

Civil Defence Association

March of The Civil Defence Services – ‘Come if ye Dare’

Composed by

Anthony John Richards FTCL LRAM LGSM ARCM psm

With the help of Terry Hissey, who found the march, and Major (Retd) Roger Swift, Volunteer Archivist at Kneller Hall, Alan Grace, Volunteer Archivist for the British Forces Broadcasting Service and Gordon Turner of Droit Music who knew him well, the following outline of his life and the history of the recording has been assembled.

Anthony Richards was born in Rochdale on 15 August 1930. He was a chorister at Manchester Cathedral. After leaving Stretford Grammar School he joined the 13th/18th Hussars as a Bandsman playing the clarinet (his principal instrument was the piano) on 30 December 1946 and saw service in North Africa and Malaya. He attended the Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall for the three year Bandmasters course and was the 979th graduate passing out as Corporal on 6 October 1955. Each student has to compose a piece of music in their final year and it was thought likely that ‘Come if ye Dare’ was written for that purpose. However, Gordon Turner advises that this would not have been the case.

In late 1955 or early 1956, when Richards had an administrative post while waiting for his first Bandmaster appointment, there was a competition to find a march for the Civil Defence Services. It would appear that he wrote this piece. The then WO1 School Bandmaster Rodney Bashford suggested that he submit ‘Come if ye Dare’ because it was a good tune, had a suitable title and incorporated CD in the title. Tony Richards won the competition.

The contract was signed with Hawkes & Company (London) Ltd on 9 July 1956 and the Band Set published on 4 August 1956.

Two recordings were made by the Student Band of the Royal Military School of Music (which included Gordon Turner as one of the principal cornets). The first was by the BBC at Kneller Hall, conducted by Rodney Bashford who later became Lt. Colonel and Director of Music at Kneller Hall. Such sessions were, apparently, fairly common. The recording is not in the BBC archive but it has been suggested that they may have passed it to the British Forces Broadcasting Service along with other Regimental Marches. The transfer has been confirmed by Alan Grace but it would appear that ‘Come if ye Dare’ was not with them. The second was by EMI conducted by Lt. Colonel David McBain. The purpose of the session was to record a selection of Regimental Marches which were issued as an LP. At the same time 2 or 3 other marches were recorded, including ‘Come if ye Dare’ but these were never issued commercially. It is clearly this recording that was advertised by the Home Office and sold through Boosey & Hawkes and of which we may have the only extant copy as a ‘78’.

Richards was appointed Bandmaster (Warrant Officer Class 1) to the 1st Battalion, Lancashire Fusiliers on 2 May 1956. Having passed the pre-requisite examination, he was commissioned on the 6 May 1964 with the rank of Lieutenant and appointed Director of Music, Alamein Staff Band, Royal Tank Regiment and was with them until 15 December 1969 having been promoted Captain on 1 April 1966.

On 24 June 1970 he was promoted to rank of Major as DoM, The Life Guards, until he retired in 1984. He was appointed Director of Music of the Oman Police with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. He was responsible for designing and equipping the Royal Oman Police School of Music. It has been suggested that such appointments were usually for no more than 5 years but it is now understood that he returned to the UK on 5 February 1994.

When he retired from the British Army he had been awarded the General Service Medal with clasps Malaya and Cyprus and the Silver Jubilee Medal. He applied 20 years late for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal which he had been entitled to when he was commissioned. By the time he left Oman he had added four further medals namely The Order of the Special Royal Emblem, the Glorious 15th National Day Medal, 20th National Day Medal and the Sultanate Meritorious Medal.

Droit Music was formed by Anthony Richards and Gordon Turner, and their wives whose initials formed the name. Gordon Turner became the sole proprietor in 1996. Gordon Turner was a student bandmaster at Kneller Hall from April 1955 to May 1958.

Anthony Richards died in 2002. His wife, Dorothy has also died and contact has been lost with their son and two daughters. David McBain and Rodney Bashford have also both died.

The only other piece known to have been written by Anthony Richards is the Regimental March of the Army Air Corps, ‘*Recce Flight*’.