



**1944 – 2024**



## The first fifty years...

*“We are planning to hold a Music Festival in May and rely on all you young teachers to support us”*

These were the words of **Mr E Bluett** at a Purley Music Circle concert in the Autumn of 1943 when he and his co-founder, **Mrs Garfield Howe**, launched the project which was to take place at Russell Hill School, Purley.

In 1946 there were 373 entries for the classes in Solo singing, Choirs, Strings, Wind, Percussion Bands, Pianoforte and ‘Elocution’ and Drama, and a group of renowned adjudicators was found.

Mr Bluett, the original moving spirit, became chairman in 1953. By now the entries had risen to 504.



The first President of the Festival was **Sir George Dyson**, Principal of the Royal College of Music, to be followed by **Miss Dorothy Grinstead** who had already entered her pupils for piano classes. She became a most conscientious and helpful



president, attending many sessions of the festival each year. She was always present at the Annual General Meeting and several times presented the awards at the annual concert.

Great interest was shown in the Festival by the local opera singer **Hervey Alan**. Several times he presented the prizes, and when he himself donated a silver challenge cup, he decided that it was to be for musicianship.

At the same time a trophy for strings playing was given the **Founder's Cup** presented by Mr Bluett.

As the financial position of the Festival improved, new classes were introduced, several being suggested by **Mrs Du Pré**, Jacqueline's mother. With the election of **Miss Cecily Skinner** in 1958 came the expansion of the Speech and Drama section. Mention must also be made of the work of the **Kirk Family**. After helping in the piano section, **Mrs Sheila Kirk** became Festival secretary in 1954.

1961 was a year of administrative change. It became necessary to change the date of the Festival from May to March and to move to the Coulsdon Youth Centre after many years mainly at Coulsdon Methodist Church Hall.

As the years rolled on, there came a succession of able workers in the field of organisation, an outstanding example being **Mrs Marian Wey**, who after many years of entering large numbers into various classes then turned her hand to the work of the Treasurer.

The Festival has indeed been fortunate in attracting the help of so many unsung helpers who each year have given their time to the vital, unspectacular jobs of clerical work, door stewards and a dozen other such tasks without which the whole event would flounder.

There are memories, harrowing and charming, which can never fade. Which of the teachers concerned could fail to shiver at the thought of an hours wait with a hall full of young recorder players while the adjudicator stood at Purley Stations looking for the arrival of the driver who was sitting ready at Coulsdon North?

And what of the piano duettist whose partner failed to appear? When her parents, distressed by the disappointment, asked the adjudicator whether she might be allowed to play her half the piece alone as she had no partner, the response from **Miss Ivey Dickson**

was 'Would I do?' The distinguished adjudicator and small child then solemnly gave their rendering to the enchanted family and audience. It has been a great experience to witness the adjudication skills of such famous figures as **Isabel Baillie, Herbert Howells, Rona Laurie, Lionel Salter** and **Michael Head**.

When the Festival was accepted as member of the prestigious Federation, \**"The British Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech"* then it could claim full maturity as an organisation. The Federation maintains a register of adjudicators, advises on matters of legal or professional importance and provides up to date information on every relevant aspect of the Festival movement.



*\*Now known as "The British and International Federation of Festivals for Music, Dance and Speech"*

**... and in a flash the Festival is celebrating its 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary!**

As with many things in life, the Festival has suffered troughs and peaks through the last 30 years. Entry numbers fluctuated until now we anticipate entries from well over a thousand participants each year.

Venues throughout the years have been varied until, hopefully, we are now settled into our current locations at Trinity School, Wilson's

School and Sanderstead United Reformed Church, all of which offer excellent facilities to our Festival participants.

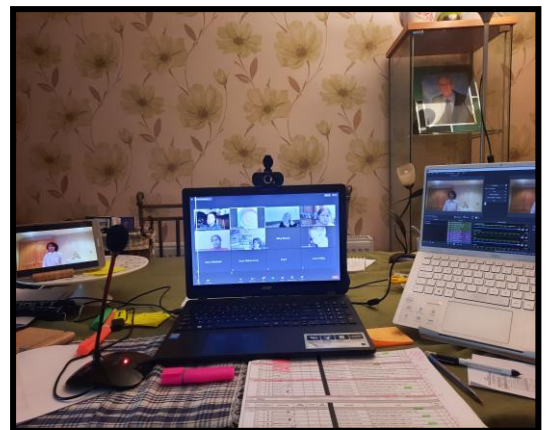
The age of technology has changed the whole aspect of Festival organisation and administration. Entries are now made online – no more the posting of application forms and cheques! The famous generated excel sheet provides all the information the section secretaries need to formulate their timetables. Social media bring followers to the Festival and a website keeps up to date with Festival news.

### ***And who can forget 2021?***

Would a world-wide pandemic stop the Coulsdon and Purley Festival? Of course not!

All of our technical skills were put to the test with 845 brave souls submitting videos of their performances.

A 'live' Festival followed via Zoom meetings with the adjudicator as we all watched the videos on a special YouTube channel and each person received immediate feedback on their performance. This was a truly international event including entries



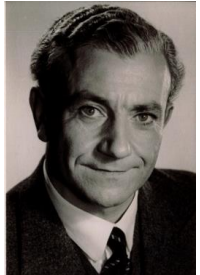




from Ireland and visitors 'popping in' from France and Austria!

### ***Feedback about the Virtual Festival:***

***"CONGRATULATIONS to Coulsdon and Purley Festival for harnessing the technology and making the Festival experiences so personal and enjoyable for all the entrants."***

## PRESIDENTS OF COULSDON AND PURLEY FESTIVAL

1944-1952	1953-1974	1975-1998
<b>SIR GEORGE DYSON</b>	<b>DOROTHY GRINSTEAD</b>	<b>PROF LAURENCE FABIAN SMITH</b>
		
<a href="#">`Sir George Dyson Trust George Dyson (composer) - Wikipedia</a>	Dorothy Grinstead was a much-loved piano teacher and musician in Croydon	Prof Fabian Smith, retired head of singing at the Guildhall, who himself had worked with Sir Thomas Beecham.

1998-2006	2007-2023	2024 -
<b>MARIAN WEY</b>	<b>DARRELL DAVISON</b>	<b>RUSSELL KEABLE</b>
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Marian Wey, who after many years of entering large numbers into various classes then turned her hand to the work of the Treasurer and then President for 8 years.	Conductor and Musical Director of The Little Symphony of London, The New Philharmonic Orchestra and also presents the successful Arthur Davison Concerts at Fairfield, Croydon. He is the Music Director of the Croydon Symphony Orchestra.	Russell Keable has established a reputation as one of Britain's most exciting and versatile musicians.



**COULSDON AND PURLEY FESTIVAL COMMITTEE 2024**

# 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Prizegiving Concert

