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Sequencer

The newsletter of the Nottingham & District Society of Organists

January 2017

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

John Morehen JP MA DLitt PhD FRCO(Chm) FRCCO Hon.FGCM FRSA

I am conscious of the compliment that the membership paid me at the July AGM by electing me – almost ‘sight unseen’ – as NDSO President. Until recently I have been a rare presence at Society events. Alexander Graham Bell famously wrote that “As one door closes another door opens”. In my case this is certainly true, since a busy academic career was followed by demanding commitments as President of my national professional association and, later, as Master of my London Livery Company. Both involved protracted ‘lead-in’ and ‘wind-down’ periods, and it was only in 2015 that the pressure reduced to the point where I felt able to become more active in the Society. If I hesitated briefly before accepting, it was primarily because I was only too well aware of the eminence and record of my predecessors. A former IAO President recently told me that the NDSO is regarded as one of the most active and innovative of all its affiliated associations. While this was a delight to hear, it came as no surprise, since we have enjoyed a series of distinguished Presidents, each of whom has brought their own personal touch to the office. In following in David Butterworth’s footsteps it would be easy for me to repeat the corny adage about having ‘a hard act to follow’, but that would be untrue: following in David’s shadow is not ‘hard’, it is impossible.



Already the first four events of the season are behind us, and in maintaining our traditional pattern of monthly meetings I have tried to continue to provide variety. In the new year and early spring, we shall sample instruments ranging from small organs in village churches to a four-manual organ in a large parish church. Our Annual Lunch will be honoured and enlivened by the presence of Dame Gillian Weir (early booking essential!), and the customary ‘non-organ event’ will this year be to Taylor’s Bell Foundry in Loughborough. (As I write it has just been announced that the UK’s only other foundry – at Whitechapel – will close in May 2017.) The year ends with the traditional ‘President’s Event’. Details are currently being kept firmly under wraps, but I can guarantee that you will encounter some ‘old friends’ ...

Finally, may I close by wishing you all a very happy new year, during the course of which I very much hope to meet you all.

NEXT MEETING

14th January – South Eastward Ho!

Details overleaf 

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Put them in your diary now!

Saturday 14th January

SOUTH EASTWARD HO!

We assemble at the village church of Hickling at 2.00, where there is a genuine, unaltered, organ by Bryceson of London. After a preliminary introduction, members will be welcome to play it until we leave at 3.00. Like some other organs we have recently discovered, it has languished in semi-obscurity. Early English music sounds well on it. But, then, so does Bach! Do not expect 'all mod cons.' We then move to Grantham for the rest of the afternoon. Dr. Tim Williams will dragoon his large choir into service, to offer us a presentation along the following lines: 4.00 arrival and tea; 4.30 Dr. Williams gives us a short talk on his work at Grantham; 4.50 – 5.30 choir rehearsal; 5.30 Assistant Organist Edward McCall will give a short talk about the organ; 6.30 Choral Evensong. Members will have a chance to play the four-manual organ afterwards. This one does have 'all mod cons.' We expect to be finished by about 7.30, plus further time for organ-trying. A lot of people at Grantham will be putting themselves out to greet us on this occasion. Please advise Denis (01773 746890) that you are coming by Thursday, 12th January. Members' cars.

Saturday 18th February

ANNUAL LUNCHEON

This is timed at 12.30 for 1.00, and will again be held at the Corinthian Restaurant in the Masonic Hall, Goldsmith Street. The Guest Speaker will be Dame Gillian Weir. Please start considering booking now. You will soon receive a booking form by email, which please return to Denis by 11th February. If you do not have email, please ring Denis (as above), and he will post one to you.

Thursday 16th March

TAYLOR'S BELL FOUNDRY

A return visit (after a number of years) to a famous bell foundry almost on our doorstep. This visit commences at 1.30 and will last around two hours. There will be a charge per head for this visit of £10, and the price includes entry to the museum. If we are lucky, they may even be casting on that day, but a final decision can only be taken near the time according to customer requirements. Solid footwear (not sandals or high heels) is required. Please let Denis know that you are coming by Saturday, 11th March. Members' cars.

Saturday 1st April

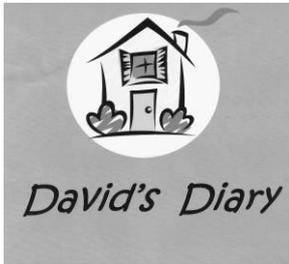
OXFORD

Our visit to Oxford will be by coach, leaving St Mary's, Bulwell, probably at 7.45. The four colleges we visit will be, in order, New College (iconic Grant, Degens and Bradbeer, recently restored by Goetze & Gwynn); Merton College (new, the only Dobson organ in the country); St John's College (2 x Aubertins – there are three in the country); and Queen's College (sensational Frobenius of 1965). Please note that this trip is open to guests, either to be with the 'organ' party, or just for the ride. Please advertise it in your local churches now, before people get committed to other things. Guests can go a long way to making the books balance, and also they get to know about us. The all-in charge is £25 per person.

Saturday 6th May

THE FOSSE WAY

This afternoon visit takes us to the village of Sibthorpe, where there is a one-manual instrument, installed with tonal modifications by Paul Hale; thence to Kneeton, where there is another one-manual organ by Taylor, installed without alteration by David Butterworth; then, on a grander scale, St Mary Magdalene Church, Newark, for a recital by the Organist and Master of the Choristers, Dr. Stephen Bullamore; and then finally a visit to the barrel organ (actually used for services) at Ossington. This will be followed by tea at the Dovecote, Laxton. Members' cars.



I am afraid this little contribution is going to have to be shrouded in a degree of anonymity, for reasons you will readily understand. Nevertheless, I hope it makes a point, and that from it we may

draw a sigh of relief that – after all – none of us will ever be perfect; but that we may nevertheless be inspired to do that little bit better without feeling it's all a waste of time. Here we go with a true report in a recent issue of the Daily Telegraph, which at first I thought (wrongly) was a mere spoof...

“Evensong at XXXXXXXXXXXX XXXXXX – but not as we know it

Mercurius Cantabrigiensis writes:

On 7 November I attended the six o'clock choral evensong at XXXXXX. XXXXXX have long been pre-eminent in the musical life of XXXXXX. And though Monday night is Guest Night at XXXXXXXXX, I was surely taking a reasonable punt that evening with the XXXXXX Choir.

'Doors open' (no, really) at 5:45. At 5:50 the choir was still rehearsing and the vergers were visibly nervous in the face of a restless, baying crowd of half-a-dozen oldies (five plus me) and an emotional-support poodle. At 5:57 we flooded in to hear the organist's prelude. Unlisted, it was French, Baroque, slow, in few parts; it was also full of missed notes and unforced errors.

The offer had seemed so simple. Good news: Stanford in C for the canticles. Bad news: the theme from *The Vicar of Dibley* for the anthem. In fact there was worse news, and Goodall was bugged-all against what followed: the most musically incompetent evensong I have ever heard in my life, anywhere, in any medium, on any reckoning.

The 13-strong XXXXXXXX Choir processed into the cantoris stalls, its five front-row sopranos immediately creating an unpromising impression. Uniformly toothsome Stepford blondes, they proceeded to sing in a breathy, unprojected, tone-free manner I last heard at infant school in the 1960s. I dare say one of them is the conductor's girlfriend (perhaps all of them are). There was a strong tenor, who very gamely tried to hold himself in throughout; and the hint of a rather good bass keeping his powder dry.

The chant for Psalm 37 was unfamiliar to me and apparently completely unknown to the choir: I have never before heard Anglican chant break down, even in rehearsal. Next up, the canticles, in which – deliberately or otherwise – the organist generally drowned out the singers. This might have been effective in its own way but for

Stanford's famous skill in writing independent organ parts. I pass over the anthem, which after all is more or less what the choir did.

The organist had weathered the first hymn, 'Immortal, invisible, God only knows' [Is that right? – *Ed.*], once he had located the registration for verse one. Unfortunately the closing hymn, 'Now thank we all our God', featured quavers: tricky fellows our man has yet to master. Then, as the last verse's final chord didn't echo round the cathedral, I had an awful premonition: Karg Alert!!! Yup, this Florence Foster Jenkins among organists was going for *Nun danket*. Here words fail me; though not as much as feet and fingers failed FFJ. I made my excuses and left, out into a lovely, clear winter's evening and a lovely, clear, desperately needed pint or two in the XXXX XXXXXXXX.

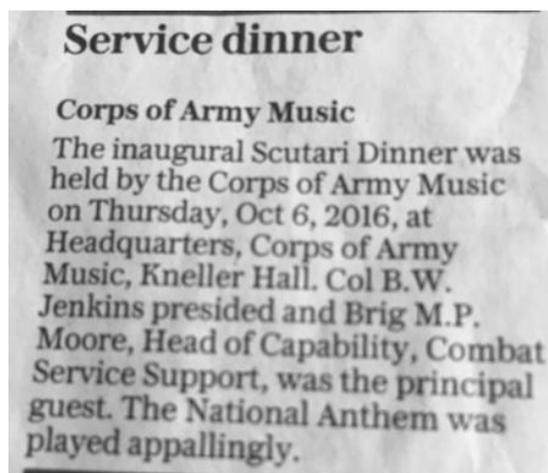
That was choral evensong at XXXXXX Cathedral. XXXX cathedral choir xxx xxxxxxxx have long been pre-eminent in the musical life of the xxxxxxxxxx.”

Whilst none of us is faultless, I'm not going to apologize for 'banging on' about standards. There seems to be little return, whatever one tries to say or do; maybe 5% if it were possible to quantify. But that 5% is, to me, gold! I can't help but think back to our recent trip to London, where we played the organs in Freemasons' Hall, St Clement Danes and St Margaret's, Lothbury, a perfectly balanced and thoroughly enjoyable day out, I may add. At one of those venues, the usual 'crew' were making their way through their chosen pieces when, out of the blue, we were treated to a performance which I did not recognize. The music, yes. But not played like this. Who was it? My early conclusion was that x had got hold of y's copy. Not so. This turned out to be the copy's regular custodian, 'y'; but we were listening to right notes, decent pedalling (ironically on a straight and flat pedalboard), and even the semblance of an ongoing momentum. The experience was heart-warming to say the least. If 'y' can do it, so can we all. Another good sign – or at least the sign of a good sign – was the take-up at John's masterclass on 10th December. No shortage of volunteer guinea-pigs, and one even came to rehearse earlier on, to find out what all the stops did, and to get used to the feel of the action. Splendid! John himself – whilst focussing chiefly on many erudite questions on the performance of Bach's music – touched on practicalities which I hope will have gone home. For example, one of my own hobby horses was flagged up, that of practising left hand and pedal before putting all together. And a ground-moving question in one instance: "Have you actually practised the pedal part?" (The honest answer was 'No!')

Personally, I am convinced that all of us can surprise ourselves if we really put our minds to it. I am not thinking so much of routine, which can be dull, ‘boring’ or downright stale; but of more original, fresh, approaches – tricks if you like – that can enhance not only our playing but our sense of enjoyment and satisfaction; and not to put it too strongly, even our quality of life.

The report I reproduced above admittedly (and hopefully!) relates to a one-off. It is well written and therefore makes for good reading in one sense. More seriously, though, even all that nonsense could easily have been avoided; not to mention all the post-mortem angst which must have followed. So, tricks? – Yes, bring ‘em on; more to come in a later issue...!

And on that very point, will someone let me know of a piece they have always wanted to play? Then let’s see what we can do with it...



The Daily Telegraph strikes again!

RECENT EVENTS

NDSO/IAO Midlands Organ Day

Organists representing about a dozen IAO-affiliated Organist Associations (including West Sussex!) joined NDSO members for an informative and engrossing Midlands Organ Day, held on 17th September and based at Nottingham’s Albert Hall. Had Winston Churchill been lurking in the wings one suspects that he might well have observed that “Never in the history of the NDSO have so many carefully-laid plans been so infuriatingly frustrated by so many last-minute and unpreventable problems”.

The draft arrangements for the day were first formulated during the dying embers of Peter Siepmann’s Presidency (2013/14), although the detailed organisation of the event fell on the shoulders of Peter’s successor David Butterworth, ably supported by Denis Littleton. By early 2016 all the basic preparations appeared set in stone until, at the eleventh hour, three of the four main events had to be substantially re-shaped for reasons wholly outside NDSO’s control. That the day transpired to be so successful was due in very large measure to David Butterworth’s ability to grasp victory from the jaws of defeat by conjuring up the assistance of an apparently inexhaustible list of local and national contacts in the fields of organ playing and organ building.



At the helm

After the opening words of welcome from NDSO President John Morehen, David himself inaugurated the proceedings with a brief talk on the Binns organ, followed by an impressive recital which reflected his longstanding interests in Bach and in French romantic organ music. David understands better than anybody the strengths and weaknesses of the Binns organ, and his first-class playing ensured that Bach sounded no less convincing than Dupré and Widor, to which the instrument is more intrinsically suited.

Dominic Gwynn was unable to give his advertised presentation on the work of the Goetze and Gwynne

company. Andrew Caskie, of Nicholson & Co, stepped into the breach at short notice, providing a visual presentation on the work of his company. Nicholson's history dates back to its foundation by John Nicholson in 1841 (NDSO members will remember John Nicholson's organ at Croxton Kerrial, which we visited in December 2015). It is now one of the largest organ builders in the UK. Andrew Caskie took us on a whistle-stop tour of a wide range of Nicholson instruments, old and new, large and small, in a relaxed presentation that was all the more enjoyable on account of his infusion of Scottish humour. We await with great interest the completion of their 90-stop organ for Auckland Cathedral, New Zealand, one of the largest instruments in the Southern hemisphere.

The innovative production company Fugue State Films, are highly regarded for their range of in-depth and highly focussed studies of selected organs, organ composers and schools of organ composition (their DVD 'The Genius of Cavallé-Coll' won the 'DVD Documentary Award' at the 2014 BBC Music Magazine Awards). Richard Eaton and Ian Watts, standing in at the last minute for Will Fraser, introduced us to two films – 'Towards a Modernist Organ' (including a fifteen-minute interview with David Butterworth, and featuring several instruments familiar to NDSO members), and the first part of a documentary on Charles-Marie Widor. We were also treated to a sneak preview of a soon-to-be-released film of Bernhard Haas playing Max Reger's mighty Second Sonata Op.60, all 22 minutes; oh yes, from memory too!

The projected trip to Southwell Minster had to be abandoned when the date was hijacked for the Installation of the incoming Dean of Southwell. The enforced revision of the timetable enabled the inclusion of a short recital at St Barnabas RC Cathedral by Robert Gower, who introduced us to a range of seasonal compositions for Advent and Christmas (predominantly for manuals only) which are included in various published anthologies under his editorship.

A short walk from St Barnabas through Market Square took us to St Peter's Church for the final event of the day, a presentation by Peter Siepmann on the rationale behind the church's decision to install a hybrid organ. He demonstrated the organ's versatility with a performance of two contrasting sets of variations, one based on a Lutheran chorale and the other based on Gregorian chant. The textural clarity of Bach's Chorale Partita *Sei gegrüßet* contrasted refreshingly with the rich harmonic hues of Duruflé's *Choral varié sur le theme du 'Veni Creator'* (Op.4).

John Moreben

Trip to London on 22nd October

Our coach left Bulwell Parish Church promptly at 7:45 and, having collected one of our number at Coalville, arrived at Great Queen St, WC2 in good time for the first of our three visits of the day; the recently rebuilt instrument in the Grand Temple at Freemasons' Hall. With a seating capacity of 1700, and dedicated in 1933, the Grand Temple was equipped with a Willis organ; very much a "child of its time" with a general crescendo pedal, Pitman chests and incredible wind pressures. A large number of pipes had been squeezed into two inadequate chambers which, coupled with the plush furnishings and hangings in the Hall itself, and the already dry acoustic, meant that the volume and quality of sound had never really matched expectations. Accordingly, Harrison and Harrison undertook a major restoration in 2015, adding a five-stop "Grand Organ" encased in a third chamber and playable from the Great keys. With three chambers each fronted with lavishly gilded pipes (the work of Bob the Gilder apparently) and the sumptuously appointed mahogany console (all at the "prow" of the Hall), it was apparent that no expense had been spared to provide the Brethren with a worthy instrument (inaugurated, incidentally, by Thomas Trotter). At the same time, hangings and curtains were removed in an attempt (not entirely successful) to enliven the acoustic of a building perhaps better suited for speechmaking and ritual rather than music. Whatever one's opinion of the organ, no-one (especially those of us unaccustomed to Freemasonry) could fail to be impressed by all aspects of the décor, the scale and magnificence of the fixtures and fittings throughout this imposing Art Deco building (not least in the Gents!) and the evident love and care manifest throughout.

We then walked to the Strand to visit St Clement Danes, the central church of the RAF (or *reginae classis aeronautica* according to the inscription above the apse). The Harrison and Harrison organ, advantageously placed on the gallery at the west, was the gift of the US Air Force following the rebuilding and re-consecration of the church completed in 1958 after its almost total destruction in 1941. Our host, Mr Alan Taylor, treated



us to a most informative and entertaining introduction to the church and its music, laced with interesting and affectionate “warts and all” reminiscences of the legendary *Martindale Sidwell, organist of both St Clement Danes and Hampstead Parish Church for very many years, and to whom our President was assistant in both capacities for some of that time.

It is known that Ralph Downes detached himself from the consultancy when the authorities insisted on the console’s placement on the north side of the gallery, rather than directly under the case. Perhaps neither was ideal, because the undoubted nobility and versatility of this fine instrument is best appreciated in the body of the church. Although Sunday congregations are usually unremarkable, the church hosts some very significant and well-attended RAF Memorial Services, along with periodic Christenings and weddings, and its seating capacity can be almost doubled by telescoping the pews, the additional sections of which are fitted with casters, into the nave. Some of us enjoyed a brief session on the William Drake chamber organ, placed to the north end of the altar rail.

Left: Freemasons’ Hall – new Grand Organ

Our last church, after a short coach journey passing some well-known City landmarks, was St Margaret’s Lothbury, a largely unaltered Wren church containing some exceptionally fine wood carvings. It’s known for its association with several Livery companies and finance houses, and for its thriving weekday ministry - though nothing happens on Sundays outside the Advent and Christmas seasons. Like our previous church, the organ is situated on the west of the gallery, accessed here by means of a hair-raising cast iron spiral stairway! Our host was Mr Richard Townend, organist for 35+ years, who has “clocked up” over 1000 Thursday recitals at St Margaret’s, not to mention those he has given elsewhere. Over a very welcome cup of tea, Richard gave us a most scholarly account of the history and life of the church and its music, dwelling on the multiplicity of Carol Services in late November and December!

The history of the organ, installed in 1801 by George Pike England, and known to have been played by Mendelssohn, is succinctly set out in a paper made available in the church. Briefly, the well-intentioned additions and “improvements” of 125 or so years were stripped away by John Budgen (of Bishop & Son) in 1984, revealing at its core the original instrument, thankfully largely unaltered. A new tracker action, winding equipment and balanced swell mechanism were provided and the 19th century pipework and console repaired and restored as necessary. The result has been very highly acclaimed, not least by Lionel Rogg, who still undertakes an annual trip from Switzerland to give a recital.

Each of the visits followed a similar format: a performance by David Butterworth of a piece suited to the organ’s character, after which members took it in turns to try the instruments for themselves. Some interesting and musically varied moments ensued! (I shall long remember David’s apparently spontaneous A minor Fugue BWV 543, played from memory at Lothbury at the President’s sudden request.)

Sincere thanks are due to our President, Professor John Morehen, for choosing the venues and making the necessary arrangements. We were made extremely welcome and all went smoothly. Denis Littleton dealt efficiently, as ever, with paperwork and publicity. No small thanks are also due to Skills and our excellent driver for a safe and comfortable return journey, and a highly efficient negotiation of London’s traffic.

**Examples of Martindale Sidwell’s work with the choir of Hampstead Parish Church are available on Youtube, thanks to the National Archive of Recorded Church Music, and are easy to locate. “This is the record of John” (Gibbons), with viol accompaniment, should not be missed. See also ‘The Martindale Sidwell Legacy’, www.martindalesidwell.org*

Roger Harrison

November 2016 Meeting at St Mary's, Nottingham

The NDSO November event was the Commemoration of St Cecilia at Evensong in St Mary's, High Pavement, on Wednesday 23rd November. Some 14 members were present to hear St Mary's Choir directed by our President, John Morehen. The *Magnificat* and *Nunc dimittis* were sung to Herbert Howells's 'Gloucester Service', which the composer apparently wrote in a single sitting. This particular setting is generally quite restrained, with some delicate vocal writing. The anthem was Howells's *Hymn for St Cecilia*, commissioned in 1960 by the Livery Club of the Worshipful Company of Musicians, to mark the composer's Mastership of the Company (1959/60), incidentally a post since held by John Morehen (2012/13.) The work sets a poem in praise of St Cecilia, the Patron Saint of music, written by Ursula Vaughan Williams as a three-verse hymn. It is in a form typical of Howells, which carries the singers along on a tide of increasing energy.



The Marcussen organ, 1973

John Morehen directed the choir with great authority, making full use of his singers. He was quite obviously enjoying himself and knew the music well.

The recessional postlude was the first movement of Elgar's Organ Sonata in G, played by John Keys on the Viscount electronic organ.

Following the service, NDSO members were invited to play the Marcussen organ which had hitherto been silent, and several of us took that opportunity.

Denis Littleton

John Morehen's Bach masterclass, 10th December 2016

John Morehen introduced the Masterclass by reminding us of the periods in J.S. Bach's life when he was actively engaged in composing organ music. These periods were: Weimar (1708-1717) and Leipzig (1723-1750.) John mentioned in passing that some of Bach's earliest pieces (pre-Weimar) were musically weak - "awful in fact", John exclaimed! He then played a couple of short extracts to demonstrate the point.

Throughout the afternoon, John reminded us that Bach gave little guidance about registration for his organ music. Therefore, one has to be aware of editorial whim, especially in older editions. The more we know about Bach and the instruments at his disposal, the better able we are to play his music as he intended. Re ornaments, John reminded us that Bach's ornaments always start on the beat. During the afternoon, John made a number of helpful comments about the pieces which were played. "Ich ruf' zu dir, Herr Jesu Christ" from the *Orgelbüchlein* had been chosen by John Sears to play for us. Unfortunately, he was ill and unable to come, so David Butterworth stepped in to play it. John drew special attention to the ornaments David had added, explaining that it was often left to the performer to use his discretion in such matters.



Denis grabs the Fagot

Richard Eaton played the well-known Fugue in D minor (BWV565). There was a frank exchange between Richard and John about the desirability of creating an echo effect in the middle of the fugue by hands changing manuals. After this had been discussed for a few minutes, John insisted that changing manuals within a piece should only be done when it is absolutely necessary.

We heard *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme* played by Michael Anthony. One of the six Schübler chorale preludes, it was taken directly from one of Bach's cantatas. We need to remember this when we ponder about the right hand part not feeling idiomatic for the organ. This would originally have been played on a stringed instrument, so it can have a bearing on how we should approach articulation. The other organists who played during the

afternoon were Denis Littleton and David Rooke. All organists had prepared well for the Masterclass. It is no mean feat playing on an unfamiliar organ in front of other organists! John's thoughts about interpreting Bach will help us to approach his music with greater understanding and renewed confidence.

The Masterclass was brought to a fine conclusion when our host, David Butterworth, played the First Movement of the G major Trio Sonata. It sparkled! After formal business was closed, we enjoyed socializing over cups of tea and mince pies. There was even a roaring log fire. Thank you, David, for your hospitality.

Juliette Adams

Timothy Trussell visits Ss. Peter & Paul, Lincoln, to hear the new organ

The recent installation of the Nigel Church organ in the Catholic Church of SS Peter and Paul in Lincoln, which has made its way there from Hucknall by way of Sedbergh, has been celebrated with a series of evening recitals by David Butterworth, Ben Morris, Jack Stone and finally Colin Walsh.

The 13th of October saw Ben Morris, the recently appointed Assistant Organist of York Minster, take to the organ bench, and the gathered audience was treated to a varied programme of contrasts which showed off the new instrument splendidly. There is one remaining RAF base within the Parish boundary, at Waddington, with a number more having closed since the war, so the majestic opening of Walton's *Spitfire Prelude and Fugue* seemed most appropriate, and also showed off the warmth of tone of the instrument. Mr Morris then divided his programme into three parts. JS Bach and Mendelssohn provided the main part of the next section of the programme, with the earlier composer's chorale prelude on *Vater unser in Himmelreich* leading into the later composer's meditation on the same theme, his Sixth Organ Sonata, the two contrasting yet related pieces allowing the wide range of tones of the instrument once again to be demonstrated to the full.

The next part of the programme made for a musical tour: the Grand March from Verdi's *Aida* took us to Egypt – whilst no elephants were involved, the organ's impressive reed stops were given ample opportunity to portray appropriate grandeur. Vaughan Williams' *Prelude on Rhosymedre* set a more intimate mood. Ben followed this with a contemporary piece with lively Iberian celebratory influences, Iain Farrington's *Conversations*, which surprisingly led seamlessly into J. S. Bach's *Pièce d'orgue*.

The final leg of the journey took us to Paris. Louis Vierne's *Allegro vivace* from his First Organ Symphony was followed by the last two movements from Widor's Fifth Organ Symphony: the penultimate *Adagio* leads logically onto the final movement which was magisterially played, providing the perfect finale to an evening of delightful and memorable contrasts.

I have since had the opportunity to play the organ myself for a couple of hours and I enjoyed every minute, exploring its rich variety and magnificent *tutti*. Hucknall's loss is undoubtedly Lincoln's gain.

Priests, too, can play the organ!

After more than fifteen years of faithful service, The Rev'd. Canon John Berry, ARCO, CHM, is retiring from his rôle as our Society Chaplain. We are indeed hugely grateful to John for the care and interest he has shown in supporting the society and its members over many years, and we look forward to regular further contact with him. We are extremely fortunate in having been able to appoint the Rev'd. Fr. Stephen Dye as John's successor. Stephen is a musician and organist of exceptional stature. He is an existing member of the Society, and some of you will already have got to know him on the Denmark trip. In what is intended to be the first of a series of articles featuring members telling us about their 'other lives', it is highly appropriate that we should have invited Stephen to be the first such contributor:

... My first acquaintance with a pipe organ was as a choirboy at a local parish church, All Saints' Huthwaite. I was persuaded to join the choir, adults and boys, at about the age of nine. A friend told me that one could earn five shillings for singing at weddings. The choirmaster and organist at the time was Derek Hartwell, who subsequently became a lifelong friend. I can't remember what music Derek played but I do remember I liked the sound of the organ especially when it was played loudly!

As I grew older, in addition to studying the piano, my parents generously agreed to my having organ lessons with the organist of Hucknall Parish Church, a great character called Norman Silcock who, despite his blindness, was a great improviser and very perceptive teacher – he could tell instantly when I didn't use the proper fingering or footing.

By a curious coincidence, neither the organ I had my lessons on at Hucknall nor the organ I practised on still exist. They were both built by John Compton in 1904 and 1905 respectively, and each had an enormous Open Diapason (Hucknall also had a Great Harmonics with flat 21st in its composition – it was never in tune to my ears). Both organs went up in smoke in acts of vandalism. The Compton organ at Hucknall was replaced by a beautiful classical organ by Church and Co. in 1976 which is now in the Catholic Church of Ss Peter and Paul Lincoln, and featured on the back cover of the last *Sequencer*.



in conversation with His Holiness Pope John Paul II

At Bristol University, where I studied music, I helped out as assistant at St Paul's Clifton which had a three-manual Rothwell – something of a curiosity with stop tabs between each manual but with a virile sound. I had three years of organ lessons at St Mary Redcliffe, Bristol. Both the fantastic four-manual Harrison and Harrison and Garth Benson my teacher were a wonderful inspiration.

As part of the degree I had to give an hour's organ recital on the Great Hall of the University. Normally we weren't allowed anywhere near this organ, a big three-manual by Nicholson, an instrument with tremendous panache. I remember many celebrities giving recitals on it, e.g. Gaston Litaize, Arthur Wills, Herbert Sumsion, Marie-Claire Alain; they usually included a fair share of blockbusters in their repertoire.

After Bristol, I spent a year at Cambridge getting a teaching qualification. Fortunately, the course wasn't too demanding and it was possible several days during the week to go to two Evensongs (St John's and King's) and still be in time for the evening meal.

The following twenty-three years were spent teaching in primary schools in the area around Mansfield and being organist of several local churches - St Mark's Mansfield, St Mary Magdalena Hucknall, St Cyprian's Nottingham, as well as helping David Butterworth at St Mary's Nottingham for a couple of years – that was a challenge!

After much soul searching I became a Catholic in December 1987 at the Church of St Philip Neri Mansfield, where some months later the Parish Priest asked me to become the organist. So for seven years I usually played for at least three Masses (one choral) each weekend and was very happy. To quote a friend 'the organ there is half decent with a wonderful tracker action, and the acoustics are to die for'. I personally think the organ is quite good.

As for more recent times, I eventually realised I had a vocation to the priesthood. So I was off to Rome for the next four years living at the Beda College and studying Philosophy and Theology at the Pontifical College of St Thomas Aquinas (known as the Angelicum). During my time in Rome, usually during half term breaks, I was able to visit the glories of Venice, Florence, Assisi, Naples, Siena, Padua, Bologna and many other places of architectural and cultural interest. Sad to say, in many of these fabulously beautiful cathedrals and churches,

the music was generally disappointing. Many of the organs were quite small and were not in very good condition, though of course in a large resonant building even a small instrument can effectively sound much larger than it actually is.

The best organs I heard were in Loreto, Venice and Assisi. If my memory is accurate, these were modern instruments very much built on classical lines. Their crispness and clarity stood out against the more usual undistinguished organs (I once heard the plainsong *Missa De Angelis* accompanied throughout with tremulant in an important basilica in Rome!)

I was ordained in 1998 at St Philips Mansfield by Bishop James McGuinness. David Butterworth played the concluding voluntary of my choice, *Prelude and Fugue in B* by Marcel Dupré – to general jubilation. Since then I have moved around the Diocese, working in Nottingham, Market Harborough, Sutton-in-Ashfield and Stamford. At the moment, I am in Oakham, where there is a small but powerful Bevington of 1871 in my church of St Joseph's, as well as two more recent organs by Kenneth Tickell (1996) in All Saints Parish Church (two manuals and pedals) and Peter Collins (1992) in Oakham School Chapel (three manuals and pedals).

I always try to convince my clerical colleagues of the importance of good music in church – nothing lifts the spirit more. And to have a good organ and a good organist? Well, that really is a bonus!

Stephen Dye (Revd.)

Lunchtime organ recitals to be revived in Nottingham

Many members enjoyed last February's luncheon at the Masonic Hall, Goldsmith Street and, as you know, we are making a return visit next month, with Dame Gillian Weir as our guest speaker. But it's a big building, and some may have wondered what else is contained therein, especially if you came on the recent trip to London's Masonic Hall. Well, apart from anything else, there are two pipe organs used for Masonic ceremonies but, until now, for little else. Jim Costello writes:

Freemasonry is one of the oldest secular societies in the world, extending to every corner of the globe. The 'Craft' as it is known is concerned with moral and spiritual values, based on the Three Great Principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. 'Relief' translates into a great emphasis on charitable work. One manifestation of the latter is that each Province (roughly the equivalent of a county) periodically embarks on a 'Festival', a concentrated programme of fund-raising with a definitive target. The target for the Province of Nottinghamshire's '2018 Festival' is £3,000,000. My lodge, which meets at Goldsmith Street, Pax Magna Lodge no. 3916, is initiating – as a part of our contribution to the 2018 appeal – a series of organ recitals by David Butterworth, to take place in the spring and early summer. They will be at lunchtimes (12.15) on Thursdays and last about 40-45 minutes. They will take place in the (main) Ionic Temple, where there is a two-manual Hill, Norman & Beard of 1930s vintage, in original condition.



Above: The Ionic Temple

Attendance comes with a good package. Admission is a mere £3.50. The management is offering lunch afterwards in the Corinthian restaurant at members' discounted rates, and delicious lighter snacks are also available in the fully licensed bar. There is good access by tram; but the management is also offering free car parking, the entrance being off Chaucer Street, and signed 'Belgrave Suite'. (Press the buzzer and explain that you are attending the organ recital.) There is also some ongoing discussion within the Lodge about showing attendees around the rest of the building, though this is as yet at an early stage.

The dates are 27 April, 11 May, 25 May, 8 June. Do put these in your diary and come along to support a revived tradition in fine surroundings!

James Costello, W.M., Pax Magna Lodge

NEWS IN BRIEF

With one stone

At the last AGM the (now) Immediate Past President expressed pleasure at the number of new members – nearly twenty – who had joined during the year. Two more new members with a special distinction have recently joined on the initiative of our current President, namely Michael Overbury and Roger Bryan, each of whom has been organist of Newark Parish Church. You are both most welcome!

John Sears was expected to have kicked off John Morehen's Bach masterclass in December, but was prevented by a stroke. We are pleased to report that John is making steady progress, with speech being the main item of attention at the moment. Many of us will be thrilled to see John at a meeting again, as and when he can manage it.

David Hanford has been equally astonished to discover, almost by chance, that he was the bearer of a serious case of lymphoma. He felt perfectly well! After intense chemo-therapy involving a long stay in hospital, he was able to be back at home in time for Christmas. Of course, David will be monitored for progress, and we certainly wish him all the best.

Paul Hale has also been in the wars, with surgery for the removal of a tumour. With Paul's boundless energy, there can be little doubt that he will be back up and running on all four (or is it eight?) cylinders before long. Our fondest best wishes to John, David and Paul, as they make their way back into full working order.

Last date of application for the post of Rector Chori was the 4th January. We shall watch that space with the greatest interest. The responsibility to maintain Southwell's wonderful tradition is great, and requires a person with exceptional abilities. I haven't yet heard whether the Archangel Gabriel has, in fact, applied.

Goetze & Gwynn our friendly organ builders up at Welbeck, who have twice hosted Society events, have gained an international reputation for conservation and restoration, as well as creating brand new bespoke organs to the highest standards. Following their success at Odiham (II/19), they are now working on the construction of another new instrument for Trinity College, Dublin (also II/19). It has been suggested that a few members may like to get together and pay a visit when the organ is at its best in the works, probably some time in May. If interested, please refer to Denis.

St Mary's, Car Colston have an organ by Wordsworth & Maskell, which seems to have started life in East Bridgford, before being moved to its present home in 1937, and then moved again within those same walls, the internal layout apparently adapted to suit at least once if not twice. Its present internal arrangement is not unique, but it is unusual, with the Swell at the bottom, then the main reservoir above head height and then the Great right at the top, with the blower suspended in mid-air! It is now in the process of being restored by Aistrup & Hind, collateral attention being paid to woodworm in the floor and to the provision of additional reflective roofing above the instrument. A loose length of timber, not part of the organ and infested with live woodworm, has already been removed. The Car Colston project is noteworthy for going ahead apparently in the face of considerable pressure to scrap it in favour of an electronic. Unusually perhaps, it was the congregation there that put their foot down and insisted on proper preservation of their heritage. Good for them!

City of London elects an organist as their new Lord Mayor

Yes, we are so used to the City of London electing a financier, banker or business tycoon as their Lord Mayor that the news that in November the Aldermen, Corporation and Liverymen of the City of London elected an organist became newspaper news in even the City pages. Dr Andrew Parmley is clearly no ordinary organist but nevertheless it is something special that even famous City organists of the Harold Darke and Thalben-Ball breed have not quite achieved this level of fame.

A native of Blackpool (born in 1956) he originally graduated from the Royal Academy of Music majoring in organ studies and returned to Blackpool as organist at the Pleasure Beach. He married his school girl friend Wendy who took a job as a teacher in the East End of London. On going to London he found getting a job in

a theatre was impossible without an Equity Card so pursued an academic route at London University, following an M.Mus at Manchester, by researching for a PhD degree on 17th-century French Opera under William Christie. But he had become involved with the Church of St. James Garlickhythe as organist and then, having also taken a teaching diploma Cambridge, took the post of Director of Music at Forest School. Later he occupied a similar post at Grey Coat Hospital and followed that by becoming Principal of the new Harroddian *senior* school in Barnes. As an FRCO and FTCL he has retained impeccable organist respectability.

However, he retained his post in the city becoming a member of Court of Common Council in 1992 for Vintry Ward which contains his church, becoming an Alderman in that Ward in 2001. Having been an Alderman and city organist for so many years he was obviously a candidate for what is a non-political position, but he is now in the unique position of representing the financial world of London in this largely ceremonial role. As our President has demonstrated ceremonial positions are open to organists if they spend time on public and professional duty.

David Gabe



Looking ahead...

The President's Event this year will take place on the afternoon of Saturday, 24th June. As you will have read earlier on, details are being 'kept firmly under wraps' for now. Sounds exciting! So please put the date in your diary now, and expect the unexpected...

And...

The Next *Sequencer* is scheduled to appear in early May. Ever fancied contributing an article? If so, please feel free to get in touch with the editor...

Last but not least...

A big, warm, thank you to David Gabe who, more or less at gun point, took over the editorship of *Sequencer* a few years back. David has now hung up his quill and retired from the office with flying honours. Thank you for all you have done, David, to maintain our interesting and widely revered magazine!