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# Sequencer

*The newsletter of the Nottingham & District Society of Organists*

**2014-15, Issue 2**

*This edition of Sequencer was compiled and edited by David Gabe, produced by Peter Siepmann, and printed by Temple Printing Ltd. Please address any correspondence to editor@nottsorganists.co.uk*

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Anthony BSc(Eng) MIET MInstP

So, after much planning, the new year's activities are well underway. Although part of Peter's planning from last year, the French romantic master class with David Butterworth at the Albert Hall in August was much appreciated by those who attended and played. We really are most fortunate in the resources and experience accessible to our Members.

In September, holidays were still in full swing for some people, and a small number attended both St Matthew's Church in Darley Abbey, Derby and the Moravian Church in Ockbrook. We had unlimited access to two very different instruments and worship cultures, and Ron Cutts gives a full account elsewhere in this issue. Ian Wells explored the work of several 20<sup>th</sup> Century composers with Non-Conformist connections, with especial focus on William Lloyd Webber, 2014 being the centenary of his birth. His music is well worth the effort of finding and learning. We had an exploration of technology with our visit to Roger's Music. Roger Hagarty is well known to many members from his years as manager at both Fox's and Williams' music shops, and latterly in his own business. We heard early electronic instruments and came right up to date with Tyros, Physis and Hauptwerk.

I commend the forthcoming Society events listed below, and hope that just a few more Members might feel able to attend than has been the case in recent times. I feel that we need to have a much greater dialogue about what we offer and how we offer it, and how our current demographic of Members might impact on the future style of events. As a refresher, very few Members responded to David Gabe's information seeking questionnaire a couple of years ago, so the Committee really do not know what the Membership would be willing to support. Have we become a much more sedentary group with Sequencer now being the main reason for Membership, as opposed to attending a full calendar of events? Our website gives e-mail addresses for the Officers, and our Secretary's contact details are well known. Please do tell us.



**Rev. Howard Ketton**  
*Guest Speaker at our  
Annual Lunch*

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

### **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January, 7.30pm**

*Eastwood Hill Top RC Church*

Denis Littleton gives a talk on less familiar German composers, and plays some of their music.

Let us learn and widen our own repertoire!

### **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> February, 7.30pm**

*Bulwell Baptist Church.*

President's Desert Island Discs

Who is this product of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Traditionalism? Come and find out. All will be revealed – with propriety!

### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March, 12.30pm**

*Best Western Westminster Hotel, Mansfield Road, Carrington*

Annual Society Lunch

Speaker – Rev. Howard Ketton

### **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April, 7.30pm**

*St Mary's Church, Bulwell*

Members' Recital – a public event

This will be a programme featuring music by blind composers, and also those with local (EM) connections.

## NEWS & RECENT EVENTS

### Visit to Derby, Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2014

The first event of Michael's presidential year was a visit to two churches on the outskirts of Derby. Nine members gathered at the parish church of St. Matthew, Darley Abbey to see the organ rebuilt by Jonathan Wallace in 2000. We entered through a door in the base of the tower and on into a nave as wide as it is long with a high, flat plastered ceiling, no side aisles, all decorated plain white and filled with natural light. A promising acoustic!

Waiting to greet us were John Gratton, Director of Music, and Geoff Howell, the Organist. Sitting at the front was the detached console, a re-used John Compton with two manuals and pedals. The original stop tabs had been replaced with drawstops on two jambs, all provided with a multi-channel capture system using thumb and toe pistons.

A cantilever platform has been constructed high over the tower arch at the west end of the church to carry the pipework, and the decorated pipes of the Great Open diapason form the front of the case. John explained how the pipework from the original Forster and Andrews had been re-used, and new stops were added/derived to give the specification of Sw. 9, Gt. 8, Ped. 6, with three couplers.

Geoff then gave a demonstration by first playing an arrangement of "Nimrod" to illustrate the dynamic range of the instrument, and then "Variations on a nursery theme" by Mozart, showing the wide tonal ranges available. The three players in our party had ample time to enjoy the instrument, while others listened and enjoyed the refreshments provided. John and Geoff are justifiably delighted with this instrument.

I saw on the board "Psalm 150". Upon enquiry they told me, yes it was sung, and the Canticles were Stanford in C. The music team clearly work hard to maintain the choral tradition, and they have an organ to enhance their worship. Well done them!



*The organ case at St Matthews cantilevered over the West door*

Leaving St. Matthew's, we headed eastwards to Ockbrook, where we enjoyed lunch at the Queen's Head before moving on to the Chapel of the Moravian Settlement. Waiting to greet us was the organist, Shaun Brown, and the Minister, Rev. David Howarth, who gave a short talk on the Moravian Church, its traditions and style of worship, loosely Anglican/Non-Conformist.

Preaching is central to their worship, hence the elevated pulpit – central at the front and fully decorated for the forthcoming Harvest Festival. I gathered that enthusiastic hymn singing was practiced, and it is not uncommon to sing five hymns during Communion, so it's on your toes, Mr. Organist!

It follows that an organ capable of supporting congregations large or small is required.

As at St. Matthew's, the church is square in plan with a high ceiling, with the organ in the front right corner. The previous pipe organ was expiring and the inevitable question arose – do we spend “£x” on a rebuild or “£x/4” on an electronic? And the winner is a Viscount customised two manual and pedal electronic with

reverse wooden keyboards and a range of stops to drool over. As is the practice, the case pipes have been retained, but the lower space within is now a chair store! Speakers are placed on the upper level. Sound generation is by Viscount's Physis system, said to be an advance on sound sampling. Ably demonstrated by the organist, it sounded convincing enough. So, you pay your money and make your choice.

Again, four players in the party were given free rein to try the organ, while refreshments were again provided. Warmly welcomed at both churches, we had an enjoyable day in Derby area.

*Ron Cutts*



*Michael Anthony and Ron Cutts discuss the Moravian Church organ*

### **Non-Conformist Church Music: 13 October**

At the President's instigation this meeting moved away from the well-trodden ground of Anglican liturgy and Ian Wells was invited to take a look at the non-conformist tradition. After short comment that this might include Roman Catholic music he moved into expected territory. Using CDs he spent much of the first half looking at William Lloyd Webber's music pointing out that after a high Anglican appointment at All Saints Margaret Street he has been best-known for his time at Westminster Central Hall where he wrote a good deal of music in a Romantic tradition which has come to light at his recent centenary, much of the organ music recorded by Jane Watts. Ian reminded us what a good organist he was demonstrated by his performance of Bonnet's Variations de Concert. John Lill's recording of piano music illustrated the contention of romantic style and we were reminded of his choral music notable the Easter cantata 'The Saviour' which has been much performed.

In the second half Ian listed a number of organist-composers with Free Church backgrounds notably Malcolm Williamson, Percy Fletcher, Graham Barber, Percy Whitlock and Eric Thiman whose cantata 'The Last Supper' has been much performed. He played recordings of Fletcher's Festival Toccata and Whitlock's Wessex Suite before inviting the President to play some recently published Lloyd Webber on the large electronic organ at Bulwell Baptist Church.

A good meeting exploring less-common territory for organists thanks to Ian's characteristic presentation.

*David Gabe*



## Music Technology, Today and tomorrow: 12 November

Our visit to Roger Hagarty's music showroom on the 12<sup>th</sup> November 2014 was a splendid opportunity to review the present music entertainment situation and perhaps to catch a glimpse of future trends. Our first impression on encountering the plethora of keyboards was, "Do you play them, or fly them?" Most of them had more buttons than keys and obviously would take some time to master – but then does not a previously unencountered three/four-manual cathedral organ!

After a warm welcome by our President, Michael Anthony, and coffee and a bun, he explained that this evening's purpose was a follow-up to his introduction of the subject some three or four years ago, and with brief reference to passing trends, he introduced our host, Roger Hagarty.

Roger briefly chronicled his career from thirty years in Fox's Music in the Victoria centre to 2006 when he 'went solo'. He then went on to chart the progress of the electronic simulation of music from the unsatisfactory days of frequency modulation via valves and multifaceted tone wheels, through the various generations of tonal sampling, to the establishment of digital sampling, not only of the original sound but also the conditions within which that sound was produced: this being made available through the greatly increased capabilities of modern computers. This was amply demonstrated by reference to the 'Tyros 5', Yamaha's latest product. This machine was completely programmable and had a vast library of very convincing sounds, including various organ types, plus backing rhythms for auto-accompaniment with suitable 'Intro' and 'Ending' buttons. It also possessed a 16 track Sequencer upon which the user could build up to sixteen levels of melody, accompaniment, rhythm and bass to make a complete 'pop' record minus the vocals.

After the interval Michael Anthony gave a brief history of the basic features of modern development with regard to electronic church organs stating that, over the last eleven years there had been little innovation and that a number of makers had either merged or ceased trading. Only Viscount appeared to be making any headway with the introduction of their 'Physis' concept, which attempts to go back to basic principals. 'Physis', through the modern computer's ability to shift and process vast amounts of data, can manipulate the generated sound of an organ pipe in much the same way as pipe organ voicer, including some of the random elements created by moving air in a confined space and the subtle inconsistency of the acoustic of the original building. However, in a recent double review in OR, the jury is somewhat still out on the efficacy of the product.

The next matter under discussion was the virtual pipe organ system called 'Hauptwerk' which, again through the power of the modern computer, can bring many notable and famous organ sounds within the computer organist geek's (or church's) reach. The down side of this project is that you need 2/3/4 and pedal Midi keyboards along with oodles of computer memory to cope with the necessary data manipulation – but it's cheaper than the real thing! You too can play Salisbury Cathedral or St. Bavo's in Haarlem!

It was stressed that, in most cases and particularly in churches, the absolute necessity for a GOOD sound system was paramount. And this may cost as much as the originating instrument. Any church contemplating anything in this field would do well to contact one of our newest members, Paul Stringfellow, who is the Lighting, Sound and Visual Systems Advisor for the Diocese.

The thorny problem of the longevity of electronic instruments was mentioned but as Roger explained, there was still a market for vintage 30 – 40 year old keyboards and that it was still possible to repair them – at the moment.

I am sure that all those attending would like to pass on their thanks to Roger Hagarty for his hospitality, knowledgeable enthusiasm and fascinating versatility, also the opportunity to learn of recent developments. Grateful thanks also to Michael Anthony for arranging the evening and prompting much to make us think and discuss.

*John Catling*

## News of Members

Members should be informed that our Past President, Peter Siepmann, has recently been awarded his FRCO diploma. Congratulations are in order especially as Peter has made a dramatic career change from Computer Science to Music and has now demonstrated his prowess in two different professions. Not unique but relatively rare. His pieces were the first movement of Mendelssohn's Sonata no.4, Bach's Canonic Variations on Vom Himmel Hoch and the final movement of Lindberg's g minor sonata.

*David Gabe*



## David's Diary

People come and people go – as true in the organ-building fraternity as elsewhere. 2013-14 has been a bad time for us in this respect, for, tragically, we have lost no less than three

masters of their trade recently; all, one may muse, before time.

Robert Shaftoe was one of that little band of one to two man enterprises creating, at their own peaceable rate, a limited number of generally small organs, beautifully crafted and of great musical distinction; whilst also assisting local churches with economic yet well executed restorations and 'transplants.' He was a consummate craftsman of, if anything, excessive modesty, who also turned his hand from time to time to other matters, such as the refitting of the interior of Mohammed Al-Fayed's jet, and the repairing of sash windows at no. 10, Downing Street! Robert's name may not be known to all of you, but it is hugely respected in the trade, and will certainly outlive us in the form of such little beauties as his organs at Ravensden and in Jim Berrow's house in Edgbaston.



*Ravensden*

On 11<sup>th</sup> January this year, William Drake passed away after a period of cancer, and, on 24<sup>th</sup> July Kenneth Tickell died quite unexpectedly after suffering a pulmonary embolism. 'Bill' and 'Ken' were undoubtedly two of the key figures in the huge revival in British organ building we have witnessed over the past twenty or thirty years, and their loss is little short of shattering. Interestingly, they had carved out their own highly regarded niches in more

or less opposite corners of today's craft. Bill specialised in historic restorations (Jesus College, Cambridge being his last completed one), whilst also building historically informed new organs; Ken made substantial inroads into the 'modern' new-organ scene, eschewing rebuilds and restorations whenever he could get away with it. Both, of course, eschewed electric action, preferring to focus all their attention on building up a wealth of experience making nice tracker action – and that does only come with experience.

I first came across the two of them on the same occasion – at an RCO symposium in the City Temple – at which a number of other rather interesting personalia were present, including Dame Gillian Weir and Olav Ussoren (Marcussen) to name but two. One of my abiding memories of that meeting was a discussion/argument (not sure on that!) which developed between Bill and Ken on the subject of what you make in house and what you buy in. Ken was adamant that it was common sense to buy in parts which might otherwise tie up his firm in extra plant and expensive labour-intensive processes, which he considered counter-productive to the business efficiency crucial to the viability of a modern firm; Bill was equally adamant that, as a matter of principle, one should make everything oneself other than the blower. (Actually, I am aware that some of the pipework in his lovely organ in Trinity College, Greenwich was made by Mittermaier in Holland!) Of course, both arguments are, in their own way, perfectly reasonable, though I have always been a little puzzled - perhaps a tad disappointed - by Ken's buying in all his metal pipes from outside. Anyway, neither gave any ground at all, and I think that is exactly what one could have expected from two equally determined and gifted men, each of whom has made an indelible impression on the current British organ scene. Thankfully, each also built up a superb team of colleagues, more than capable of maintaining their respective traditions. Thus it is that William Drake Organ Builders have been able to complete their magnum opus restoration – at Christ Church, Spitalfields; And Ken's team will, after all, build the new organ for Manchester Cathedral. Much can be read elsewhere about William Drake, and Ken Tickell will be covered more fully elsewhere in these pages.

But, indeed, people come and people go, and it was really uplifting recently to read of the flip side of this particular coin. How does a young Swiss national gymnastics champion end up as a fully qualified organ builder, running an organ-building school in

Romania? Well, one never knows what may grow from a tiny seed, or what a chance encounter might eventually lead to, and that is the story of one Barbara Dutli. Passionate about sport in her childhood, she would daily walk to school past the workshop of Ferdinand Stemmer and – it is said – press her nose against the windows in fascination at all the activity therein, whilst taking in the beguiling odours of freshly sawn timber (indeed who can ever forget a Nigel Church organ with its sweet scents of Cedar of Lebanon?) Well, one thing led to another. What with a sporting accident behind her as well as a distinct ambivalence towards competition, she found herself accompanying Stemmer to Transylvania on a mission to restore a historic organ which had been silent for the past twenty years. Being a purely charitable exercise, they had to find ways of raising the necessary funds back in Switzerland. This was partly achieved through friends' donations, but also rather more spectacularly by Barbara's venture into baking fresh crepes in the market square in Zumikon! News of their initial work in Romania quickly spread there so that, by 1999, firm plans were afoot for a brand new organ-building school and workshop in Hărman. As the craft of organ building in Romania had been extinct for decades, this was pioneering stuff indeed. Such has been the school's success, that they now have no less than seventeen fully-trained organ builders to their credit, who in turn are training the next generation of apprentices. The school is now constituted as a firm as well, and does much restoration and new-build work in Transylvania and elsewhere. Organ building, at last, has a secure future once again in Romania – all thanks to the vision and sheer generosity of a remarkable woman and her mentor. Heartening!



*Romania School of organ building*

Are organ-building schools to be found anywhere else? Certainly! They exist in several European countries, the most famous being at Ludwigsburg. Here, even British trainees have been known to step across the threshold and return with specific qualifications as first-class organ builders, including such notables as John Mander, Neil Richerby (one of my earliest choristers at St Mary's) and Mark Venning's daughter, Laura. Britain has never had such an establishment. Our way, by contrast, and especially pre – Drake / Tickell / Goetze & Gwynn, has traditionally been through apprenticeship at sixteen to an individual firm – a great way of picking up lots of tricks of the trade from the old stagers, but equally an opportunity for getting stuck in a rut, in which other ways of doing things – perhaps rather better – have no place. But even that - at long last - looks like changing if the more far-sighted members of the IBO have their way. For there is indeed a strong move afoot to establish a government-sponsored 'trailblazer' educational scheme outside the strictures of one traditional workshop. And, funnily enough, it may all happen nearer to you than you could imagine! More anon...

### **Future Plans for 2015-6 : A Visit to Denmark**

*Ever Met A Dragon? – Or A Mermaid? Well, Now's Your Chance*

Following on somewhat belatedly from our two very successful trips abroad in 1974 and 1975, I am planning a week's trip to Denmark, probably in early 2016. We shall visit a number of outstanding organs as well as Marcussen's organ works; we shall visit nice places, be hosted by two remarkable choirs, and meet some lovely people. The tour will probably span eight days including getting there and back. We shall be based in Esbjerg. Practicalities permitting, we ought to be able also to make brief skirmishes into Sweden and Germany. It looks as though the cost per single person would be in the region of £600-700, with a significant reduction for participants sharing a room. This would be intended to cover air fares, board and lodging in a decent hotel with breakfast, and all internal travel. That figure is also before any block discounts that may apply. Having sounded out a few individual enthusiasts as to what form the trip might take, how long, etc., etc., I am now in a position to ask any interested members of the Society if they would let me have their names, please. This would not constitute any form of commitment; I just need to get an early take on the possible extent of any interest, to assist with the forward planning. (I do not need further notification from those who have already expressed interest.)

Please let me know by any means you wish, and also feel free to ask questions. Some contact details if you don't already have them are: Nottm 9625400 / 07850 833890 / david@luna23.dk

*David Butterworth*

## OBITUARIES

**Frances Phoenix** was born in Nottingham in 1930 and recently died peacefully (2014) at a Nottingham nursing home. Frances was a Nottingham organist and a piano teacher for many years. I was the first of her many piano pupils – a patient and thorough teacher. She was taught the organ initially by her father at Mansfield Road Baptist Church. A pupil at the Manning School for Girls, Frances went on to read Music at Durham University. Frances held 3 organist posts in Nottingham with distinction: Sherwood Methodist (in the old building), the former Redcliffe Road Methodist Church and finally at St Christopher's Church in Sneinton. Frances was married to Brian, and leaves three daughters - Susan, Heather and Judith, and one sister – Audrey Sheppard.

*Philip Hopkins*

### **Kenneth Tickell, 1956-2014**

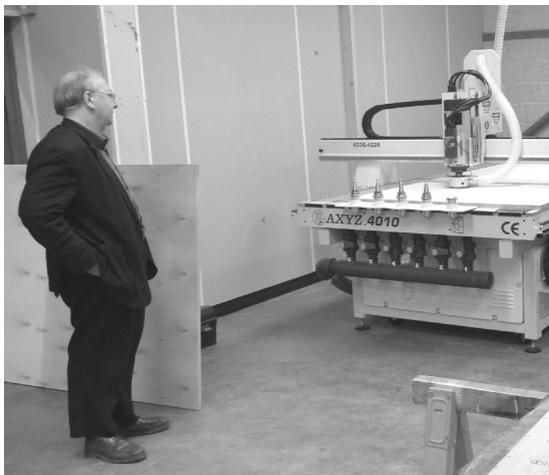
The distinguished East Midlands organ builder died suddenly on 24 July 2014. Paul Hale recalls his times of collaboration with affection, culminating in the organ at St. Mary's RC Cathedral, Newcastle upon Tyne.

*A formal Obituary by Ian Bell has been published in Choir and Organ, Sept./Oct. 2014, p19.*

Kenneth Tickell, who died suddenly on 24<sup>th</sup> August aged 57, was a skilled modern organ-builder in the 'classical revival' style, who had built up a team of craftsmen at his spacious and well-equipped Northampton workshop, where he was renowned for his perfectionism and for being able to visualise how an instrument would look and sound before it was built. Indeed, it was Ken's rare ability to enter a church, cathedral or chapel, return to his office, and rapidly design an organ case which suited the building and position to perfection which brought him such a volume of work. It was the most effective way to 'sell' an organ – one used more rarely by other leading British firms until recently, now that computer-aided design (of which Ken was the first developer in the UK) has made it easier for firms to accomplish this feat.

His company's output includes notable organs for Eton College, Worcester Cathedral, Keble College Oxford, St Mary's Catholic Cathedral Newcastle, Sherborne Abbey Dorset, St Mary le Bow London, St Andrew's and Holy Trinity churches in Headington, St Mary the Less Cambridge, Cheltenham Ladies' College, St Laurence Upminster, St Barnabas Dulwich (an important early success 1997), Oakham Parish Church, Doui Abbey (another important early work), numerous 'box' organs, and Lincoln's Inn chapel, Holborn — which, he said, was his favourite because it was one of those rare venues where everything comes together both visually and acoustically. I worked with him on the Newcastle organ and have spent the last four years planning with him a spectacular new organ for Manchester Cathedral, which would have been, he felt, the crown of his career.

It will now be built by his firm without him, which it is able to do as Ken had made so many of the layout and technical drawings, and will, it is hoped form a worthy memorial to him when complete in February 2017.



*Ken Tickell and the CNC machine*



*Paul Hale at the console of the Tickell organ in Newcastle*

Kenneth Tickell was born at Orrell, Lancashire, on 25th August 1956, the family moving to Coventry when Ken was two. He learnt violin as a child and, despite not having a piano at home, became a youthful organist. He entered Coventry School of Music, where he studied with Robert Weddle (of Coventry Cathedral), before winning an organ scholarship to the University of Hull, where his teachers included Simon Lindley, then recently arrived in Leeds. With a music degree from Hull, an FRCO and a passion for Baroque music, Ken then trained as an organ builder at Grant, Degens & Bradbeer in its last days in Northampton, alongside Martin Goetze and Martin's colleague at Goetze & Gwynn, Edward Bennett. Ken set up on his own in 1982. His Opus 1 (of 82, so far), which was displayed at St Albans Organ Festival, was later sold to All Saints', Preston Bagot, Warwickshire.

Ken's first workshop was in farm outbuildings, where he was often irritated by the presence of a goat watching him as he assembled his instruments. In 1986 the company, by now taking on staff, moved to an old bakery, where he lived above the shop with his young family. On one occasion he had to cut a hole in the bakery ceiling and into his living quarters to accommodate some particularly tall bass pipes. From the outset he was quite clear that, while most organ builders have to work on rebuilding and restoration, he would build only new instruments. "My philosophy has always been that good organs result from pursuing a single-minded purpose" was one of his sayings. His single-minded determination included bringing in projects on time and on budget, and in training his own staff, including the excellent voicer, Simon Brown.

Ken Tickell was a founding member of the Institute of British Organ Building, and was for a number of years organist at St Mary's Church, Northampton. He is survived by his wife, Philippa, whom he met at university and married in 1977 (who currently manages the company), and by their daughter Eleanor, a lawyer. He will be very greatly missed by all concerned.

*Paul Hale*

## VACANCIES

**St Helen's Church, Burton Joyce (NG14 5DN)**  
are looking for an  
ORGANIST / CHOIR DIRECTOR  
to play the new, 2 manual pipe organ (by Principal),  
lead choral music, and co-ordinate occasionally with friendly instrumentalists.  
RSCM rates apply for Sundays and Thursday evenings  
plus generous fees for weddings etc.  
Assistance available.  
Please contact the Reverend Roger Harper  
harperrog@googlemail.com or 0115 931 2109

## ARTICLES

### **The Royal Festival Hall Organ**

It is inevitable that after 60 years organists are looking back to compare the original organ with its rebuilt form at the RFH, bearing in mind that in 1954 it was the largest new installation completed since World War II. Its improvement is not in dispute, especially the projected pedal sound, but with a dry acoustic hall any blame may not be appropriately laid at the door of Harrison and Harrison.

For its opening on 24 March 1954 the London Philharmonic Orchestra under Sir Adrian Boult supported Ralph Downes and Andre Marchal who played in each half. Downes played Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue and the Poulenc Concerto; Marchal played a Handel Concerto (op.7 no.4) and an improvisation on a theme submitted by Sir George Dyson.

The opening recital on 27 March featured four of the best recitalists of that time. Ralph Downes played Sweelinck's variations on *Mein junges Leben hat ein End* and the Vaughan Williams three Welsh hymn tune preludes. Arnold Richardson played the scherzo from Vierne's second symphony and Bach's prelude and fugue in D.

Lady Susi Jeans played Bach's Trio-Sonata no.1 and the Toccata in c by Franz Schmidt. George Thalben-Ball played the Reubke sonata on the 94<sup>th</sup> Psalm.

As a souvenir booklet, the programmes, organ specification and critique-reviews by seven critics of that time form a most interesting account. The choice of music, organ sound and performances all come in for critical analysis; the only unanimous view was that G. T-B was outstanding and clearly the star of the occasion.

Critical comments are worth recalling in view of the recent re-build. B.B.Edmonds wanted to hear it a few more times before a judgement. Walter Emery commented on the 'peculiar organ repertory' whose 'centre of gravity lies before 1750'. He disliked the snarling reeds but approved of the 'magnificent fluework'. Gilbert Benham believed that the 'baroque school has received major consideration', the 'string tone is mild' and the 'combination of organ and orchestra did not come off happily'. Susi Jeans – one of the recitalists – objected to the 'sharpness of the mixtures' but found the organ a sheer joy to play thanks to a comfortable layout and lively attack.

In 2014 the re-build has received general satisfaction but not acclaim. Time will tell.

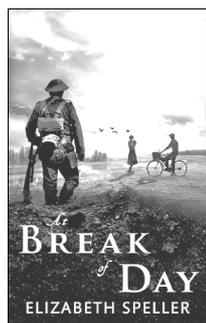
*David Gabe*

When in 1988, as President of the NDSO, I arranged for us to be shown the Royal Festival Hall organ by Ralph Downes the reaction was mostly sceptical: either too modern or too dated. Anyway a goodly party did venture south and quite a few played it: Walter Esswood's performance of an Arthur Bliss fanfare on just about every trumpet stop he could find was an intriguing experience and not as loud as he expected. I once asked Downes about a chamade trumpet and got a very dusty answer: it was designed on very different lines. There are several recordings from the 1954-2005 period, beginning with André Marchal's improvisation on a theme of George Dyson at the opening recital. This is the sound Cecil Clutton and his brethren heard; a few years later Clutton asked Downes if he was still up to his Baroque tricks so we can see where Clutton was coming from. There were two problems of course: the paranoia about the Royal Albert Hall echo and the attempt to replicate the "perfection" of the bombed Queen's Hall, which is where Hope Bagenal went too far and failed to realise that what worked in the council chamber of Nottingham's Council House would not work in London's new concert hall. The second was that Downes realised that a classical organ could, used judiciously, do perfect justice to romantic music - if you worked at it. Vaughan Williams denounced the RFH instrument, saying his ideal for Bach was Harold Darke at St Michael's Cornhill (Rushworth and Dreaper 1916); Darke, having heard one of his pieces played at Brompton Oratory, realised that its designer's other instrument at the RFH might be safe to play on after all. When I asked how Darke got on, Downes replied "He made it sound like St Michael's Cornhill!" I have heard Nicolas Kynaston make it sound like Westminster Cathedral, so with imaginative playing it can be a productive experience.

I heard John Scott play it during its opening week in March 2014. The Romantic music came off very well, with a splendid account of Liszt's *Ad Nos*, a work I first heard on that very organ played by flamboyant Leipzig organist Heinz Wunderlich in January 1968. The organ sounds a bit warmer now (I have yet to hear an orchestral concert in the new acoustic – I did not fancy going there to see a "hole" behind the concert platform) and the console has been raised and moved closer to the pipes, making it evidently rather loud for the player. However, as the excellent BIOS handbook about the organ tells us, we were lucky to get it back at all: a telling comment on our uncultured and money-grudging times.

*Ian Wells*

## Book Review



The other month I read a review in the Times about a novel on WWI, one of the many recently published. It persuaded me to get it out of the library though not because of the organ content. It is the story of four men, unconnected, whose lives intertwined in France. One of the characters is an organ scholar at Gloucester Cathedral and there is a fair amount of 'organy' stuff in the book. It is by Elizabeth Speller, called "At Break of Day" and published by Virago. If you want a taster, go to <http://www.amazon.co.uk/gp/product/B00B27ED1W?btkr=1> and read the bit about Benedict Chatto. I've never come across fiction concerning an organ scholar before - maybe someone might like a copy as a Christmas present!?

*Joan Orton*

## “On the Rock of Ages Founded” - Musical Tradition in the Church

I was asked a while ago to participate in a discussion on BBC Radio Nottingham regarding the relative merits of different styles of music in worship. “Is 'traditional' music church *better* than 'modern' music”, I was asked by Sunday morning presenter Sarah Julian (who admitted she was being deliberately provocative!). Though we need to be careful about qualitative comparisons (and of course the diversity of the Anglican church is one of its great strengths – let us not alienate our more 'liturgically charismatic' partners), it is undeniable that traditional church music is the result of centuries of musical evolution by the greatest composers the world has known. Such music, I suggested, was more *suited* to worship, and for two principal reasons that I shall discuss below.

Before continuing, however, it is important to appreciate that when referring to 'traditional' church music, I do not merely mean the ancient, but rather that which comes from the 'art music' tradition, including the most modern of works. Secondly, let me emphasise that this article is not concerned with the reasoning behind the very presence of music in worship in the first place. This I shall take for granted, hoping that we can all agree that St Augustine's proposition “qui cantat, bis orat” (“he who sings, prays twice”) is founded in the realisation that music can take human emotions into areas that other artistic works cannot, and offer the prospect of an escape from worldly existence (religion is more than cerebral, theological argument; it should occupy the heart and soul as well as the mind, and music - as well as all the other adornments to our liturgy – surely helps that to happen).

First and foremost, my argument for the use of art music in church is one regarding the sanctity of worship. Worship should be something special, something unique in our weekly routine - not using language and music that one might hear on the street, but rather that which lifts our hearts and minds to a higher place than the experience of daily life. Our communication with the divine should surely be something more than our communication with each other, and this is why I believe that the sights and sounds of the church should not be something that you see or hear in your every day life, but rather be formal, thoughtful, dignified, inspiring, and rooted in the traditions on which the church was founded. How can such a style of worship be 'relevant' to today's modern society, one is often asked. The Church must be relevant - its outreach, its charity and its role in society must be appropriate to what is going on right here and right now; but does this mean that its worship should mimic the culture of the here and now? Whilst church music (and indeed religion in general) should be accessible, in that it should be understandable, but must it necessarily be obvious, easy, or even banal? Of course not.



*A page from the Wollaton Antiphonal (15<sup>th</sup> century)*

Secondly, I believe that adhering to tradition (yes, for its own sake!) is an important part of worship, and the Anglican Church (indeed Tradition forms the second of the Three Pillars of Anglicanism, the others being Scripture and Reason). “On the rock of ages founded”, says one of our favourite hymns; tradition connects us with our past and our ancestors, and with the past of the church and its ancestors. When hearing or singing plainsong, or music based thereupon, we engage in a style of music that has been present in the church since at least the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, and that itself derived from the chants of the Jewish temples at the time of Christ. This represents something rather extraordinary - a real, solid connection to the time of the very foundation of Christianity. Indeed, apart from being exceptionally beautiful, I think there is also something

profoundly comforting in the timelessness of this ancient music - it has existed for centuries and will continue to exist long after we do (whilst, one could argue, genres of 'popular' music come and go). "Tradition," said Pope Benedict, "is the communion of the faithful around legitimate pastors over the course of history, a community nourished by the Holy Spirit. It is the *organic continuity* of the Church, the *permanent presence* of the Saviour Who comes out to meet, redeem and sanctify us in the Spirit."

We are justly proud in the NDSO of the high quality of traditional music and liturgy offered week-by-week in so many of our churches. Whilst not needing to be defensive, I hope we can continue to encourage those not familiar with such a style of worship to give it a go – some may never look back.

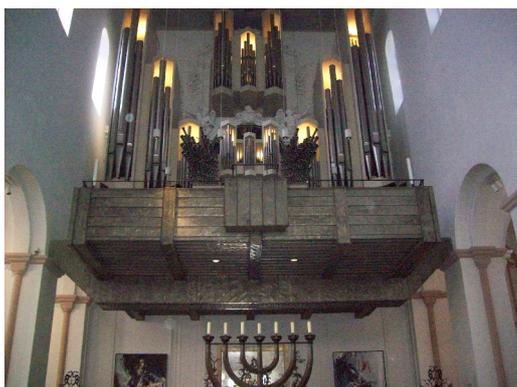
*Peter Siepmann*

## Engineering for Organists

In a talk during last session Paul Hale told us about the design and planning of the new Tickell organ at Newcastle Roman Catholic Cathedral. In particular he described the need to create a west end platform, in an old building, on which to place the organ. This is increasingly a major issue for organ builders and church architects; for engineers it is known as Retrofitting. For cathedrals careful structural engineering analysis is required especially for medieval buildings about which little may be recorded from the original building design and construction.

The leading German company of Klais have gone so far as to employ a structural engineer to take on contracts that might not otherwise be satisfactorily pursued. The hard fact is that a large organ weighs upwards of 20 tons and possible nearer 40 tons depending on the exact disposition and the nature of the case. Two scenarios can be described. Firstly, the placement of the organ on the side of the nave walls in a modern version of a swallows nest organ. Secondly, the creation of a west end platform. Klais have successfully employed both approaches.

To place the organ on a nave wall requires cantilevering supports driven into the wall with adequate counterweighting of vertical supports. At Worms Cathedral simple cantilevering appears to have been adequate with the organ midway in the nave. At Koln (Cologne) Cathedral more spectacular engineering has been employed for a similar placement. The cantilevering alone clearly was not safe so eight stainless steel rods were used to suspend the platform from the roof structure whose strength was known presumably from the recent experience of restoration from WW2 (RAF) bomb damage. The great shame is that the rods are so inconspicuous that the engineering feat is not appreciated by visitors and congregation. However this does beg the question which asks is such a positioning absolutely essential?



At Wurzburg Cathedral the war damage restoration led to a decision to build a completely new organ with 5 manuals and 87 stops as a west end installation. The platform was provided by bridging the west door arches portico with a (presumably steel) beam clad in wood to match the casework. The organ has several *en chamade* reed ranks so the installation looks spectacular with the historic clock on the west end wall appearing through the casework like a rose window.

Klais has built a further organ (II/23) in the south transept/chancel junction with an ability to play both organs from the one console. The restored historic organ by Seufert, with 11 ranks on one manual, dating from 1740 is now in the sepulchre.

*David Gabe*

