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# Sequencer

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

September 2017

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ian Watts

Since my early leaving of Imperial Tobacco where I served as the Engineering and Services manager, my career has taken off in the musical direction and as my predecessor so correctly quoted in his first post in Sequencer (January 2017) “when one door closes another opens”; well that has certainly been true for me. A range of opportunities have presented themselves with immaculate timing in order for me to draw on the skills I have, both in People Management and in my love of Music underlined by the absolute honour of being proposed and elected as your President of this, our wonderful and historic NDSO.

I follow a list of ‘big names’ in the local organ world leaving very large shoes for me to fill in this post, not least those of my immediate predecessor Professor

John Morehen who recently gave me a copy of his outstanding CD of broadcasts from his career and afforded me the opportunity to join him on an organ duet at the recent AGM. I’m only thankful that I undertook the duet and then heard the broadcasts as the opposite order would have filled me with fear and dread due to John’s immense talent! As it happened it turned out to be a joy and an honour to perform with him and one to add to my life CV. I have had welcome advice and help from John as well as past presidents David Butterworth and Michael Anthony for which I will be eternally grateful.

I had decided very early on that I would not attempt to fill these shoes but in my usual style try on a new pair and come from a different angle with just a little bit of risk and a whole lot of faith. That led me to hit upon the idea of focussing on the ‘everyday organist’; those amongst us that work hard and care about our playing but perhaps don’t give performances at recital standard, those of us that churn out new music week after week in order to enhance worship, those of us that face the challenges that popular music brings to our world as organists, those of us who endeavour to form choirs out of very little resource and those of us that do our work on instruments that we have to ‘make do with’ in a world where an organ is often the last priority on the financial agenda and the people that really understand the value and beauty of the instrument are few and far between. I have the burning desire to open up our NDSO events to the public far more in order to showcase what a great set of people we are and share our passion for this musical mechanical machine that is the pipe organ.

You will by now have seen my events list for the year and will perhaps have noticed a few opportunities within where the outside world can get a peek at who and what we are; it is also essential, may I add, that if and when they do, we show them a professional, friendly and welcoming shake of the hand and give them an interesting and enjoyable experience. I feel particularly thrilled to be the President that



## NEXT MEETING

Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October - ‘The Trials and Tribulations of the Everyday Organist’

*Details overleaf* 

introduces the NDSO to our new Rector Chori, Mr Paul Provost as he settles into the role at Southwell and of course to the now famous Kanneh-Mason family at our Annual Dinner in February. We have the customary fabulous Organ Crawls and Bus Trips which I sincerely hope that you support with your attendance to ensure that we break even financially. Attendance at these events I honestly believe is critical in preserving the ongoing future of the NDSO. I do appreciate how difficult it can be in our busy daily lives, but please do get the dates into your diaries early and push yourselves to take part in something that you may not usually do, invite others along with you as guests, encourage fellow society members to attend and spread the word wherever and whenever you can. At the time of writing I look forward to welcoming you to the first event my 'Presidents Evening' in the form of a concert raising money for the Children with Cancer charity. It is intended to be fun and light hearted, an opportunity to bring my Male Voice Choir together with our organists and perform to a public that probably don't know that much about the NDSO, so here is a great chance to put our best foot forward. And throughout my year, do come and say hello when you get the chance, as I can't wait to meet you all in due course.

*Ian Watts*

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## **FORTHCOMING EVENTS**

Put them in your diary now!

**Friday 20<sup>th</sup> October, 7.00**

### **THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF THE EVERYDAY ORGANIST**

A seminar at Bulwell Baptist Church, with 'organ vs worship band'. With guest Martin Hodge, who is the Director of Music of Watnall Road Baptist Church, Hucknall.

**Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> November, 2.00**

### **MEET PAUL PROVOST**

An afternoon at Southwell Minster to meet our (fairly) new Rector Chori. Paul will tell us about himself, his responsibilities and his aspirations, and we shall also be able to attend Choral Evensong at 5.45 sung by the Minster Choir.

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> January, 9.30**

### **NORTHWARD HO!**

This traditional organ crawl takes us north of Nottingham this time, to St Mark's, Mansfield, St Peter & St Paul, Warsop, St Swithun's, Retford and St Anne's, Worksop. Included will be a stop for a light lunch.

**Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February, 12.30**

### **ANNUAL LUNCHEON**

To be held at the Carrington Westminster Hotel. Guest speaker Kadiatu Kanneh, along with some music by her youngest daughter, Mariatu Kanneh-Mason.

## RECENT EVENTS

### Down the Fosse Way: 6<sup>th</sup> May 2017



*Robin Drury, Ossington's organ grinder and general factotum*

In his poem 'To a mouse ...' Robert Burns wrote that "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft agley" (for "Gang aft agley" you may substitute "often go awry"). These words certainly resonated as I set out on 6<sup>th</sup> May for our last outing of 2016/17, entitled 'Exploring Organs the 'Fosse' Way'. The day's programme, based on venues in the vicinity of the A46 Roman road, had been planned as long ago as February 2016, and was expected to begin with visits to Sibthorpe and Kneeton churches to savour the organs installed by our Past Presidents Paul Hale and David Butterworth respectively. In April 2017, however, a month before our visit, I was informed that "The organ at St Peter's [Sibthorpe] is out of commission and shortly to be sold". That scuppered Sibthorpe, but worse was to come, for at 1.53am on the morning of our visit we learnt (via an e-mail from Japan!) that "under no circumstances should the [Kneeton] organ be used, as the church electrics in total have been condemned." Some very nifty footwork on the part of David Butterworth enabled us to replace the Sibthorpe slot with a visit to Car Colston (St Mary's), where Chris Hind was putting the finishing touches to his refurbishment of the Wordsworth & Maskell organ (this builder was responsible also for the instrument at St Mary's Plumtree). We were warmly welcomed by Charles Bignall (project initiator) and Nigel Crockford (PCC Secretary), before being allowed to try the superbly restored instrument for ourselves. Some members were able to return for David's opening recital three weeks later.

After the short journey to Kneeton we were at least able to view the single-manual and pedal instrument (six speaking stops) at St Helen's. It was built by Taylor of Leicester for Wigston Magna Methodist Church, whence it travelled the short distance to Markfield Methodist Church. It then migrated to a Methodist Church/Hall in Castle Donington before being purchased by David Butterworth for installation in the Great Room at Bluecoat School, Nottingham. It settled in its current resting-place at Kneeton in 1978.

The central focus of the day was the visit to Newark's fine parish church of St Mary Magdalene (12<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> centuries), where Dr Stephen Bullamore inaugurated the church's summer series *Music for a Market* with a fine solo recital. His excellent programme, clearly aimed at the layman rather than the practitioner, took us from Walton (extracts from the music for the film *Henry V*) to Liszt (*Variations on Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen, Zagen*), by way of Bach's sublime prelude on *Schmücke dich* and two movements

from Ireland's tuneful *Miniature Suite*. Following his recital Dr Bullamore gave a brief account of the history of the Newark instrument before inviting members to become 'hands on'.

For the final activity of the day NDSO members veered a little *off-piste* with a detour to Ossington (Holy Rood Church), where we first played the undated single-manual instrument built by the Positive Organ Company under a patent of Thomas Casson (d.1910). However, members were much more intrigued by the church's working barrel organ (three stops) built by the Robson company in about 1830. The organ has three original barrels and one recently-manufactured roll which together provide the accompaniment for about eighty hymns. It is still regularly used for services.

The day concluded with a delightful and convivial tea at The Dovecote Inn, Laxton.

*John Morehen*

### President's Day: 24<sup>th</sup> June 2017



*Oh, my goodness, was that a mistake?*

Driving out to Syerston village on a very warm sunny afternoon in an open-top car was a delightful start to Professor Morehen's afternoon of recordings made over almost four decades. As we assembled, John welcomed each one of the rather small audience of just over a dozen. In a *Desert Island Discs* format he took the combined role of Roy Plomley and interviewee as we learned of the locations - but no detail of the instruments (taken as read by the assembled cognoscenti) - and sprinkled with off-air anecdotes arising before or during the recordings. The recordings, he explained, had come from his copies of BBC reel-to-reel tapes recently professionally transcribed to digital format on a laptop. Once the attached speakers were persuaded to fill the Village Hall with sound we began in King's College Chapel, Cambridge with a recording from a choral (Elizabethan Singers dir. Charles Pickard) and organ concert broadcast in 1965. Messiaen's *Dieu parmi nous* in the reverberant chapel acoustic was an exciting opener to the afternoon. Two more mid-1960 King's recordings of Messiaen first movements from *La Nativité* and *L'Ascension* showed John's fine interpretation of what is still to many, 'modern' organ music. One audience member asked for more. I should have dearly loved to have heard John play *Transports* from *L'Ascension*. A jump in time to 1974 to the Great Hall, University of Nottingham where John became Lecturer in Music in 1973 gave us the Duruflé *Prelude from Suite (op.5)*. Back in the 1970s the 3m Willis was in fine working order and this recording showed how it could be 'driven' to good effect with relatively limited resources. Two recordings (1976 and 1981) on the small Marcussen in St Mary's, Clifton Village were excellent vehicles to hear an expert player articulate the music of Buxtehude (*Wie schon leuchtet der Morgenstern*) and Bach *Contrapunctus IV (The Art of Fugue)*.

The mid-afternoon break allowed members the opportunity to travel to nearby Elston village where the original church is located in the corner of a farmer's field. Some seemingly agitated horses kept at bay the first arrivals who were reluctant to venture across the field to the obviously open little chapel. A brave soul walked briskly across to be totally ignored by said livestock; remaining stout party followed. The untouched interior has rustic box pews, simple two-decker pulpit and a rickety West gallery. The remains of wall paintings made the visit worthwhile. No pipe organ there but in the current Victorian All Saints church in the village a 1m+pulldown pedal Bishop and Starr dated 1872 [NPOR N01500] sits on the North side of the chancel with its visible Bourdon pipes mitred to follow the roof line. Some members explored the instrument before returning to Syerston to cake and tea served by the President.

The second half of the collection of recordings John played to us comprised a movement from a Handel *Organ Concerto No. 7 in B flat* played at the RAF Church St Clement Danes, London in 1968 and two more from Clifton: Bach *Prelude and Fugue in C (BWV545)* from 1978 and in 1981 the last two movements from Hindemith's *Sonata No. 1*. Some interesting discussion took place of keeping the orchestra and organ in sync. The clarity of the sound was remarkably good. John noted that the Hindemith probably had few listeners because it was broadcast on the same day as the Spencer/Windsor Royal wedding!

A short, sharp injection of Kenneth Leighton's *Scherzo* from *Prelude, Scherzo and Passacaglia* from a September 1986 recording in Southwell Minster managed to sound convincing on the then ever troublesome Minster HNB.

At Wollaton Hall John made two broadcasts in 1997 and 2001 demonstrating the hand-blown (by his son on one occasion) historic instrument. Being interviewed by Sarah Walker in the 1997 programme added to the afternoon's enjoyment of hearing BBC Radio 3 (Third Programme at the beginning of these recordings) announcers in their changing style of addressing the audience. John made the interesting point that in his early recital days the BBC would send an announcer to the venue and what the listener heard was the announcer in the building describing the forthcoming programme in an erudite if somewhat, to our current ears, plummy inflection. Whereas currently all the announcing seems to be via the duty continuity announcer seated firmly in a studio in Salford or elsewhere and without quite so much informative background about the venue/music/soloist etc. Twenty years on Sarah Walker still has her S. Yorkshire accent but somewhat mellowed.

To end his President's Day John gave us two August 1983 recordings from Lincoln Cathedral. Some Reger: *Toccata (Op59, No5)* and *Fugue No6 on BACH* by Schumann. Despite making advance arrangements with the Cathedral Organist the recital was almost in jeopardy. Thanks to the quasi conspiratorial support by the Assistant Organist (Roger Bryan) John was able to secure practice time on the Cathedral Organ after all, despite the denial by the titular organist.

For the members listening to John Morehen's BBC recordings the afternoon flew by. It was a widely varied and stimulating collection of beautifully played items delivered with a dash of good humour. We are grateful to him for drawing together the personal archive. To round off the occasion each attendee was presented with a CD of three broadcast concerts including two from St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. Thank You Mr President.

*John Whittle*

## **Annual General Meeting: 18<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

The 85<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society was held at St. John's Church Carrington on 17 July 2017 with 25 members in attendance.

Following approval of the minutes of last year's AGM and matters arising, the President, John Morehen, commented briefly on each event during his year of office. He noted various highlights, such as Dame Gillian Weir's attendance as guest of honour at the Annual Dinner as well as a few disappointing turnouts for certain events, particularly the IAO Midland's Organ Day and the



*“Little Miss Muffet, she sat on her tuffet”*

President’s Day. He suggested that the timing of the latter may have been one factor which should perhaps be taken into consideration for future years.

John commented that he was honoured to have fulfilled the role as President and thanked the Secretary, Treasurer and all committee members for their work and support during his term of office with special thanks to his predecessor, David Butterworth, for his wise counsel and regular advice.

He reported that five new members had been recruited in the year. John also announced the recent deaths of Elizabeth Mullarkey and Rachel Key for whom a period of silence was observed in their memory.

In the absence of the Treasurer, the Income & Expenditure Account was presented by the Secretary showing a surplus for the year of £292 and total capital at 30 June 2017 of £16,427, being an increase of £801 compared with last year and including growth in the value of the Charity Fund of £509 during the period. After questions, the

accounts were duly adopted by the meeting. Continuing membership subscription rates of £20 for ordinary members and free membership for students were also approved.

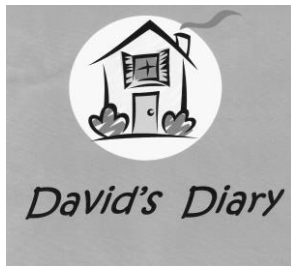
Treasurer David Towers and Secretary Denis Littleton were reappointed. Michael Worth was reappointed to the Committee and John Sears was appointed to fill the remaining vacancy, both appointments being for 3 years. Paul Hale was proposed, seconded and approved by the meeting as President Elect for the coming year.

John then handed over to his successor as President, Ian Watts, who introduced his varied programme for the coming year and distributed informative “flyers” containing details of forthcoming events which could also be used as publicity to a wider audience. Ian was keen to stress the practical “hands on” and topical elements of the programme, which he hoped would be of interest to many members, as well as visits to instruments of interest in the local area and further afield.

Following conclusion of the formal aspects of the meeting, John performed two short organ duets; firstly with Ian and then with David Butterworth. The enjoyment of these tuneful miniatures was enhanced by the video link from the console to a “big screen” giving members an excellent view of the display of manual dexterity. Thanks must go to David Shooter for his considerable efforts in providing the equipment and setting up the video link especially for the event.

The final duet concluded, with almost metronomic accuracy, at John’s predicted time of 8.15pm when refreshments were served.

*David Hanford*



It would be difficult to home in on a subject much more topical at this moment in time, than 'our' new Rector Chori, now reasonably well settled in with his

first term behind him, and ready for the onset of his first New Choir Year. So I called in at No.3 the other day for a chat.

DSB *Paul, the first thing most people will ask is: How did it all start?*

PP I was born in Hale [*ironically!* – Ed] and went to a standard primary school. My parents are quite musical, my mother in particular being involved with amateur operatics. My older brother is an organist and is very interested in organ building, such that he nearly took it up as a career. My parents also sang in our church choir of St Vincent's, Altrincham. I was never really a member of the choir, but I happily tagged along. I believe my folks found me trying to replicate some of the music from choir on the piano, so I started the piano when I was 4 and the 'cello when I was 6.

DSB *What happened after primary school?*

PP At age 11, I gained a place at Chetham's School, with 'cello my first study and piano second. As far as the organ is concerned I fell into it more or less by accident, via choral music. To start with, I got up to a reasonable standard on virtually a self-taught basis, and then this led to my having proper lessons with Chris Stokes. By the time I was starting sixth form, there was something of a hiatus in the organ scholar arrangements at the cathedral. There would normally be a senior and a junior organ scholar, respectively from the Royal Northern College of Music and Chetham's. Something had gone wrong with the regular plan, so I ended up as Senior Organ Scholar for two years whilst still at school. Naturally, in that time I gained massive experience in the art of accompaniment, as well as first-hand knowledge of a wide-ranging cathedral repertoire.

DSB *What came after Chetham's?*

PP I followed Chetham's with a gap year, fairly casual but nevertheless, I think, important in my development. Effectively, I worked as a freelance musician. I love chamber music, and

took every opportunity to play when I could; I had got to know Marcus Farnsworth at Chetham's, so fortuitously that now brought me to Southwell on a number of occasions; I periodically visited Cambridge to see Ruth, whom I had met at school, and we kept up the relationship on a long-distance basis. For part of that year I also stood in for the organist at St Peter's, Hale, where they had a lively musical set-up.

DSB *What was Ruth doing at this time?*

PP She had also been at Chetham's with 'cello as her first study! She went up to Cambridge a year before me, and enjoyed exploring the musical variety on offer, eventually settling as a singer. We were to be married at the end of my time in Cambridge, in St John's College chapel with an amazing group of friends around us. We did have some exciting music - excerpts from Kodaly Missa Brevis for instance - but it was made the more special by having friends singing for us.

DSB *So, to Cambridge.*

PP Yes. By then, it was becoming much harder for all the colleges to attract organ scholars of adequate ability, largely because of the crackdown on A level requirements. When it came to my applying, rather than adopting the standard routine of first choice, second choice, etc. I nominated only St John's. However, on top of that, and notwithstanding a general paucity of candidates, it turned out there were no less than nine others who had put down St John's as their first choice! Such was the reputation of the choir and its Director of Music, the legendary David Hill.

DSB *What a wonderful opportunity to work so closely with an all-time great! What particularly stands out in your mind about David's work and the influence he had on your development?*

PP One thing that particularly stands out has to be the opportunity I had to observe the early morning boys' rehearsals over at the choir school on Grange Road, and quite often actually having to stand in when the maestro was absent on exterior business. David's approach was often not obviously technical, although the aim was for a sound technical basis for his choristers. What he did seriously was to focus on 'sound'. He had a special knack of placing the boys quite specifically to blend with



one another and to learn from each other. I think this rather clever and sensitive approach transcended the more traditional practice of ‘desks’, each led by a senior boy accompanied by two or three juniors. David was also not

averse to putting us organ scholars through it, albeit with great sensitivity and understanding. For instance, once he had become aware of his final term, and bearing in mind that his wonderful choir was up for practically anything, he took the opportunity to include in the music list what felt like the entirety of the music library! So, between us, Léon Charles and I would be plunged from one fearsome accompaniment to another, day after day, week by week – whilst in my case, of course, still studying for my finals!

*DSB By now, you will have had a good idea as to what you wanted to do with your life. Did you ever have leanings towards an alternative career?*

PP Never. I always wanted to spend my life in music. As far as I was (and am) concerned, music is what I do! It is important to say that there was a wealth of musical opportunities in Cambridge outside of the chapel. I particularly loved being called upon as a keyboard continuo player, directing the University Baroque Ensemble from time to time, and accompanying at the piano.

*DSB And, after three years at Cambridge?*

PP My first job was as Assistant Director of Music at Winchester College, with Malcolm Archer. This was a perfect opportunity to do a bit of everything. I was the Assistant Organist for the excellent chapel choir; there were choir rehearsals to take; I ran a regular Saturday evening Compline; there was the teaching of keyboard skills, harmony and counterpoint, et al; I did some class music; and I was a House Tutor involving all the domestic duties one might expect. I never intended to be a school teacher, but this all-round experience was nevertheless to prove invaluable.

*DSB How about the ARCO and FRCO? Have you done those?*

PP I passed the A.R.C.O. when I was 15 or 16. I had intended to go on to the F.R.C.O. However, there were other serious calls on my time at Cambridge and, by the time I had finished there, I came to realize that I had already done everything that would have been required of me – and more – in the course of my studies and as Organ Scholar at St John’s.

*DSB I suppose that having one of these qualifications at the job application stage could be quite valuable, when a hapless appointment board has, say, 30 candidates to whittle down to a short list, and needs a starting point?*

PP Of course they are very useful things to have, and for many these qualifications are the only introduction to the rigour of keyboard skills, musical analysis etc. All of these skills are vital to our work not only as church musicians but as keyboard players in general - conductors, for instance, often have to assimilate an orchestral score. For the purposes of jobs, I am not aware of ever having been turned down for not having an F.R.C.O., and I think that, whilst these are good qualifications, they are less of a necessity now than they once might have been.

*DSB So, then it was from Winchester to Guildford?*

PP Yes, this was a fortunate move. The Director of Music there is Katherine Dienes. She had also worked with David Hill when he was at Winchester Cathedral. Katherine is superb. She is exceptional in her ability to engage so well with everyone – from beginners to highly skilled professionals, and is very well known for her work with the RSCM. When I arrived at Guildford, Katherine had only been there a year and things still seemed to be a little shaky. But she and I gelled immediately. We were a great duo, and with the strength of that solid relationship, we steadily built up both the boys’ and girls’ choirs to a stability which continues to this day. One of the great ‘secrets’ of our work was that we talked with each other virtually every day. We were always in touch, always knowing what each other was thinking. It was right to leave Guildford when I did, but of course difficult to leave behind such a close working relationship and wonderful friendship. Indeed, we made many very strong friendships whilst at Guildford, and it is fantastic to have Katherine and her husband Patrick as Godparents to our daughter, Martha.



DSB *But, leave you did. And here you are in Southwell, with one full term behind you, and who knows what and for how long ahead of you! You must have turned over in your mind a multitude of ideas, aspirations, maybe some concerns for the future, some of which might be difficult to share at this early stage. Clearly, Paul Hale did a great job maintaining high standards through thick and thin, for a quarter of a century. What could possibly need changing?*

PP Yes, undoubtedly Paul put the music at the Minster onto a proper professional footing. Naturally I have ideas of my own, but they do relate to all the good that I have inherited. The main question for me is what the music will look like in Southwell in, say, ten years' time. We have plenty to keep us occupied, not least simply running things from day to day, but also there are lots of exciting ideas for development. Our biggest challenge will be financial. Cathedrals throughout the country are having to work hard at fundraising, and ours is no exception to this. Music is expensive, of that we are all aware, but it is also a huge contributor to the core purpose of a Cathedral - that of daily worship. Planning for the future is probably more relevant now than ever before.

DSB *I can see the sense in that. Not least, it is a known fact that many potential benefactors prefer to target their munificence in a particular direction, such as the music.*

PP Quite, and music is one of the few tangible elements of worship, which helps us. We do need to keep working on recruitment and constantly to review how we distribute our resources - with both boy and girl choristers, as well as lay clerks and a voluntary adult choir, there is a surprisingly large programme for such a small town. Modern life presents us with great challenges in the busy schedule we keep, and it is my job to ensure the continued provision of excellent music whilst keeping the commitment manageable for all.

DSB *It is a happy fact that there have been Roman catholic organists at Westminster Abbey, and Anglican ones at Westminster Cathedral! You are in fact a Roman Catholic. Do you find this sits easily with your position in an Anglican cathedral?*

PP Absolutely. It is fascinating to be in this position. I love theology and liturgy and have

deep conviction in my faith, as I do in my work in the Church of England, itself historically a Reformed Catholic church. I hope that my 'outside' perspective is useful, and that I can use my experience and knowledge from many traditions with sensitivity. We are experimenting with the use of Magnificat Antiphons on Feast Days, for instance, which lifts the liturgy without changing the fundamental principles behind Cranmer's Evening Prayer.

DSB *Taking things a little further, would you say that a commitment to the Christian faith is an essential part of a cathedral organist's persona?*

PP No, but sensitivity and understanding are important. It could be a great strain for someone of no faith, or indeed any other faith, to work as intensively as cathedral musicians do within a religious organisation. A cathedral organist does have to champion the faith to some extent, especially encouraging choristers to come to confirmation for instance. I suppose it is a question of internal balance - the job doesn't necessarily need a Christian to do it, but there would be some searching questions any individual would wish to ask themselves if they were coming from any other standpoint.

DSB *It does us all good to relax from time to time from our everyday profession. How do you like to spend those precious moments?*

PP I think 'moments' is the right word! With a fourteen-month-old in the house, there is little time for much other than keeping things ticking over at home. Ruth spends much of her time with Martha, but equally has plenty of work - as a freelance singer this can be tricky with a toddler around the place! We do like to keep up with the Bake Off (even on Channel 4!), love the chance to read, and to see friends. When we can, we enjoy climbing the Lakeland fells (yes, even with Martha). Food is also a great interest: we will save up for a trip to somewhere rather special, usually with at least one Michelin star. But family life rightly takes precedence, and we are enjoying watching our little one grow.

DSB *Thank you, Paul, for sharing your time and thoughts with us. I know that all the members of the N.D.S.O. would enthusiastically join with me in wishing you every success and happiness in this new chapter in your life. Bon voyage!*

## The IAO Festival 2017

This year's Festival (previously known as Congress) was held in Oxford between the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of July. Proceedings got under way with an outstanding recital by outgoing IAO President Peter King, on the 2001 Tickell organ at Keble College. Works played included the Franck *Grande Pièce Symphonique* and the Reubke *Sonata on the 94<sup>th</sup> Psalm*.

We then moved to New College, with its Grant Degens and Bradbeer organ dating from 1969, complete with transparent swell box shutters, apparently once the subject of an unfortunate incident when an over-enthusiastic organist managed to shatter one of them. The organ was demonstrated and then it was off to the pub.

Monday started at Merton College, with a masterclass with Dame Gillian Weir, where the organ scholars from Exeter Cathedral, Blackburn Cathedral and Magdalen College presented Bach's *Prelude in B minor*, Franck's *Pièce Heroique* and Messiaen's *L'Ascension*. Dame Gillian was encouraging in her approach. Amongst the tips I can remember were, try playing with your eyes closed and do not be too mathematical in your approach to Messiaen. This was followed by an interview with Dame Gillian conducted by David Saint (Birmingham St Chad's Cathedral). This was quite amusing and gave her the opportunity to delve into her fund of stories about people she has known and organs she has played.



*The great Hill organ at Eton*

After lunch we went to Blenheim Palace, where following a guided tour we were entertained by William Fox (organ scholar of Magdalen College) playing the 1891 Wills in the Long Library.

Tuesday turned out to be a non-organ day, starting with a lecture by Dr. Geoffrey Tyack on *Architecture in Oxford: Wren, Vanburgh and Hawksmoor*. Here was a man who really knew his subject. I could have listened to him for much longer than the hour allocated. The day's musical elements started with a piano recital given by John Reid of works by Bach, Janáček, Fauré and Ravel. After lunch was a chamber music recital by the Edington Ensemble playing *3 miniatures for piano trio* by Frank Bridge and the Brahms *Piano Quartet in G minor*.

Wednesday was spent at Eton College. They have several organs there and we encountered four. The Chapel organ is a Hill of 1895, and was demonstrated by David Goode the College organist with the *Allegro maestoso* from Elgar's *Sonata in G*, two of Parry's chorale preludes and works by Reger and Howells. There is also a Snetzler organ in the chapel. In the School Hall is a Mittenreiter organ dating from 1773. It was originally in a church in Rotterdam which was decommissioned in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and was going to be thrown out. It was bought by a master from Eton who gave it to the College, which installed it in the School Hall and extended it. The organ was restored in 1973 by Flentrop, bringing it back to something like its original state. The final organ was the Tickell from 2001 in the Lower Chapel. This is quite a versatile instrument and worked well in music by Messiaen and Marchand. This is the organ used for most of the teaching of the 25 organ pupils.

Back in Oxford the final day started with a mainly Bach recital given by Robert Quinney on the 1965 Frobenius at Queen's College. A change of venue found us at St John's College for a recital on the 2008 Aubertin organ. The programme consisted of yet more Bach, alternated with De Grigny. I believe other composers are available.

We were then able to play several organs of choice. The instruments at Merton College, St. Michael at the Northgate (3 manual Willis 1954) and Harris Manchester College (3 manual Gray & Davison 1923) were all made available.

The last event was the annual dinner at Exeter College where the new IAO President Steven Grahl (Peterborough Cathedral) was installed.

Anyway, all in all it was an enjoyable few days. The 2018 IAO Music Festival will be based on Peterborough, dates to be confirmed.

*Denis Littleton*

### **On the square – Masonic Hall Recitals April – June 2017**

According to the National Pipe Organ Register [R01859] the Hill, Norman and Beard organ in the main Ionic Temple of the Masonic Hall, Goldsmith Street, Nottingham was installed in 1929 and cost £1,512. Synoptically it is Gt 8 8 8 8 4 4, Sw 16 8 8 8 4 2 8 Tr, Ped 16 16 16 (Sw) 8 (ext). Usual couplers and including Sw octave to Gt, Sw suboctave to Gt, Sw octave, Sw suboctave. Interestingly the NPOR states two separate Swell boxes and two balanced Swell pedals. So, not a large instrument of just nineteen speaking stops. However, under David Butterworth's expert musicianship we heard an interesting and at times exhilarating variety of sound in the rather dry acoustic of the Temple.

On 27 April David opened with *Marche Pontificale* from Widor's 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony. A certain gravitas and majesty in the writing gave the organ opportunity to show what the tutti was like. By including at least one piece by JS Bach in each of the four lunchtime recitals we heard including on 27 April some lovely flutes (Jesu, Joy of man's desiring) and diapason choruses (St Anne Prelude and Fugue) and dextrous playing in the *Pièce d'Orgue* (11 May) and the 'Great' *Prelude and Fugue in G* (25 May), the (in)famous *Toccata and Fugue in D Minor* (8 June) and *Fugue a la Jig* (8 June).

In his introductions to the fortnightly recitals I was pleased to hear a little about each composer and specifically about the next items. The Bach theme was explained and taken up in the Liszt *Prelude and Fugue on B.A.C.H.* No doubt some of the audience (numbering about 30) may not have previously understood how 'H' fitted our keyboard letter assignments and were rewarded by David's genial explanation. This piece came over well and demonstrated the versatility of player and instrument (and page-turner throughout the series - Denis Littleton). Pistons (keyslip and foot) no doubt worked hard to negotiate the contrasting registrations towards the end. [*Thanks, John. But in fact all the recitals had to be hand registered throughout - Ed!*]

On 11 May the more romantic flavours in Mendelssohn's *War March of the Priests* and the *Sonata No.2* were contrasted by Vaughan Williams *Prelude on Rhosymedre*. The latter began very quietly but built to a strong middle section before ending in a subtle pianissimo. Twentieth century was represented by Noel Rawsthorne's *Hornpipe Humoresque* - a fun piece recalling London's boisterous promenaders' excesses and showing inter-manual exchanges and a chance to hear the Swell Horn to good effect including snatches/parodies of Widor's *Toccata*.

For the third concert, the opener was Lemmens' *Fanfare in D* - loud and got one's attention before David included two items by living composers: *Mozart Changes* Zsolt Gárdonyi (b. 1946) and *Hamburger Totentanz* Guy Bovet (b. 1942). The 5-minute Bovet piece keeps up rhythmic pulses in the left hand/pedals whilst fluty sounds dart around excitedly. [Not having seen the score I imagine the hands and themes interchange as the frenzy builds up]. A brief nod toward *Fur Elise* then a steady crescendo brought it all to an *ff* conclusion and rapturous applause. Mozart was well represented in the *Fantasia in F minor for Mechanical Clock* in which David brought out the softer flute sounds of the instrument to good effect. Our President's arrangement of Mozart's *Masonic Funeral Music K477* received a world premiere for one of the audience; non other than John Morehen himself told me afterwards that he had never heard the piece although he had arranged it!

The final Thursday recital on 8 June was one of sharp contrasts. Apart from the Bach items mentioned above, the programme had three short pieces by Danish composer Jesper Madsen (1957-1999). The *Denne er dagen, Som Herren har gjort* was a lively modern piece with a slight hint of Hindemith in its tonality. Probably more suited to a Danish or North German sound than a 1929 HNB, David nevertheless gave us a spirited and exciting performance. This was followed by Brewer's arrangement

of Elgar's *Chanson de Matin* which was more restful on the ear. [The Swell 2' Fifteenth is quite piercing in the dry acoustic; if only it was a little more subtle...] [*I agree – its problem being that it constitutes the organ's total upperwork! – Ed*] Two minutes of jollity came through in the jazzy, foot-tapping rhythms of Michael Schütz's *Keep Cool* written in 2008 – well worth hearing again.

The grand finale of the series was truly a revelation in how this organ, under DSB's expert handling, could move into the world of French big (and small) sonorities. Having heard Harry Jacques (St Mary's Newark) play Duruflé *Prelude et Fugue sur le nom d'Alain* in the highly resonant Worksop College Chapel the previous week I was apprehensive of how the 2m 19-stop HNB would fare. At once the opening sounds and registration were easily recognisable as sounding like a French instrument - the strings and flutes very convincingly coming through in the Prelude. The lack of any mutations and only one reed - the 8' Horn - must have been a challenge. The Fugue theme (using notes ADAAF to represent the equivalent of Alain) positively sang and the build up to the powerful climax was for me the best piece in the four recitals.

*John Whittle*

## Say Aaaaaagh!

*One of our Past Presidents, Dr Don Henry, reluctantly spills just a few beans in an account of a remarkably full life of medicine, music and much more besides ...*



*“ I love my grandchildren”*

The Hollins Methodist Chapel Oldham that I knew no longer exists. With bricks torn down and its lovely Conacher organ confined to the builders' skip. Here where my wife and I and both sets of parents married, and here where I first ventured onto an organ stool, enchanted by all those stops with peculiar names. Decades on the names are more familiar but the enchantment remains.

All our family were musical, and in particular we sang, in get-togethers at home and in the chapel choir. My primary school was next door to the chapel, and this is where I first met my future wife, Margaret - her grandfather was eventually to clock up over fifty years as organist of the Chapel.

My next school was Oldham High School, which at that time was a less than happy place with some quite inappropriate staff. But there were many more memorable aspects to my teen years. This was the time of the Second World War, which affected towns and cities all over the country, not just London and Coventry. Sometimes after a raid on Manchester, the Luftwaffe would jettison their unused bombs on Oldham. Our house had a field in front of it and also one at the side – the only two fields in Oldham! One day, I witnessed a plane as it dropped four bombs on one of these fields in a particular pattern which I can still remember. A favourite hobby of me and my friends was collecting shrapnel, so this was good news for us! On another occasion, a doodlebug landed in Oldham and demolished a whole row of terrace houses. [*This was the result of an experiment to launch 45 flying bombs from Heinkels over the North Sea on Christmas Eve, 1944. They were intended for Manchester, but several dropped straight into the sea and the rest went all over the place; one even landed in Northamptonshire and only seven reached Manchester itself. The Oldham one landed two miles from Don in Abbey Hills Road, and was the most devastating of all, killing 27 people – Ed.*]. As a precocious teenager it was a joy to play services in some of the many non-conformist chapels often with their enthusiastic choirs. But I soon learnt to expect the unexpected. On one occasion the service ended with the beautiful and rousing St Clement (The day thou gavest) . Always

prepared, I quickly closed the hymn book at the end and took up the music for the final voluntary only to hear with horror the minister proclaim “Friends, that was such a wonderful hymn we will sing the last verse again!” To play in public exposes one to many such hazards. Too many or too few verses, overlooking an open pedal reed etc.

Notwithstanding my inglorious school days, I gained a place at Edinburgh to study Medicine, a six year course. Margaret went off to Leeds to read Classics. At the end of her three years, we got married and bought our first house in Nottingham, in Thornton Avenue, Redhill. Of course, my musical interests followed me to Edinburgh, where the surprises continued. I was an associate organist at Greyfriars Kirk (with my own key!). At lunchtime I would enter, switch on the power, walk down the long nave to the console and there switch on the organ. On one horrifying occasion this was immediately accompanied by an enormous explosion which shook the windows and left me anguishing - however would one pay for the damage? It was a relief to realise after a bit that the explosion came from the castle’s cannon directly in line with the church and fired every noon.

As a student I spent many hours in Emergency where I was allowed to attend to modest lacerations etc. These are closed by looping the needle and thread round the forceps to tie the knot – a simple action which looks difficult. Doing this on one occasion an elderly man appeared saying “that’s an interesting way to tie knots young man”. Thinking him to be a visiting GP I offered to show him how to do it. Just then the registrar appeared, flustered saying “good afternoon Professor Kerr, sir...” It was the Dean of the medical school that I as a junior student was teaching!

After university, it was good to get back permanently to Nottingham where I spent the next six years in various jobs at the General Hospital before entering general practice. After several years as a junior partner, I decided to set up on my own. By then, we had moved to our present house in Burlington Road, which had a double garage at the bottom of the garden, fronting on to Perry Road. We had that knocked down and a brand new surgery built in its place. There was a limit of 5,000 patients allowed in a single practice, and I had reached that number in two weeks, after which I had to close the books. I had many interesting patients over the years, including Kendrick Partington’s mother, two of David Butterworth’s choir families from St Mary’s, and many more. After a while, my older son Ian joined me in the practice, and eventually we moved to the current premises on Edwards Lane (where we had one or two N.D.S.O. meetings.) Both my sons and my grandson Tom are all doctors now.

Many GPs take on other related interests. At various times I was a police surgeon; the medical officer at Nottingham Prison; and Lecturer in Computing in the Department of GP at Nottingham University. In the last capacity, I was particularly interested in bringing computers into the realm of general practice, and devising various suitable programmes. My work on a ground-breaking programme for repeat prescriptions won me a £5,000 prize.

Apart from my music and my medicine, I have always taken a keen interest in practical things. After the old garage had been demolished, we built a new, long, one on the other side of the garden. There I built three boats, two dinghies and then a narrow boat which we kept at Sawley; I also have a large model railway network running right through the attic. And, when the grandchildren came along, of whom I have five, I built a decent-sized swimming pool in the garden; now they have all grown up, I have filled it in again. My sons have taken after me in this respect. Apart from both being doctors, Ian is a dab hand with cars, having completed his own kit car at the age of just 18; and Julian can do practically any of the building trades, having doubled the size of his present house since moving there.

In my later years, music is a constant source of pleasure. I am a Past President of the N.D.S.O., and designed the first websites both for the Society and for Norwich Organs. For some years, I was organist of Mansfield Road Baptist Church where there was a three-manual Norman & Beard, later an assistant at St Barnabas’ Cathedral, and after many locums am now settled at Lambley Church. I love playing hymns, and also psalms when I get the chance. I am very happy at Lambley, though recently I realized that even there things are a-changing, when I had to play “I do like to be beside the seaside’ during the morning service ...

*Donald Henry*

## Let's enjoy Bach

David Goode's article (Organists Review, March 2017) about the 16-CD set of Bach's organ music he has recorded was interesting to read. What a monumental achievement for David. Recorded at Trinity College, Cambridge David went into some detail about how he assembled the team closely involved in the technical side of producing his CD's for Signum. I have found that people who enjoy classical music frequently shy away from listening to Bach's organ music, the Toccata in D Minor excepted. They find his music too cerebral. In the past year two accomplished, well qualified organists have told me they dislike playing Bach [See me - Ed.] I was glad that they felt free to share their thoughts with me.



Many years ago when I was a girl in the US I recall my reaction to hearing a Bach fugue on the organ for the first time. It left me cold. I could not relate to the fugue. Since then I have performed much Bach on the organ most of which I have found uplifting to play. I do feel that people would begin to get more of a taste for Bach's organ music if organists used more discretion in deciding when it is appropriate to play a piece in which imitative counterpoint is used (as in a fugue). J.S. Bach has left a wealth of music in different styles for us to enjoy and interpret. Speaking personally I never tire listening to the Trio Sonatas and the Brandenburg Concertos.

Back in April of this year I was privileged to hear a Radio 4 programme entitled "A Passion for Bach". One of the people interviewed was a young man from Senegal who played a Bach keyboard piece on his West African Harp. (I think he had helped to build the harp). What a treat to hear him play. Later in the programme a woman told how her mother, an Alzheimer's patient, was suddenly able to talk when she heard the 1<sup>st</sup> Cello Suite by Bach. The lady had had Alzheimer's for 8 years and the family had virtually given up trying to converse with her.

*Juliette Adams*

*[Juliette is one of our newer members, and the most distant at Ipswich. She participated in the Denmark tour and, apparently having enjoyed the company so much, decided she would like to be a part of this Society – distance no object – Ed]*

## NEWS AND NOTES

Cor Edskes, the internationally known organ expert and adviser, has died peacefully at the age of 90 in Haren, near Groningen. His formidable research into historic Dutch organs involving riding around the whole country on his bicycle, taking comprehensive details of pipework, soundboards, action and other elements of the many fine historic organs in that country, can never be equalled again. His scholarship has led to his close involvement in the restorations, often complex, of some of the most important historic instruments in the world, including those of the Nieuwe Kerk Amsterdam and Roskilde Dom (both with Marcussen, and the latter visited by us last year); and Martinikirche Groningen and Jacobikirche Hamburg (both with Ahrend, the latter being the largest extant Schnitger organ.) He is interviewed most interestingly and at length in the wonderful Fugue State Films production 'Pronkjuwelen in Stad en Ommeland.'

Chesterfield Parish Church continues to host weekly organ recitals on their gigantic Lewis/Willis/Wood organ, replete with two new blowers, so we are informed. Forthcoming dates are the lunchtimes (12.15) of 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September (Ian Brackenbury) and 12<sup>th</sup> October (David Butterworth.)

The next recital on the Binns organ at the Albert Hall, Nottingham, will be given by Luke Bond on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October at 2.45.

On Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> November, at 3.00 in the afternoon, St Giles' Church, Sandiacre will celebrate the fortieth anniversary of their Nigel Church organ with a recital by David Butterworth. Refreshments will be included in the event.

On Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> November, the Nottingham Harmonic Choir with the Orchestra de Camera, conducted by Richard Laing, will give a concert comprising Strauss's Four last Songs and Brahms' A German Requiem.

The recent recitals given at Nottingham's Masonic Hall, written up elsewhere in this journal, raised £350 clear profit for charity, and sparked off unexpected interest in the organ itself. Whilst possessing many good features such as its delightful flutes, there has been an ongoing problem with unsteady wind, and full organ was noticed by audience members to lack 'top'. There are consequently plans afoot to revitalize the instrument, addressing both the wind problems

and the tonal balance. A generous starter donation, uninvited, has already been offered. It goes without saying that, should any members of the Society be interested in being a part of this new project, the editor would be delighted to hear from them. Look out for the next series which is in the planning stage.

Some of you will be aware of Fugue State Films' latest offering, the monumental 'Maximum Reger.' The editor has played through the complete thing twice already, and he tells me it is magnificent from beginning to end. Arising from his personal connections with FSF, Will Fraser the Director is making a special offer to members of the N.D.S.O. of £50 for the whole set, normal RRP £85. Christmas is just around the corner; treat yourselves!

Congratulations to Robert Pascall, one of our most distinguished members and the internationally acclaimed authority on Brahms and his music. In recognition of another branch of his talents, his long-standing contribution to church music, he will be receiving the coveted Bishop's Award at the R.S.C.M. Festival Service in Southwell Minster on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Sequencer may take on a new name ere long. Sounding out members on a purely ad hoc basis has revealed the diversity of opinion one might expect! However, there is a general view that a change might be timely. Some excellent suggestions have been received, amongst which 'Organo Pleno', 'Wind Trunk' and 'Soundboard' seem to score highly. Watch this space!

Congratulations to Farnsfield Parish Church on their appointment of a new Director of Music, with a special remit to build up the choir. The successful candidate? None other than our President! Well done, Ian.

With regard to the circulation of our mag and following careful consideration by your committee, it has been decided to issue it primarily in hard copy, whilst still retaining the electronic version for those who prefer it. This particular edition, therefore, is issued postally to the whole membership. Thereafter, if you would prefer just the electronic version (which does save a few pennies), please just let the editor know as below, and it will be done.



*A Happy Treasurer*

Many thanks to our photographers John Morehen, David Shooter and Simon Fricker

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