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Sequencer

The newsletter of the Nottingham & District Society of Organists

2014-15, Issue 1

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Michael Anthony BSc(Eng) MIET MInstP

Before I outline the events for the coming few months I would like to record my thanks to our retiring President Peter for his leadership and hard work during the past year. He has brought us a wide range of events which, I believe, have stimulated the Society in new directions. The co-operation with the Derby Society and their educational programme is to be commended and we hope that seeds will have been sown for a new generation of players. Very often it can be their supervising adults who are not aware of the organ world, and who first need convincing of the joys and rewards to be found there. Let us all continue to encourage younger people into the movement.

As each year passes we gain a few new members but we also lose some, and this year has been no exception. We are grateful to these friends for their support of the Society in past times, and without wishing to diminish any individual contribution, it is right that we especially remember our friend Kendrick Partington. He and Mary had been members since 1963, and his life was recalled at the special service at St Peter's on 11th July. The music was typical of what he cherished, and the spiritual nature of the event was an appropriate recollection of his life. We should also recall his great service to the Binns Trust at the Albert Hall, and his stewardship there. The mood of thanksgiving was given its true expression with the spontaneous applause following Adrian's sizzling rendition of the Vierne "Final". A full remembrance of Kendrick's life and work is to be found inside this issue of Sequencer.



The programme for the coming year will focus on two strands of thought – firstly, music in the Non-Conformist church and, secondly, the application and development of technology to musical instruments, existing and aspirational. The first four meetings are listed below, with details and directions to a selection of different venues being given on the accompanying information sheet. We do not need to know the numbers attending for most of these events, although the meeting at Roger's Music does have limited space - also note the earlier starting time here (site security issues). Likely numbers for the President's Evening would be helpful, and contact details for this are also on the enclosed sheet.

Advance notice is given of the Members' Recital at Bulwell next April. This event is open to the general paying public, and forms part of our "evangelising" campaign. If you wish to participate, then your choice of music is to be made from the lists of blind composers or composers with local connections, which are available from me. Final details for this event need to be submitted to me by the Lunch on 7th March 2015 at the latest, to facilitate rehearsal time during Lent and Easter (5th April), and for programme preparation.

Finally, many of you will be aware that this past year has not been an easy one for the Anthony family. We would like to thank you all for your prayers, support and kind thoughts during these difficult times, and we all look forward to seeing you at the coming events.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 7th September 2014 *Albert Hall, Nottingham*
Donald MacKenzie (Odeon Cinema, Leicester Square)

Wednesday 17th September 2014 *Southwell Minster (Quire)*
David M Patrick (Exeter)

Saturday 20th September, 10am
Visit to Derby area (members' cars to be used)

Saturday 11th October *Southwell Minster*
RSCM Diocesan Choirs Festival

Sunday 12th October 2014 *Albert Hall, Nottingham*
Lionel Rogg (Geneva, Switzerland)

Monday 13th October, 7.30pm *Bulwell Baptist Church*
Presentation by Ian Wells

Wednesday 12th November, 6pm *Roger's Music*
Technology in Music

Saturday 6th December, 7.30pm *Heanor Methodist Church*
President's Evening

KENDRICK PARTINGTON MA, MusB, FRCO (1925-2014)

Past President of the NDSO

Obituary from *The Times*, 1 July 2014:

Kendrick Partington was one of the finest organists of his generation. His playing was fiery and impassioned, underpinned always by a splendidly natural technique. Although a Bach enthusiast, he also had a special liking for the music of Herbert Howells and for the sonatas of Josef Rheinberger. With an ear for neatly shaded colour, he was also an accompanist of great sensitivity.

His teaching career began in 1950 at Malvern College and from 1953 until 1957 he was director of music at Wellington School, Somerset. From there he returned to his home city of Nottingham to become director of music at Nottingham High School. He stayed for 29 years and created a noted centre of excellence in music education.

For 37 years, from 1957 until 1995, Partington served as organist of St Peter's Church in Nottingham city centre. Here, revelling amid the rich ecclesiastical ambience, he directed a small but skilful male choir whose resources he came to use with much imagination and skill. On two occasions, in 1954 and 1983, he had the welcome opportunity to update and redesign the church's venerable but increasingly unpredictable organ. In 1978 he set up the St Peter's Singers, leading them with humour and inexhaustible enthusiasm.

Hilary Silvester later added that Kendrick Partington was President of the Binns Organ Trust, the body responsible for the upkeep and continued use of the large four-manual organ in the Albert Hall, Nottingham. He did much to campaign for the organ's restoration during its period of silence from 1985 (when he was the last person to play it in public) to 1993 when it was triumphantly re-opened and regularly gave recitals on it. Indeed the organ was in use at the last concert he attended the day before he died.

At Nottingham High School he numbered among his students the Baroque music specialist Nicholas McGegan and the politicians Kenneth Clarke and Ed Balls, the latter of whom he recalled as 'one of my tenors'.

Patricia Stephens later added that when he succeeded Douglas Madden as organist at St Peter's Church it was only an all-male choir he inherited. There were a number of girls on the treble line and I was one of them. He may have preferred an all-male choir but he demanded a very high standard from us all and if sometimes we fell short we would get more than a glimpse of his fiery and passionate nature, and music would occasionally fly off the music stand.

See also 'David's Diary' later in this edition of *Sequencer*.



NDSO BURSARY SCHEME

The committee has resolved to introduce a scheme of financial assistance to young organists in full-time education. We wish to encourage their learning to play the pipe organ under the guidance of a recognised tutor in the Nottinghamshire area.

The scheme is open to all those whose home address lies within the county of Nottinghamshire. Application is made through a letter addressed to the Honorary Secretary. The committee will consider any such approach at their regular meetings:

Mrs Joan Orton
1 Haslemere Gardens
Ravenshead
NG15 9FW
j.orton@dj001.demon.co.uk



NEWS

Rebirth of the Royal Festival Hall Organ

The national event of the year must surely be the unveiling of the rebuilt Royal Festival Hall organ in London. In a previous issue of *Sequencer* members may remember an interim report when two colleagues went to the partial opening and reported conditional appreciation.

The Hall was built in 1951 for the Festival of Britain and was the first major concert hall to be built in Britain after WW2. It utilised modern constructional techniques (ie. reinforced concrete) and the acoustic engineers planned a short reverberation time for orchestral use and speech events. The organ, designed by Ralph Downes and built by Harrison and Harrison, was controversial at the time and has remained only moderately popular as an instrument. *Musical Opinion* published a 'Symposium' consisting of seven critiques which were not by any means approving of the concert and recital outcomes. Readers may be interested to know that the organists were Ralph Downes, Andre Marchal, Arnold Richardson, Lady Susi Jeans and George Thalben-Ball. The only one to receive universal acclaim for performance and registration was G T-B for Reubke.

The long rebuild has addressed these matters and the final opening has been awaited with interest. Last year was disappointing; this year the newspaper critics have not been very kind so far so members are invited to submit comments to the editor based either on attendance at one of the opening recitals or on the BBC relays on Radio 3 during March and April. Please limit your comments to 100-200 words for a compilation of your comments in the next issue. It is not planned to use censorship!

David Gabe



David Rooke has responded as follows:

“After all the money spent and the waiting time we finally had the opportunity to hear what all the fuss and controversy was about. Perhaps you were among the BBC broadcast audience, as I was. One former President of NDSO was fortunate enough to be present to hear it live but another member felt himself to be fortunate not to have been there as he would have been disappointed!

“So I have heard mixed views about the restoration. The controversy continues. For my part I thoroughly enjoyed the programme, the sound and the performance. One of the highlights for me was the Alison Balsam arrangement of BWV 972 but then I love to hear trumpet and organ playing together. Maybe that’s because I first heard this combination playing while on holiday in France one year. The ambience, weather and whole experience made it a memorable occasion. Regarding the organ restoration itself I reserve general judgement until I have heard it live which I hope to do sometime this year.”

Kenneth Tickell

It was with great sadness that we heard of the unexpected death of Kenneth Tickell in August. Tickell was a leading light in the organ building world, and his life and work will be featured in the next issue of *Sequencer*.

Appointments

- Steven Grahl has been appointed to succeed Robert Quinney as DoM at Peterborough Cathedral. His position as ADoM at New College, Oxford will be filled by Timothy Wakerell (St Paul's).
- Hilary Punnett (All Saints' Northampton, formerly Southwell Minster) has replaced Claire Innes-Hopkins as Assistant Organist at Lincoln Cathedral.
- Canon Peter Gould has announced his retirement as Master of the Music at Derby Cathedral, to take effect from January. He will be succeeded by Hugh Morris (Christchurch Priory).
- Sarah Baldock leaves Chichester Cathedral for Cheltenham Ladies College, to be replaced by Charles Harrison (ADoM, Lincoln Cathedral).
- Tim Harper leaves Birmingham Cathedral to become ADoM at Ripon Cathedral.
- Christopher Barton leaves St Woolos Cathedral; Matthew Beetschen leaves Dunblane Cathedral.



Peter Gould



Charles Harrison

RECENT EVENTS

Interpreting Baroque Organ Music with John Keys



The advertised masterclass on Baroque organ music on Saturday 12th April had to be slightly 'reformatted' due to a lack of willing participants! Instead, John Keys led those present (about twelve members) through a fascinating tour of Baroque repertoire and the interpretative issues surrounding its performance.

Given the lack of space in the organ loft at St Mary's, where John has been Director of Music since 1984, the wonders of modern technology in the form of a camera, projector, screen and radio microphone, were on hand to facilitate proceedings, enabling John to speak to us from the loft, often holding up his score to the camera to show us details of the music.

A charming dance from the lesser-known Susanne van Soldt Manuscript showed us the increased emphasis on paired phrasing when employing period fingerings. Using pieces by Georg Muffat, John discussed historically informed registrations, in particular showing us to "react and adapt" on a given instrument, for example replicating Celeste ranks with the use of tremulants. We then moved to France, and to the stylised registrations of Couperin. A discussion of 'notes inégales' and the different proportions of note lengths for different rhythmic formulations, as well as the different methods of realising a trill depending on its context illustrated the great complexity of this style of playing. Using the brilliantly exuberant music of Nicolaus Bruhns, John illustrated how the 'stylus fantasticus' was not just a style of playing the notes, but also of registration. He also made the valuable observation that conversion between tablature and staff notation was not always perfect, and that we shouldn't be afraid to alter things that seem unlikely!

After a welcome tea break, organised as ever by our trusty Hon. Secretary, we moved to the music of North Germany. Some pictures of period pedal boards were used to discuss their effects on articulation, and a valuable discussion followed regarding the concept of 'good and bad notes' – the beats of a 4/4 bar should not all be played with equal length, but should rather be 'prioritised' as 1,3,2,4. When playing Bach, John stressed the importance of the singing nature of chorale melodies and advised annotating the scores with the text of the original chorale. The effect of 'good and bad notes' on a Bach fugue subject was particularly revealing.

A performance of Bach's famous C minor passacaglia concluded a fascinating and most enjoyable afternoon.

Peter Siepmann

Visits in Worksop



Two visits were made to Worksop on 17 May. In the morning we visited perhaps the most renowned British restoration company who specialise in old pre-Victorian or period organs from countries over most of Europe. Goetze and Gwynn have an enviable reputation and are based near Worksop at Welbeck Estate on our doorstep. Here we were welcomed primarily by Martin Goetze who gave us an account of their activities illustrated with photos of past successes and organs in various states of restoration all being at least 100 years old with unique actions and cases having unusual origins including, in one case, early life as a harpsichord. Most of us had never encountered such an insight into the problems of understanding early organ leave alone restoring them to good working order. It was a revelation and left us full of admiration for the scholarship and practical ability required to fulfil the contractual demands.

In the afternoon we moved to Worksop Priory which provided much interest. We were welcomed by the Churchwarden who gave us an excellent potted history of the church and how it had been founded in the 12th century, damaged in Reformation antics and restored in the 20th century to create transepts and an East End worthy of the Priory but not on the earlier scale. Fortunately David Butterworth was in the party and having been the organ advisor explained how the old nave aisle organ (by Brindley and Foster) was scrapped and a new organ by Peter Collins was installed in the 1970s with several novel features. He also demonstrated the organ playing Bach having declared that any organist not having a copy of the *Orgelbuechlein* should be shot but then admitted that he had forgotten his copy (members were relieved that forgetfulness and 'non-use while in possession' were not deemed capital offences!). Both the organ and the Church were of great interest and the hottest day of the year was well-spent.



David Gabe

Celebrity Recital and Luncheon

The committee have for some time been concerned about the annual dinner and the support it gains through being an evening event. This year the President suggested a Luncheon combined with a celebrity recital which could be shared with the series of Saturday morning 'coffee break' concerts at St Peter's Church. The recital was well-attended, the luncheon at the Mercure Hotel a little disappointing in attendance. The celebrity was Robert Quinney who fortuitously was in the news as the departing organist at Peterborough Cathedral and in incoming Director of Music at New College, Oxford. He agreed to be both recitalist and after lunch speaker both of which roles he served with distinction.

The recital opened with Bach's *Toccata, Adagio and Fugue* and continued with less well-known pieces – *Dies Resurrectionis* by John McCabe, *Die nobis, Maria* by Scheidemann, *Adagio in E* by Frank Bridge and concluded with *Prélude, Adagio et Choral Varié* by Maurice Durufle. The playing was of course impeccable and provided the organists in the audience with a number of challenges for repertoire expansion.

The theme of his address at the luncheon was **Connections** between musicians ranging from Bach and his contemporaries to himself and his tutors, and as connections was taken to include *coincidences* and *links* it made a most interesting and amusing talk.



David Gabe



It has been both an honour and a real pleasure to take on the Presidency of the NDSO this past year. I am proud of the programme of events that the Society has been able to provide, and am only sorry that more members were not able to participate in what I think was a broad and engaging programme. I would like to record my thanks to this year's committee, who have been a great help, not only in their support of events, but also in behind the scenes organisation and logistics. Thanks in particular to Joan Orton and three Davids - Rooke, Butterworth and Cowlshaw, who have been particularly helpful in bringing the year's programme to fruition; and also to David Gabe for his editorship of the Society newsletter - a real jewel in the NDSO crown.

It was a great joy to start the year 'at home' with Evensong at St Peter's, where the Society chaplain Father John preached, and after which I was delighted to receive the President's badge of office. My thanks to the Choir of St Peter's both for their support at this, and the President's Evening in October. I was sorry not to be able to be present myself at the visit to Peterborough Cathedral in November, but pleased to hear that a warm welcome awaited our members and a good amount of time to explore the cathedral organ. The NDSO enjoys most generous support from the Diocesan cathedral in Southwell, and I remain most grateful to Paul Hale for his fascinating presentation on the splendid organ he and Ken Tickell designed for Newcastle Catholic Cathedral. This theme of organ building was further developed by our visit to Goetze & Gwynn in May; our hosts could not have been more welcoming, and touring their workshop was both eye-opening and great fun.

"Education, Education, Education" was how Tony Blair famously set out his priorities for office, and as I said this time two years ago, I was keen to see Education as the theme to most if not all of our events this year. It was excellent therefore to have had Robert Gower lead an interesting and rewarding masterclass and repertoire event in January, and most of all to witness the enthusiasm of local children and their parents at the 'Pull out the Stops' event in February. I believe this latter venture is the sort of thing that all organist societies should be doing, and I remain most grateful to our friends in the Derbyshire Society for facilitating this wonderful and inspiring event. Our theme of education continued in April with an illustrated lecture from John Keys on the finer points of interpreting Baroque music - heady stuff, but fascinating, and a further reminder of how fortunate we are in the Nottinghamshire area to have such a number of expert organists willing to share their knowledge and love of the instrument and of its repertoire.

The year also saw two experiments - firstly, uncoupling the Members Recital from the AGM, instead having it as a standalone event. Though the audience at St John's Carrington was small, it was appreciative, and the programme presented by members was impressive in both its variety and its quality. This year we also moved the annual meal from the evening to a lunchtime affair, following a morning recital at St Peter's as part of the regular 'Coffee Break' concert series. It was an enormous privilege to have one of the foremost organists of the world as our visiting recitalist and speaker, and those of you able to attend that day's festivities will remember well, I'm sure, the wonderful manner in which Robert Quinney played and spoke. I'm grateful to both the NDSO and St Peter's for agreeing to fund this venture - well worth it, in my opinion.

A £15 subscription fee for a programme of events as rich and diverse as that which we have been able to provide this year is staggeringly good value, and I hope you will join me in sending this message around our region. The society membership is strong, currently standing at 135 individuals in 112 separate households. It has therefore been both thought-provoking and somewhat disappointing that the average number of people attending events this year has been in the region of less than a tenth of this number. I end my year as President wondering why this has been the case. Perhaps the events have not been as attractive as I think they have been; perhaps Saturdays were not a good choice of day; perhaps people are just too busy these days and an event every month is too frequent; perhaps it is not events that members of the Society value, but moreso the newsletter and their membership of a Society that itself gives recognition to their work and interests - should we therefore invest more time and energy in this part of the Society's work? The answers to all these questions would be of great interest to me, and I'm sure to future Presidents. Please do let us know what you think in a letter to the Editor of Sequencer – editor@nottsorganists.co.uk.

Also at the AGM...

- **Subscriptions are now due** at a single rate of £15 per annum, per household – please make sure you have paid your subscription for 2014-5. Any queries to David Towers – treasurer@nottsorganists.co.uk
- The Society now has a Child and Vulnerable Person Policy



David's Diary

With the loss of Kendrick Partington still fresh in our minds, it is perhaps unsurprising that the 'Diary' should have been steered towards recording one's own thoughts and memories of

this unique character whom I had known for nearly fifty years. Such might seem superfluous after all the tributes and letters which have already appeared in print, and which are reproduced in this journal. But there is so much to be remembered of so versatile – and volatile – a figure as Kendrick, that a few further thoughts may not go amiss.

Kendrick will for ever be remembered, and held in deepest gratitude, for his long and invaluable consistent service to the church of St Peter's and its music, and for his heroic championing at the High School of an erstwhile Cinderella subject into a fully-fledged and highly respectable department fully the equal of others by the time he retired in 1986. On top of the multifarious talents required to mastermind these two prestigious appointments, he was also accomplished as both composer and improviser, displaying a natural flair for fluency and harmonic originality. Instrumentally, yes, he was a good organist, though I thought he excelled most of all as a pianist; as such, I first encountered his playing when John Haslam invited the two of us to his Methodist Church in South Normanton. Kendrick first played the organ (Karg-Elert's 'Nun danket', I think) and then settled down to the grand piano John had just purchased for the church. I was amazed to find myself listening to such beautiful playing from one so tied up with the rough and tumble of two prestigious full-time jobs. As to the organ, I was never quite sure how Kendrick related to the St Peter's instrument, made up as it was of different bits and pieces of dubious provenance, though he did declare in print that he considered it one of the finest in the county. Well, no-one else thought so, and the sale of the verger's house in Mapperley Crescent in order to finance the nave console (now in St Leonard's) did little to redress the ongoing dilemma. Organ goings-on up the hill at St Mary's did nothing to put Kendrick at his ease. The installation of GDB's amazing little 'red' organ as a temporary precursor to the Marcussen, an instrument nicely written up in Stephen Bicknell's definitive 'History of the English Organ', prompted a visit from Kendrick. To his great credit, he chose to try it out (like you do) with a trio sonata movement – one of the quick ones. Full marks for guts! Unfortunately, the concept of a note sounding simultaneously with the



depression of the key seemed quite foreign to Kendrick. As the trio movement gathered momentum, it got quicker and quicker until, by the middle, it had collapsed into a heap of what sounded like hemidemisemiquavers. We never got to the end. Thereafter, he christened our little gem "that box of whistles" – not quite accurate but understandable. In fact, what I think Kendrick's love of the St Peter's organ showed was primarily a love of, and loyalty to, the building and community of St Peter's, and that sums up much of the sterling quality that made up this man. And, I must add, it is thanks to the firm heritage Kendrick left behind that St Peter's has never had any problem since then in attracting directors of music of the first order – a priceless legacy in itself.

In his later years, he was much occupied with thoughts of the Binns organ. Memories can fade all too quickly, even for recent events and achievements. It is worth reflecting here just how much we owe to figures from the early days – to John Haslam who chaired the earliest meetings in his role of Director of Technical Services (his name used to appear on the sides of dust carts et al.); to Roger Hursthouse, subsequent Chairman who had been instrumental in securing the massive gift from Allan Standen which kick-started the whole restoration project into reality; and, not least, to Kendrick who kept the Albert Hall organ in the public eye during the darkest days, organizing fund-raising events and initiating the interest of those who would eventually bring all to fruition. Once the money worries had abated, and by which time I had been appointed consultant, there was the process of investigation, of visiting the work of prospective organ builders. This took the two of us to various places, including Manders, a large Walker restoration in London and to Oxford, to name but three. (I did the critical Durham trip solo.) We took it in turn to drive, and to this day I have a vivid memory of being transported to London, charging down the M1 in a kind of sustained frenzy. Kendrick's face was a picture of grim determination, gripping the steering wheel as though it would run away if he let go. Whether this had anything to do with the state of the car I am not sure, but a vehicle whose wheels were more out of alignment I have never encountered. It seemed that as much energy was being



put into rocking from side to side as into our forward progress. The vibration was terrific, the whole experience terrifying – yet we survived to smile another day! (Mr. Toad, eat your heart out) Binns was always with Kendrick. I think he knew he had achieved a lot on that front, and he loved the cause. On my later

frequent visits to him, he would always bring up the subject, especially his regret at being unable to do as much to assist with publicity as he had earlier on. And if he couldn't think of anything new to say, he would simply go over old ground, which I didn't mind in the slightest.

Amongst all the eulogies, we have been given occasional glimpses of the 'other' side of Kendrick, his potential for volatility and quick temper. It does no harm to talk through these traits which are so much a part of the make-up of many a genius, especially when we can look back on them in a spirit of affection and even mild amusement. Generally speaking, I am pleased to say I avoided that side of Kendrick, although my very first encounter did not augur well. On a Saturday morning in late 1967, there had been a High School event in St Mary's, a rehearsal followed by the Speech Day ceremony. The Walker organ, true to form, had apparently been playing up and Kendrick had taken it upon himself to fix it. When I came into church later in the day to prepare for Sunday, I noticed some 'alterations' and, once back at home, I 'phoned Kendrick to find out what had happened. The 'phone was answered – delightfully – by Mary, who passed me over to Kendrick. Barely had I got a sentence out when he slammed down the 'phone without a word. Well, that was a good start, I thought! Things could only improve after that, and they did.

Inevitably, I saw most of Kendrick after Mary had died. Our now very frequent meetings often went beyond friendly informal chit-chat, as was inevitable with someone in his late eighties, ranging from the regular shopping, through fixing the plumbing, to getting his hearing restored! Conversation was always pleasant, sometimes illuminating, and at times challenging. He

could be charming and gracious and as sharp as a needle one moment; and slightly daft the next (the prerogative of an 87 yr. old!) He read avidly, often books with a religious slant – for his faith was rock solid. Shopping could be a contentious issue. Sometimes I would take him with me, but at risk of losing him when he would suddenly wander off to find the puffy white bread and potato crisps which I wouldn't buy for him. Sometimes he would invite me to play his organ, and on other occasions, he would play one of his pianos. Now, this was a real treat, for he seemed to have lost nothing with age. The most beautiful and accomplished improvisations would flow from that mind, or alternatively I might be treated to long and perfectly remembered excerpts of Ravel or Chaminade. What an amazing man, and what an amazing musician!

The one thing Kendrick could not really come to terms with latterly was his loss of Mary. Although it was often said that she had a lot to put up with (!), in fact he was nevertheless devoted to her. The last time I saw her was with Kendrick, at a recital I gave at St John's Carrington in aid of the Binns Organ Trust. As they slowly walked away afterwards, arm in arm, down the curvy, leafy, path through St John's Churchyard, I just thought "What a lovely old couple." And a young helper at the door turned to me and said: "Aren't they sweet?" Kendrick often said that he longed to see Mary again. I had a funny feeling he would trundle on for ever, and certainly see out his uncle who still lives in Lincoln. But I was wrong, it was not to be. Now, he and Mary are together once more in another place, and there we wish them eternal happiness.

David Butternorth

ARTICLES

Catling's Capers or 'How an organist spends his birthday'

To have one's anniversary marked by friends and family is splendid: to be the recipient of a specially arranged treat is doubly so! Thus it was destined for me, being adjured not to plan anything for the Saturday following my 70th birthday on the 9th May 2014.

We joined the London train at Newark Northgate Station and our first stop was the London Transport Museum Café for lunch. The tour was fascinating and informative and too soon it was time to pass on to 'Tea in the Crypt', but not before John had 'driven' an underground train simulator – without disastrous incident!

Arriving with time to spare at St. Pauls a respite seat was sought where the full story was explained! We were to meet Andrew Yates, one of daughter Annie's leading men in her short association with the semi-pro/amateur opera group based in Bracknell, a Vicar Choral in St. Paul's Choir. He had arranged, with Organist Simon Johnson, for the observance of the proceedings from the console: a rare and honoured privilege.

Stepping into the Crypt Café we duly met our host who explained that we were to contact a Verger who would conduct me to the console to



meet Mr Johnson and settle in for the service. This done I found myself alone in the console loft atop the south Chancel screen with the perfect opportunity to get a photo or two of the five manual, 109 speaking stop instrument. Simon duly arrived and we exchanged brief details before he busied himself ready for the service. As this was to commence with a 16th century unaccompanied introit his first task was subsequently to improvise music, based on the introit, that covered the procession and seamlessly ended in the key for the psalm. His skill at registration change was fascinating. The Canticles, *Collegium Regale* by Wood, were in turn restrained and glorious and the organ gently supported the anthem, *Dum transisset Sabbatum* by Taverner – a sublime mixture of contrapuntism and pure plainsong. 'All people that on earth do dwell' displayed a beautifully proportioned yet refined gravitas and led to a restrained and almost ethereal voluntary of French extraction.

All too soon we were preparing to descend and thus with veneration and appreciation we took our leave. At the West Door we shook hands with Andrew, and made for the bus.

Sustenance was the next item on the agenda at King's Cross Station. Choosing a well-known emporium we collected our choices and made for the counter to obtain our coffee and account. At the passing mention of my birthday the young man proclaimed that my Cheese and Pickle Roll, Cookie and coffee would be on the house!

Finally, thanks for a loving gift from two lovely people.

John Catling, May 2014

Book Review: Have you come across this?

I was recently lent a paperback entitled *We don't do that tune, Vicar (more disharmony in the choir)* - published by Canterbury Press; 162 pages. It was written by Reginald Frary, an author I had not come across previously. By the time he died, in his 92nd year in 2011, the number of his books about church choirs, organists and vicars had reached double figures. They are full of amusing stories, based on Reg's experiences and suitable for those in a lighter frame of mind. To whet your appetite, and inform you how 'the other half' lives (because all of our readers' choirs are, of course, immaculate, well-behaved and tuneful!) here are some extracts:



1) Life around the parish church was comfortably settling back into its winter routine with the usual large gatherings at the church whist drives and dances, and the usual four people at Sunday evensong. And this year the church council were settling back to consider a most intriguing question - what to do with the Major-General's lectern. The Major-General had given the lectern in a rash mood many years ago. It was the most hideous creation anyone in the church had ever seen, and only the organist who had been there for 40 years had never seen it because he never saw anything but choirboys with filthy collars and people who wanted to get married and asked him to play 'Here Comes the Bride' which he didn't like.

2) Traditionally church choirs attract a variety of unusual characters - members who often upset the new, forward-thinking vicar no end by not immediately falling in with his vigorous, visionary efforts to drag Christian praise from the nineteenth century into the twenty-first century in a couple of months.

3) 'Is the choir-master on holiday?' I asked. 'Oh, no,' the vicar said soberly. 'He never goes on holiday - he never lets up on the choir. It's almost as if he thinks they'll disappear if he's away. He's a perfectionist, you see. He can detect the slightest imperfection when the choir are singing and even in the middle of a service he will point to an offender and scowl in a most unsettling manner.' The vicar glanced around almost furtively in the empty church where we stood. 'He points at me sometimes. It puts me right off, you know.'

4) They were breaking in a new vicar at the Berkshire village church where my Auntie Rosie sings in the choir..... The new vicar, a recently married young woman full of enthusiasm and dozens of ideas for radical change in the parish that nobody wanted to know about, was carrying on undaunted, serenely sure that her ideas were right and would therefore eventually succeed. To her sorrow, however, she had to admit that a sizeable portion of the congregation, led by the choir, had made it quite clear to her that they didn't want to be messed about with any of her 'thrilling new thinking' about Sunday services. They knew exactly what they liked, had always liked and intended to go on liking.

If you are tempted to try one of Frary's books I can recommend www.AbeBooks.co.uk which has a number of them in stock at the time of writing. I have used this company several times for second-hand and/or out-of-print books and been very pleased with the service and quality. Typical price around £2 with free shipping.

David Rooke

A peep into an organist's diary

Part 1 - Preparation

Monday

Filed music played at yesterday's service(s). This varies from week to week and can be up to three, more usually one or two, involving travel to Arnold, Mapperley or Woodborough Methodist churches or, occasionally, to Bulwell parish church. Entered music details in playing record. Such a record is essential to avoid repeating a piece at a given church too quickly and also to avoid "losing" a piece from the repertoire by forgetting about it. A typical quiet voluntary before the service last about three minutes. So three or four of those will be required at each service together with music for the offertory and, if Holy Communion is being administered to more than about twenty people, music during the receiving of the bread and wine. Then there is also a final voluntary at the conclusion of the service. So anything between four (Offertory during a hymn and no Communion) and seven pieces may be required, amounting to over three hundred pieces per year at around sixty-four services. Provisional thoughts about music requirements for next Sunday. Continued practice on pieces being prepared for next lesson.

Tuesday

Made final selection of music for next week's services. It needs to be suitable and fitting - suitable for assisting preparation for worship and fitting in terms of the theme. At this stage knowledge of the theme for the service is most helpful but rarely available. Began practice to identify any sections of the service music requiring significant work. Concentrated work at a tricky passage in music for lesson.

Wednesday

Did more practice on service and lesson music. Tricky passage almost presentable but why does my brain persist in providing the wrong combination of fingers for that succession of chords?

Thursday

Tricky passage was still tricky but glimmers of hope began to appear. Service music progressed nicely. Began timing it.

Friday

Received the hymn numbers for one service. Checked the tunes and played them over. Tune to third hymn not too familiar to me but fairly straightforward, so decided not to look for an alternative. Nice mix of time signatures for the tunes this week - i.e. three in a bar and four in a bar - nothing so dull as having them all the same! Rang for hymns for other service. Not yet ready. Checked that the selection of music suited the service as far as could be judged by the hymn words. All seemed fine this week. Concentrated on the service music and made final timing which determines when to begin playing before the service starts.

Perhaps 'Performance' is not the best word to use. There is no sense in which playing at a service should be seen as a "Personal Performance". The organist's role is to provide leadership for the musical aspects of the service, an accompaniment for the singing, a support for the devotion, meditation or other acts of worship. Of course, there is 'performance' (lower case 'p') in any act, of music or otherwise, and it is that sense which is intended by the title.

This and part 1 both apply generally at whichever church the services are held. Though the three churches (Arnold, Mapperley and Woodborough) all have very different organs the preparation, as described in part 1, is very similar for each. So, too, is the procedure for each service as described below.

Sunday

On arrival, at least 15 minutes before needing to start playing, a number of jobs need to be done: specialist organ-playing shoes donned, organ switched on and checked everything is in order. Many things can go wrong with such an intricate instrument. The most common is notes not playing when they should or playing when they shouldn't! All three organs have displayed faults from time to time during the past year. These faults can often be rectified within a few moments. If not it may be a case of opening up the piano and getting specialist attention as soon as possible. For smooth running the hymn book or books to be used need to be opened at the right page; all pre-service music opened and in the right order and the organ switched on with 'stops' prepared for the first piece. If the timing has been accurate and the preacher enters on time, the prepared music will finish, unhurriedly, at exactly the moment he or she arrives at the pulpit. An early arrival will necessitate finding a way to curtail the music so that it doesn't sound 'chopped off'. A late arrival gives the organist the scope for 'extemporising' or 'improvising'; in other words 'making it up as one goes along'! This is a bit like the musical equivalent of being 'up the creek without a paddle'! French organists are excellent at it. They do it all the time. It is much less common in our non-conformist churches. So to the service itself. "What can go wrong?", you might ask, with all this preparation. Well, some examples will be given in the next issue, all of which have happened over time.

David Rooke

