

## CHAPTER ONE - THE EARLY YEARS

Charles Gordon Phillips was born at Slough on the thirteenth of October 1908. His father, Alfred Enoch Phillips, was a Baptist minister and his mother, a good looking woman according to the one small photograph that Gordon had of her, was called Martha.

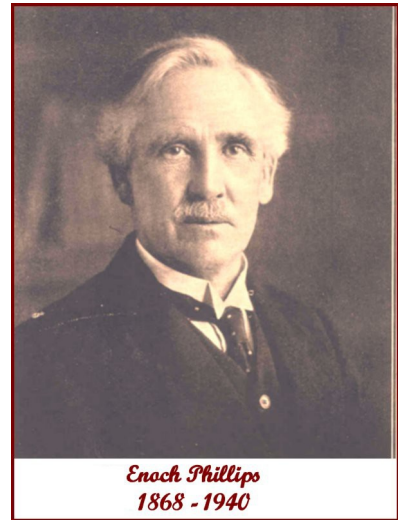
Gordon was an only child. His mother had wanted a girl and was disappointed when Gordon made his appearance, but to compensate for this, she dressed him as a girl for the first few



*Martha Phillips*

months of his life. His father had strict ideas about bringing him up. He was allowed no toys, except those that he could make himself, and Gordon has mentioned making a wooden toy like a doll which he was allowed to keep.

The family moved to West Bridgford in Nottingham, and when Gordon was only five years of age, he began to teach himself to play the



*Enoch Phillips  
1868 - 1940*

piano. Four maiden ladies at his father's church were interested in the small boy working so assiduously at music, and they promised him sixpence if he could learn to play a hymn tune on the piano. This he managed to do.

Although he attended all the services at the church, he never noticed the organ playing, which may have been because it was not of a very high standard.

When Gordon was about twelve, the famous French organist, Louis Vierne, gave a recital at the Albert Hall, Nottingham, and the four ladies who had encouraged Gordon to learn the hymn tune, years before, arranged for him to attend the recital. One piece that Vierne played was the Widor "Toccata", which thrilled Gordon so much that he decided to become an organist, and to make music his career. His parents were not so happy, as they wanted him to become a minister in the church.

Gordon persisted in his desire to learn all he could about music, and, in particular, organ playing, and he himself writes:

**My father was furious, as he considered musicians to be dubious characters, and on one occasion when we had guests for dinner to provide a sympathetic audience for him, he turned to me and addressed me in his best pulpit tones, -"Gordon, if you pursue this ridiculous course, you will, no doubt, end up in the gutter, playing the violin." - I rather removed the wind from his sails by replying - "Well, father, I had better be given some violin lessons as preparation for that dismal future."**

As a teenager, he attended the Boys' Grammar School. Prior to that, he took lessons at home with a private tutor. The journey to school was by train. At that time, the trains were compartment trains, with no connecting corridor, so the boys from his area were in one compartment, unsupervised. His parents gave him money for school dinners, but he spent it on music, teaching himself, because they only had one music lesson per term at the school.

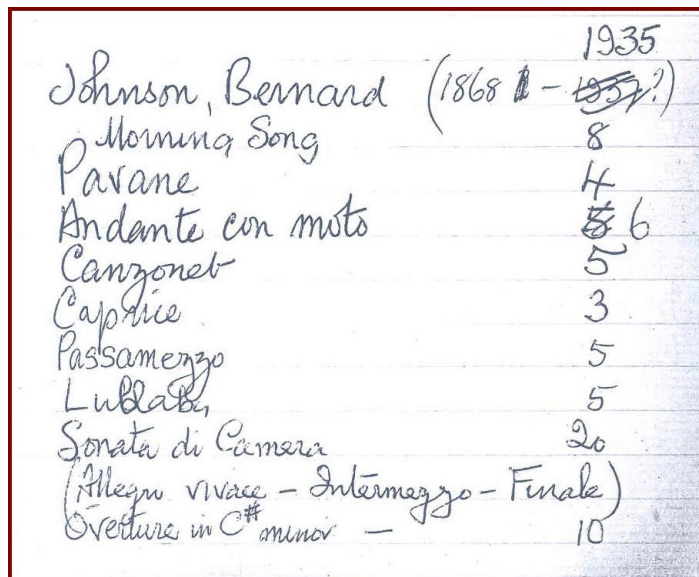
His first certificate for music was awarded in 1924, when he was either fifteen or sixteen. It is from the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music, and as can be seen from the copy opposite is extremely ornate.

Gordon became organist at the village church, (not his father's), where he played each Sunday. He learned a great deal from the volumes of Organ Voluntaries by T. Mee Pattison (Bayley & Ferguson Ltd.), and enjoyed playing the Anglican chants.

When he was seventeen years and eight months old, he Matriculated in English, Mathematics, Mechanics, English History and French and was placed in the Second Division. This would correspond to the modern A levels, and for examination the school came under the University of London.

His father continued to oppose Gordon's burning desire to devote his life to music, and such an argument arose that he left home and went to work as a pupil teacher in the area. He began to have organ lessons with Bernard Johnson (1868 - 1935), the Nottingham City Organist, whom he admired greatly as organist, teacher and composer.

Bernard had gone to the Albert Hall, Nottingham in 1910, after spending five years at Bridlington Priory. Gordon played at least nine of Bernard Johnson's compositions, and listed them in his repertoire book, with the exact number of minutes which each one took.



	1935
Johnson, Bernard (1868 - <del>1937?</del> )	
Morning Song	8
Parane	4
Andante con moto	<del>5</del> 6
Canzonet	5
Caprice	3
Passamezzo	5
Lullaby	5
Sonata di Camera	20
(Allegro vivace - Intermezzo - Finale)	
Overture in C# minor -	10

The "Sonata di Camera" was in three movements, Allegro vivace - Intermezzo - Finale.

Later in life Gordon admitted that Bernard Johnson had been a greater organist and composer than he was, and he certainly learned a lot from him.



**Certificate from the Associated Board of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music**

# UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.



*This is to Certify  
That Charles Gordon Phillips  
Matriculated, as a Student, in  
the University of London, at the  
June Examination in the Year 1926  
and was placed in the Second Division,  
having satisfied the Examiners in*

*English.*

*Mathematics.*

*Mechanics.*

*English History.*

*French.*

*10 July 1926*

*E. C. Perry.*

*Principal Officer.*

## Matriculation Certificate

School teaching occupied him during the days, but after school he played as much organ music as he could, on as many organs as he could, and worked tirelessly at music theory, sometimes staying up all night.

# University of London.

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This is to Certify

That *Charles Gordon Phillips*

has passed as an External Student the  
Intermediate Examination in Music in  
the year 1929.

*29 January 1930*

*Geo. F. Goodchild*

External Registrar.

He gained another music certificate in 1929 from the University of London.

During the four years, 1926 to 1930 when Gordon was at variance with his parents, and living away from home, he continued as organist at the village church, although he had very little money, not being a qualified teacher, so it must have been a tremendous relief when his parents relented in their attitude. They told him that if he would study to be a teacher, they would pay for him to go to Nottingham University.

*Gordon Phillips*

D.Mus., F.R.C.O., F.R.S.A., F.L.C.M., F.C.C.M., A.R.C.M.

Studies: Nottingham University - lessons from  
Bernard Johnson

R. C. M. Sir Ernest Bullock  
& Sir George Thalben Ball } Organ

Dr. Armstrong Gibbs (Composition)

Dr. C. H. Kitson (Harmony & Counterpoint)

Dr. Percy C. Buck (Musicianship)

During the period 1934 - 39 was successively  
Assistant Organist, St. John's, Smith Square and  
then Director of Music, All Saints, Ennismore Gardens.  
After the war, Lecturer in Piano-playing & Composition  
at the City Literary Institute, then Tutor at the RSCM  
and also in the University of Cambridge (Organ teaching)  
Professor of Organ & Harpsichord at the LCM for over  
20 years and Director of Music, All Hallows by the Tower  
since 1956. President, London Guild of Organists and,  
in succession to Sir George Thalben Ball, President of the  
Bach Cantamus Choir.

Over 3000 recitals given at All Hallows  
including a Bach marathon lasting 8 hours and  
20 minutes. Outside recitals include annual visits  
to Cornwall, Scarborough, Filey and Lincoln and  
to Bath as adjudicator in the West of England  
Organ Festival.

Compositions include works for Organ, Woodwind,  
String Orchestra and Recorders, while also acting as  
general editor and instigator of the Tallis to Wesley  
series and other anthologies. Works also published on  
Pedal technique, Articulation in Organ-playing and  
a Basic Organ Tutor.

Other interests - Philosophy, Chess, Latin, and  
the smoking of innumerable cigars!

**Gordon's Curriculum Vitae**