Hymn – *Saviour, again* tune Ellingham (S S Wesley)



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BDOCA Singers Membership

The BDOCA Singers are keen to increase membership. The SATB choir was formed in 2018 and first sang Evensong in March 2019. The proposal at that time was to sing Choral Evensong 2-3 times a year at various churches in the area with 4-5 rehearsals in the preceding months. The pandemic interrupted this somewhat, but the choir resumed in 2022 and the Evensong at St Mary's, Welling, in October was the second such service given in 2023. A further 2 Evensongs were sung in 2024 and 2025. In order to continue to enjoy a varied and interesting repertoire, the choir needs to grow. Rehearsals are held at All Saints' church, Foots Cray. The first rehearsal for the next evensong will be on Tuesday 6th October at 7:45pm. Singers do not have to be BDOCA members and there is no subscription fee other than a small donation for the church at each rehearsal, so please spread the word, and let Reg. know if you are interested in joining.

Reports of past events

Choral Evensong – 25th April

As many of you may know, The Cathedral Music Trust is seeking to obtain recognition via an UNESCO Heritage status as a way of safeguarding our traditional English Sacred Choral Music. The Trust says recognition would celebrate the cultural and educational value, reinforce its community role and help safeguard its future.

So, it was a delight and pleasure to continue to contribute to this tradition by once again having the BDOCA Choir sing Evensong on Saturday 25th April at St. Johns' church, Sidcup. This year it had a theme remembering 150th anniversary of the death of S.S. Wesley, nearly to the day (19th April, 1876).



Some 17 singers, (in red, blue, black and purple robes) under Reg.'s direction sang the introit O Lord my God, Psalm 24 to a Wesley chant and his Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis in F. As there did not seem to be any Preces and Responses by Wesley, we used those in C by Thomas Ebdon. And of course, no tribute could be made without the very well-known anthem *Blessed be the God and Father*, with a couple of thunderous organ chords just before the final section – *But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever*.

Following the blessing, having played for the service, Peter gave us yet again wonderfully selected and played a voluntary by, of course, S.S. Wesley: *Choral Song*. The service was led by The Revd. Canon Cathy Knight-Scott. We had readings from Deuteronomy and John read by members of the choir. Sadly, we yet again out-numbered the congregation by about 2:1).

Thank you for organising and leading all this, Reg., and we look forward to seeing what you will find for us to sing and enjoy on the Eve of All Saints' Day at the end of October.

Melvyn French.

Canon Giles Talk on AI – 10th May

Being the very model of a modern organists' and choirmasters' association, as we are, we were glad to host a talk on the subject of AI and hymns, given by Rev'd Canon Dr Gordon Giles, from Rochester Cathedral, at St John's Church, Welling, on Wednesday 10th May.

Canon Giles is a music graduate, and his doctoral research was on hymnology, so he is very well placed to discuss the subject. The introduction to the subject illustrated many of the practical and ethical issues very forcefully. We were "treated" (if one dares consider that word apposite) with words for a hymn written by an AI app at Canon Giles's bidding; we then collectively proceeded to dissect said hymn and enumerate its considerable deficiencies.



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Similarly, Canon Giles showed us an example of a collect (liturgical prayer with a strict rhetorical formula) composed by an AI app. It quickly became apparent that the "thoughtless" nature of AI often led to texts that did not hold together, though they apparently fitted the parameters given to the AI.

Those of a more deterministic mindset may have interpreted a leak in the roof early in the talk, during a fierce blustery squall, as a sign of divine rebuke at the use of such gadgetry. In any case, we moved to a more sheltered part of the building to continue our discussion. Most of the focus thereafter was on the meaning of works of art. The frames of reference were fairly familiar to me, though theories of aesthetics are not necessarily the typical fare of the average natter down the pub. One of the important points that was reinforced was that the meaning of the art is not merely in the created object, but in the intention behind it. This of course becomes particularly relevant for liturgy, where participation is integral to the purpose of a work of art, whether a hymn, spoken text, or an icon, for example.

The talk and discussion were very thought-provoking. The consensus seemed to be that the human element is the crucial aspect in music, and we should not allow technology to cloak it. This will continue to be a hot topic for quite some time to come.

Aeron Preston.

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Continuing the theme above, Peter Mitchel has been having fun with ChatGBT, requesting limericks on the following themes (he would not want to take the credit for any of the compositions!):

| <u><b>The Treasure Hunt</b></u>                                                                                                                                                                   | <u><b>The BDOCA Committee</b></u>                                                                                                                                                              | <u><b>The Newsletter</b></u>                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| There once was a hunt through<br>Woodchurch so fair,<br>With Organists hunting<br>everywhere.<br>They followed each clue,<br>Then met for a brew,<br>And swapped tales with good food<br>to spare | The Bexley Committee would<br>meet,<br>With agendas both lengthy and<br>neat.<br>Though the minutes were long,<br>There was laughter and song,<br>And a Chinese meal made every<br>vote sweet. | There once was an editor, Miss<br>Gray,<br>Whose newsletter brightened the<br>day.<br>With red pen in hand,<br>She kept standards well-planned,<br>And made BDOCA shine all the<br>way. |

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Treasure Hunt – 20th June

It was a sunny day when the BDOCA Treasure Hunt took place on Saturday 20th June in the village of Woodchurch, Kent. It being in the region of fifty miles from Bexley, it is probably the furthest distance travelled for such an event.

My nephew Tom and me arrived just before 3.00pm at the appointed venue – The Village Green. It was good to see a few familiar faces as we arrived. Further participants arrived before the event began. I handed the clipboards to those who needed one and Aeron handed out the question sheets.

As I had assisted Aeron with possible questions, I could take not part so I discreetly followed those hopefully enjoying an afternoon of discovery. The questions followed a path through the village – and the opening questions made use of the beacon installed in 2022 for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the fact the village won the Best Kept Village in 1994.





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When participants reached question twelve: "Where may half a dozen ring the changes?" and found the answer was the Six Bells Inn, several (if not all) took the opportunity for a rest and some refreshment!!

A path close to the inn took the treasure hunt to the local (non-working) Windmill and some were befuddled with question fourteen: "The initials of the dedicatees of one of the benches form a triad. What is this triad?" – the

answer being "A minor (Eileen Anthony and Cecil Anthony → A, C, E)".



Question fifteen was very appropriate for an Organists' Treasure Hunt: "Which famous organist presented the windmill to the parish?". It was Sir Sydney Nicholson and question sixteen asked the participants in which year it was given the parish – the answer being 1947.

The Treasure Hunt then moved onto the village church (All Saints) and churchyard for the final four questions. Outside the church, participants discovered Scots Pine Trees were to be found and for the final question (number twenty) a little research was needed to discover that there are two other churches in the Parish (St Margaret's, Bethersden and St Mary's, High Halden).



Before the concluding recital, the answers were given and prizes handed out. There were nine teams taking part and in the region of fifteen of us. Disappointingly for this report, I cannot remember who scored the most correct answers!!

Aeron gave the recital on the two manual tracker instrument (dated from ~ 1886) – as you can see it has decorative pipe work. We were joined for the recital by the vicar (Rev Sue Rose) and a churchwarden.

Aeron played two pieces:

Prelude and Fugue in E minor, BWV 548 - J. S. Bach (1685 – 1750)

Variations on "God Save The King" - S. S. Wesley (1810 – 1876)

The recital rounded off a very pleasant afternoon for those in attendance and thanks goes to Aeron for all his hard work in both preparing the detail of the Treasure Hunt and providing an illuminating recital.

On the journey home, some concluded the excursion into the Kent countryside with a meal at The George Inn, Maidstone.

Doug Snow



Celebrity Recital – 24th July

Our Celebrity Recital this year was given by Francesca Massey, erstwhile organist of Rochester cathedral. In practising the day before, she hit dreadful problems with the pistons behaving very strangely. That didn't get sorted out until later that evening, so she had to come in early on the Friday to re-set everything. Her first piece, which lasted for the first half of her programme, was Percy Whitlock's rarely heard, and very expansive, Sonata in C minor. Francesca used the pistons (as well as plenty of hand registration) to give us a varied palette of colours through this epic piece. She will be recording this work soon, so look out for it.

For the second half of her programme, she turned to two Swedish composers: Otto Olsson and Oskar Lindberg, the first work being more classical in its leanings, while the second had a freer romantic tinge to it. She followed this with Bach's third Trio Sonata, where she used gently contrasting timbres (I think you have to choose your



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positioning in the building to gauge this properly). The final two pieces were by the modern-day composer, Francis Pott, with two works based on hymn tunes - the last one was 'King's Lynn', a sturdy folk tune which deserves to be better known than it is, and the Potts work brought out its strength.

This was a wonderful evening. When it behaves, the organ at St John's, Sidcup, is a splendid instrument, but most splendid was Francesca's playing.

Reg. Boulton.

Summer Lunch

Despite the crippling temperature of 35 degrees centigrade (or 95degrees in 'real money') went ahead last week. Here, eight brave members battled through road works and traffic to attend our summer lunch. 'The Star' was the venue – changed at the last minute from North Cray Road which was inaccessible. Notwithstanding this, all had a delicious two-course lunch at a reasonable price with first class service. The Guinness Record for the slowest eater was awarded to Mr. Bishop! Congratulations to him.

Linden Toy.

(It needs to be added that Barrie was the only one to have a starter, and the rest of us were snarlingly hungry for our main course. So, we all glared at him – while he took no notice, carried on chewing and chatting. RGB)

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## Bursary

BDOCA is keen to encourage youngsters to learn the organ and will give sympathetic consideration to requests for financial support. Please write to Linden with your request and supply supporting details.

## Website

In conjunction with Alan Hunt (who has kindly run our website for many years), Aeron has updated it. Aeron now invites contributions and also needs to update the "available to deputise" information.

Your contributions will be very welcome.

## Your Committee

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