



# Soundboard

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

Est. 1932

January 2023

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Richard Marsden MA (Cantab.)

First of all may I wish all our readers a very Happy New Year! We have an interesting programme lined up and I hope to meet as many of you as possible in the coming months.

Christmas, eh! Are we relieved or sad that it's all over? For a church organist it can be a time of exhilarating highs or toe-curling embarrassment. I experienced the latter during our Carols by Candlelight. The church was packed, the lights were dimmed, candles dutifully providing the atmosphere that only candles can. We'd already done 'Once in Royal' and a couple of others. Chris, a talented trumpeter friend, had agreed to add some brass support from the heights of the organ loft, and the singing was warming up nicely. Then came 'Angels from the realms of glory'. Help!! As I started verse 1 I realised that my note from the vicar said '4vv' but the hymn book had 5 verses! The words were being projected onto screens dotted around the church, none of them visible to the organist, so they were no help. From the console you can only really make out the s's and the l's when people are singing, but I managed to discern that in verse 2 we'd had the 'shepherds in the fields', then the 'sages leaving their contemplation' in verse 3 and the 'saints before the altar' in verse 4. But was a verse 5 coming up or not?? I decided that the hymn book and 'Carols for Choirs' were more reliable than the vicar's scribbled note, and went for full organ for the fifth and final verse. I didn't hear any singing – but from the console that's not unusual when every stop is out. Then, to my horror, I noticed Chris frantically miming the slitting of his throat and immediately I realised why!

My mind went back to last November and David Machell's excellent improvisation workshop. His advice was (I paraphrase): 'If you make a mistake, pretend it was deliberate and just press on'. I'd already completed the first line so I started the second, added a couple of discordant, syncopated chords and brought everything to a triumphant conclusion, convinced that I'd fooled people into thinking it was an intentional 'festal flourish'. I think I got away with it, as Basil Fawlty once famously said. However, Chris's anguished expression and barely concealed smirk suggested otherwise, as did the wry smiles I received from other musically aware members of the congregation as they tucked into their mince pies after the service. My dear wife, bless her, also gave her verdict: 'Well, you made a right bodge of that, didn't you!'



## Next Event

*Monday 23 January: A Zoom meeting at 7.30pm: 'My Life with the Organ' by Dr John Kitchen*



All was not doom and gloom, though. I chose Widor's *Toccata* for the final voluntary, and one enthusiastic 80-year-old thanked me with tears of delight in his eyes, saying that this was the first time in his life he'd ever heard 'that piece' played live. If that doesn't make an organist feel Christmassy, nothing will!

You'll find details in this edition of *Soundboard* of our annual luncheon at the Corinthian Restaurant in Nottingham. We have an excellent speaker in Professor David Baker and it promises to be an enjoyable and convivial afternoon. Please do try and make it. In the meantime you might like to dip into David's latest crime novel *The Organ Loft Murders*. Simply Google the title and you can read it online. Enjoy!

*Richard Marsden*

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### **Monday 23 January, 7.30pm: My Life with the Organ**

A Zoom meeting with Dr John Kitchen of Edinburgh. The link will be supplied by Denis before the event.

**Saturday 25 February: Annual Luncheon** at the Corinthian Dining Room, Masonic Hall, Goldsmith Street. 12.30 for 1.00pm. Guest speaker will be Professor David Baker.

**Wednesday 22 March:** Visit to **Burton Joyce and Lowdham** Parish Churches. The organ at Lowdham is a vintage Forster & Andrews, whilst that at St Helen's, Burton Joyce, is a relatively recent new-build by Principal Pipe Organs of York.

**April date tbc:** Hopefully this will feature a visit to **Lincoln**. Unfortunately, making the necessary arrangements with the Minster is proving difficult. Updated details will issue from Denis, as and when available.

**May date tbc:** Zoom - a film by James Dawson - **Organ Stops:** Saving the King of Instruments

## MORE FORTHCOMING DATES

### **Halam Court, Sunday 22 January, 3.00pm**

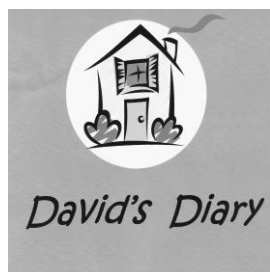
A recital of song and piano in music related to children, organized by Ian Watts Holly Jewitt-Maurice (soprano) and Roger Holland (piano) in a programme to include Schumann's *Kinderszenen*; songs from *The Sound of Music* and *Les Misérables*; and more.

Free entry to this concert, with a collection in aid of Dr Barnardo's

### **St Anne's Church, Derby (Whitecross Street), Saturday 18 February, 7.30pm**

A Concert with Derwentio Brass, conducted by David Blackwell

The programme will be intentionally light in nature with some intriguing titles, and will include the last movement of Saint-Saëns' '*Organ Symphony*' with Tom at the keyboards! Admission Free.



It is only very rarely that I have accepted an invitation to give a recital on an electronic organ, and then only because I regard the invitation as a particular

privilege, or I've had my arm seriously twisted, or both. By nature, I am even less inclined to attend someone else's electronic recital. Not that I am against electronics; they are just not particularly my cup of tea. I find my personal pattern - when listening - is (usually) to enjoy the sound for a few minutes, following which that comfort zone seems to dissipate, being replaced by a kind of monotony of perfection which palls on the mind. Notwithstanding, they are an absolute boon for the serious student wanting something to practise on in the home, churches these days having become, by and large, hopelessly inaccessible. And great things can be achieved thereby. To name one example, think of Charles Harrison, one time head chorister at Southwell, learning in the Minster, whilst all his serious practice was carried out at home. Having gone on to Jesus College as Organ Scholar, and now resident Director of Music at the lovely Chichester Cathedral, he is, I know, hugely grateful for that early opportunity. My beef when it comes to churches concerns the all-too-frequent scenario of a pipe organ displacement. Electronic organs are, for many PCCs, the easy way out, maybe the only way out, when they are informed by the local organ tuner that their organ needs £xx,xxxs spending on it, or it will stop working altogether. This is happening all the time, and in some instances is little better than a ploy to secure work, whereas a proper approach to thorough maintenance may be all that is necessary.

Hence, considering my somewhat guarded approach to the matter, it is perhaps the more surprising that, presented with the opportunity of attending a pair of

lunchtime recitals on the Content Organs organ of St Anne's, Derby, I jumped at it. Why? In the first place, having played it and also heard it myself many times, I had to acknowledge that it had its good points. More importantly, however, these two closely inter-related programmes were to be given by the much-loved resident organist, Dr Tom Corfield. I might also add that, having once almost been destined for closure, the church is now perceptibly being brought back to life by a first-rate vicar and a delightful, determined and industrious core of worshippers who support everything (including organ recitals). Tom's two programmes were devoted to a cunningly devised 'mix' of *Orgelbüchlein* preludes and excerpts from Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur*. The different items were interspersed with our maestro's original and perspicacious remarks about the place of this music in the minds of the two composers, each deeply religious yet coming from very different traditions. In the first recital, on 5 December, the *Orgelbüchlein*'s *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* 599, *Gottes Sohn ist gekommen* 600 and *Herr Christ, der ein'ge Gottes-Sohn* 601 were juxtaposed with Movements i, ii, iii and v from *La Nativité*. I felt that the Messiaen came over particularly well with some excellent and idiomatic timbres from the organ. It was only when we got to the final item, Bach's 601, that we were seemingly plunged, somewhat abruptly, into a sound world so synthetic that we might have been better off without it. Tom's programme the following Monday was of similar ilk and, again, specific points he wished to make were illustrated on the nearby grand piano which the church has recently acquired. Much of what I have related concerning the first recital could be repeated here, but in terms of tonality in which sphere this can almost be described as an experimental venture for me, I cannot help but return to the penultimate item in the previous Monday's recital, *Les enfants de Dieu*, movement v. of *La Nativité*. This is one of his most approachable movements. It

takes a chordal motif developed over a long *crescendo*, a kind of inherent *accelerando* adding spicily to the effect “*To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the children of God, and God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts*”, until it reaches a magnificent climax “*crying Father! Father!*” portrayed in what some people might describe as ‘crashing chords’. Thereafter, the music quickly subsides into a final, dream-like passage seemingly representative of the sublime fulfilment of the prayer which, frankly, could only have come from the pen of this master. It was here that I thought the organ came into its own in a manner I have rarely heard before. The sound was warm, gentle, but characterful and – all-embracing. Only occasionally, have I heard anything like it even from a pipe organ!

Needless to say, the real value of this unusual pair of recitals was entirely down to our maestro’s wonderful playing. There wasn’t a note out of place anywhere (albeit it would be in Tom’s nature to dispute that).and musical judgement in registration, tempi and the like were impeccable. What an experience! So, a big thanks to Tom, not only for those two recitals, but for all he is doing to help in restoring the life of this fine anglo-catholic church near the city centre of Derby. There will be a lot more lunchtime music-making this year, so look out for those Monday slots, commencing 6 March, with most programmes involving the use of their recently acquired grand piano. Timing is 12.30, and parking is easy.

David

## RECENT EVENTS

### Midlands Organ Day: 3 September

After months of planning by the DDOA Chairman and Committee, a wonderful programme beckoned participants attending this year’s Midlands Organ Day in Derby Cathedral. We were treated with presentations by tip-top organ builders, performers and soloists, all masters of their art.

First on the programme for the morning session was **Robin Jennings** who built the new chamber organ for the DDOA endowed by the Edmund Stow Legacy. Robin told us how he came to love Baroque music whilst a student at the London Furniture College, and that in his final year he had built a two-manual harpsichord, a vital tool for Baroque accompaniment. After a spell working for N.P.Mander Ltd, he set up his own business and took commissions to build house and church organs. After a while, he decided to specialise in building



Robin Jennings (in green)

chamber organs and so far has completed 36. All the examples he showed us in photographs were beautiful pieces of furniture as well as practical instruments. He initially took his inspiration from the craftsmanship he discovered whilst dismantling a 17<sup>th</sup> century ‘Father’ Smith chamber organ during his time at Manders. For his own designs, he declared that none of them could be described as ‘authentic’; a prime aspect of design was that they should be

practical working instruments capable of easy movement and transportation. Indeed the instrument he built for John Eliot Gardiner had travelled several thousands of miles during the musician's Bach Cantata recording project. Robin went on to explain the creation process for his chamber organs, beginning with the design in the same kind of computer software used by architects, but proceeding to a completely hand-made fabrication process. He showed videos using various electrically driven tools, like a band-saw and turning lathe, but automation was totally absent; each component, be it structural, the keyboard or a wooden pipe, was hand-crafted. *[Rather frustrating that the potentially fascinating clips of 'work in progress' were in fast time, thereby depriving them of either use or interest – Ed.]* Different components used different types of wood: English box wood and ebony for the keys, Scandinavian pine for pipes, oak for the structure and so on. The manner in which Robin described respectively the qualities of the wood or a process for hand-finishing a component left us in no doubt that here was a man who had intricate knowledge of his materials and loved his craft which he had refined through experience; in short, a master craftsman. It was fascinating to discover what had contributed to the pedigree of our instrument in Derby Cathedral, already an object of our admiration and which became a honey-pot for members of the audience after the conclusion of the talk and questions.

After lunch it was the turn of **Andrew Scott** to take the platform. Andrew joined Harrison & Harrison, organ builders, as an apprentice in 1994. He was appointed Head Voicer in 2012 and most recently became Managing Director, just six days before the Derby event. His subject "The Evolution of H&H Tonal Architecture" carried the sub-title "To nick or not to nick – that is the question". As we discovered, the process of nicking is one of several that can be applied to a pipe to modify the sound it makes.

By way of context, Andrew first gave a potted history of the firm. Originally founded by Thomas Harrison in Rochdale in 1861, the firm moved to Durham in 1872. Thomas's two sons, Arthur and Harry, joined the firm in the 1880s as apprentices, later to become partners when Thomas retired in 1895. Hence the two brothers gave the name by which the firm has been known ever since. Arthur's skills as a voicer of vision and perfectionism achieved widespread acclaim, whereas Harry excelled behind the scenes leading all the technical aspects of construction. Arthur died in 1936 during the finishing of the organ in Westminster Abbey. Andrew described the character of organs built between 1900 and 1940 as the 'Imperial Voicing Period'. Under Arthur's influence, the general voicing style was 'Romantic', characterised by very controlled and even pipe speech. However, during the period from about 1936 to about 1980, the Organ Reform Movement (*Orgelbewegung*) grew in influence on the continent of Europe and the USA. The inspiration of this movement was to recover the voicing style of 'classical' organs of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. With lower wind pressures, open-tip voicing and little or no nicking, pipe speech was freer and the upper harmonics more prominent.

The firm came face to face with the impact of the ORM when it was awarded the prestigious contract to build the brand new organ for the Royal Festival Hall (RFH). Ralph Downes was in charge of the tonal concept which generated numerous conflicts with the firm's traditions of both scaling and voicing. The *coup de grâce* occurred when a Frenchman [*Rochesson – Ed*] was brought in to voice the reeds. "That didn't go down well!"

In subsequent rebuilding contracts, like those at King's College, Cambridge and St Alban's Abbey, under the leadership of Cuthbert Harrison, the firm found a happy medium, providing better upperwork but without thinning out the foundation tone. When it came to the new organ for Coventry Cathedral, this philosophy arguably found its apogee; to the ears of many, it remains one of the finest in the country.



In his concluding remarks, it was clear that Andrew felt very comfortable with the balanced approach to tonal matters that prevails at present.

The fashion for transcriptions of orchestral works for organ was at its height in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when great virtuosos like Edwin Lemare would thrill audiences which had no access to live orchestras. By the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the fashion of organ repertoire had drifted away from transcription, focusing in the main on pure organ music. However, in recent decades we have witnessed a gradual



Jonathan Scott

*rapprochement* with the art and **Jonathan Scott** has been at the forefront of its revival not only as a virtuoso himself but as a prolific arranger of great orchestral works. So it was a great privilege to welcome him to Derby for a masterclass with two local organists.

Our first volunteer was **Paul Hodgetts** who played Lemare's transcription of the *Meistersinger Overture* by Wagner. We admired Paul's accomplished performance, but as we expected, Jonathan offered many ideas for elaborating the principle of recreating the sound-world of an orchestra. Second on the stool was **Richard Syner** who had brought along his own transcription of *Scene* from *Swan Lake* by Tchaikovsky. Richard's piece of work was impressive, especially as the orchestral score employs such a diverse range of instrumental sounds, often the case in Tchaikovsky's music. Jonathan's discussion focused on how to make this expressive music as expressive as possible; the *sforzandos*, rapid diminuendos and crescendos, the dramatic build-ups, the big tunes and so on, all need special attention to registration. The guiding principle to find the best way of playing, is to think of the original instrumentation.

The final session of the afternoon brought us back to the Baroque and to the chamber organ which has a major role as a continuo instrument. **Alexander Binns**, the Derby Cathedral Director of Music, presented his talk in two halves, each concluding with a performance with his wife, **Dora Chatzigeorgiou**, playing violin.

In Baroque times the only instruction to the continuo player was a 'figured bass', a single bass line annotated with numbers and accidentals. Alex explained the conventions of this system and demonstrated the freedom that it offers the player; a 'realisation' could take a variety of forms from simple chords to florid elaboration. In conclusion Alex and Dora played a lovely *Sonata in D* by Handel.

The crowning glory of Derby's Organ Day came in the evening with **Jonathan Scott's recital**. "The Orchestral Organ", his title for the recital, ushered a complete programme of transcriptions. Opening with Lemare's arrangement of Wagner's *Overture to Tannhäuser*, we knew that we were in for a treat. He conveyed the dramatic crescendos of this piece using the full dynamic range of the Compton organ. To quote him from the masterclass, he gave us the full "sound-world of the orchestra".

Wagner was followed by Purcell; This was Jonathan's own arrangement of *Dido's Lament*, such a poignant piece, and, as it happened, became a portent of the mood of the nation in the week following. The performance was poignantly expressive and again we witnessed thumb solos picking out the theme on a second manual. For my taste, the dynamic range, using loud reeds, was a bit too great for this sombre piece, but one cannot deny the dramatic effect of his performance.

Then we were charmed by Mozart; a Scott arrangement of *Allegro con brio* from *Symphony No. 25*. Clearly Jonathan was very taken by the Compton reeds, this time using a prominent reed soloing the main theme in the pedal. This achieved essential clarity for the rapid semi-quaver ornaments recurring throughout the whole movement. The reeds were on fine form and this was a bright and breezy performance.

The grand finale comprised Saint-Saëns' *Symphony No.3 in C minor*. Nick-named the "Organ" symphony, in organ transcriptions we often only hear the final *Maestoso*. Not so in Jonathan's arrangement; this was the whole symphony, and what a mighty one! Hearing all the orchestral movements on the organ was a thrilling experience. It was a virtuoso performance *par excellence* making a triumphant conclusion to a unique day for organ lovers.

Laurence Rogers

## Visit to Church Organ World, Oldham – 8 October

The sun was shining as we boarded our coach at various pick-up points around the locality, and we enjoyed lively conversation as we caught up with old friends during the journey. We were on the outskirts of Manchester in no time and picked our way through the streets to the headquarters of Church Organ World. I had expected something concrete and glass – a bit like a car showroom – but it was a pleasant surprise to pull into the yard of what appeared to be an old Victorian mill.

Unfortunately, Covid prevented Keith Harrington, the Managing Director, from joining us, but we were given a warm welcome by Corbie, his Financial Controller and Matthew, another Director. Apparently, Matthew's young daughter had declared that 'Church Organ World' sounded like the most boring theme park ever. For most of us, though, the sight of a dozen or so organs beckoning us to come and play made us feel as though we were in heaven – surely the best theme park imaginable!

Matthew gave us a brief talk about the origins and development of the company. Compton first experimented with electronic organs in the 1920's and Makin Organs dates from the 70's. The 'real time' digital sampling of actual organ pipes, which marked a major improvement in the quality of non-pipe organs, dates from the 90's. Nowadays the individual notes on every individual stop are sampled from a 'live' pipe, a lengthy process that is often carried out during the night, for several nights in succession, in order to ensure that no extraneous noises, such as from passing vehicles, are captured.

We were then set free to explore the various organs in the showroom. We used headphones and could thus all play at the same time without disturbing one another, or having to wait our turn. My particular favourite was a top of the range model which allowed me to be in various continental cathedrals at the touch of a button. On this model, the LED labels on the stop knobs even changed according to which organ was selected. I could also switch between hearing the sound from the console and hearing it from the centre or back of the cathedral. Fascinating!



After a very generous lunch, during which we perused the extensive display of sheet organ music, we made our way to nearby Holy Trinity Church, where we enjoyed playing and listening to a Makin Organ ‘in situ’. On returning to the showroom we had further time perusing the music (and paying for our many purchases) before heading home.

Many thanks to our Secretary, Denis, and all involved in organising this enjoyable and worthwhile event.

*Richard Marsden*

### **An Approach to Improvisation – 12 November**

David Machell’s approach to this thorny subject (for many of us U.K. organists) came as a refreshing blast from a highly original mind. David had clearly gone to an immense amount of time and trouble to prepare an eye-opener beyond – I believe – anything any of us had expected. He divided his talk and demonstration into a number of more-or-less comprehensible compartments, at the end of each of which he invited members present to mount the hot seat and display their individual ingenuity in interpreting what the maestro had told them to do. The guinea pigs were David Hanford, Richard Marsden, Ian Watts and Denis Littleton and, quite honestly, I think they are to be congratulated on their courage apart from anything else. Certainly, the afternoon’s host kept well out of the way.

Copious notes were provided for the event, the last sheet presenting us with a number of ‘shapes’ which could be taken into account in preparing one’s instant masterpiece:



Notwithstanding, David subsequently produced a skeletal (compared with the original documents) *résumé* which it seems appropriate to share with everyone (see below).

Let us hope that you will seriously have a go at latching onto some of David’s unique thoughts and try putting them into practice (though not necessarily during the Administration.)

### **A Plaine and Casie Introduction to Improvising on the Organ**

Following the successful recent workshop at Halam Court, it has emerged that the real-life situation where improvisation is most required of an organist is extending an existing piece of music to fill a time gap. *How a bride, who has had months to prepare for a wedding, still manages to be ten minutes late, is beyond me...and playing a quick chorus of “Let’s call the whole thing off” is probably not the best idea.* Anyway, here are some further thoughts:



## CORE SKILL 1: Deriving melody from a chord.

### Example: “INVENTION” (JS Bach’s Two-part invention No 8 in F)

The single most effective core skill needed for organ improvisation is to derive melody from an existing chord. The supreme role model for this is JS Bach, whose mastery of effective chord sequences meant he could produce work after work, flawlessly, at dictation speed. A good example is the Two-Part Invention in F, as quoted below.

This skill divides into two sub-skills, firstly taking the notes of the triad and shaping them into a melodic fragment. *The most useful contour to play with is the **serpentine** (ie snake-like) **curve**, where a melodic line curves upwards, then returns, dips downward and then returns.* The second sub-skill is to insert “helping notes” (aka *passing notes* and *auxiliary notes*), filling in the gaps between the harmony notes on the “off-beats”.

## CORE SKILL 2:

Using an “away” chord to alternate with the “home” chord.

### Example: “PRELUDE” (JSB’s C major Prelude, Book I of ‘48’)

The single most useful chord progression to the improvising organist is probably the one found at the opening of JS Bach’s First Prelude. CEG moves to CDFA. My preferred way of notating chord sequences is to show the lowest sounding note as 0 (zero) and each additional note as the number of semitones above. *2 is a major second, 3 a minor third and so on.* If the lowest sounding note moves, it can be shown. (In this example it doesn’t move). In this way the chord can theoretically be placed on any note, giving an opportunity for transposing. Most useful.

4	
3	3
4	2
0	stays put 0
aka	
Tonic	Supertonic with a seventh, in 3 <sup>rd</sup> inversion
aka	
C	Dm/C bass

## CORE SKILL 2a:

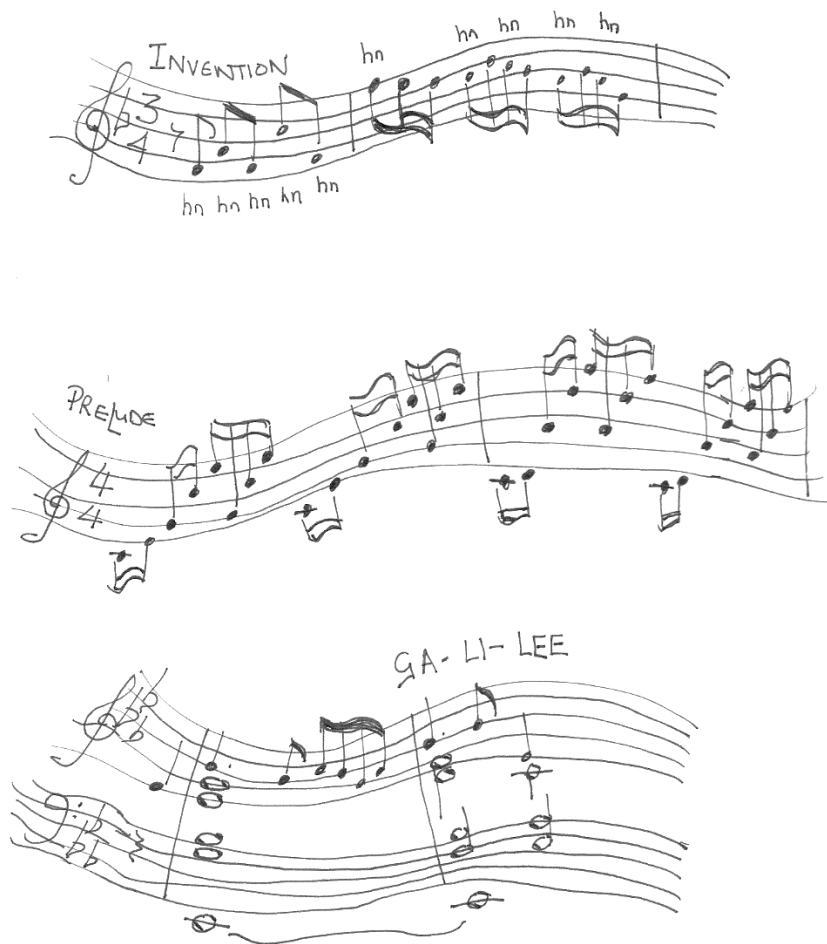
Using another “away” chord to alternate with the “home” chord.

### Example: “GALILEE” (from Hymn Tune Repton)

This progression is complex to explain, but easy to execute. It involves moving to the Dominant whilst leaving the lowest sounding note, the tonic, in position.

4	
3	5
4	2
0	stays put 0
aka	
Tonic	Dominant, over the tonic
aka	
Eb	Bb/Eb bass

This progression can be used multiple times, as in Core Skill 2.



*One of our members attending also provides us with a succinct overview of the occasion:*

### **“Game of Tones”**

On a Saturday afternoon in November, an eager group of NDSO members met at Halam Court to be instructed and entertained by David Machell. David had devised an innovative and unusual way of learning to improvise for one’s own pleasure, based on the *Game of Thrones* computer gaming concept.

David introduced the session by referring to several significant concepts applicable to inventing music *ad lib*, such as ‘Take a note for a walk’, and ‘There are no wrong notes, only interesting variations’. Four intrepid volunteers agreed to follow David’s directions and take part on the Halam Court organ – David Handford, Richard Marsden, Denis Littleton and Ian Watts.

There were four sets of cards, about A5 size: PITCH CARDS, SHAPE CARDS, VARIANT CARDS and STYLE CARDS. The player selects one card (unseen) from each group. Thus he might have chosen a Pitch Card asking for notes E, G, A or a chord pattern, a Shape Card asking for a sideways S shape, or a squiggle, a Variant Card suggesting ornamentation, and a Style Card asking for maybe a waltz or a fanfare.

Seated on the organ bench each player selected registration, then he had a go at following the instructions on his cards, more or less fluently and inventively. The first player received cards for BASIC PLAY, the second for MAIN PLAY, the third ADVANCED PLAY and the fourth player LEVEL FOUR (‘Ruler of the Universe’).

Our sympathies went out to the executants, who did surprisingly well with what might have been a rather dry exercise, but was in fact quite entertaining.

It was suggested that organists could make up sets of cards for themselves, and try out the method at home (or church). There are, of course, many possible permutations to be explored over a series of practice sessions, whether or not for public consumption.

All-in-all this was a very unusual and instructive afternoon, and our thanks go to David Machell for guiding the event and to David Butterworth for hosting it. Could this gaming method possibly lead to a rise in improvising standards in churches?

*Peter Horne*

### **An audience with the Rambling Rector Retired - 3 December**

On a crisp, sunny Saturday morning in early December, around a dozen members and guests made their way to Halam to meet Stanley Monkhouse (a.k.a. “The Rambling Rector Retired” on his blog) and his wife Sue for a talk on Stanley’s interesting and varied career and his thoughts on life in general.

After words of welcome from our host, David Butterworth, Stanley played two engaging short pieces by Thomas Tomkins, well suited to the Halam Court organ.

David then interviewed Stanley on a range of topics, including his early life, musical development, work as a professor of anatomy followed by his ordination and role as a priest in the Church of England. All this, as well as his candid and robust thoughts on diverse issues such as the state of the NHS and the situation in Ukraine.

Brought up in rural Cumberland in a Methodist family, Stanley took organ lessons at Carlisle Cathedral and had ambitions to be the cathedral organist. However, his mother put pressure on him to pursue a career in medicine which he duly studied at Cambridge, followed by medical school on London. He went on to teach anatomy in medical schools in Nottingham, Dublin and Derby before being ordained in 2006. His last living before retirement was as vicar of Burton on Trent.

During his period in Nottingham he continued his interest in the organ and was assistant to David at St. Mary’s and later organist & choirmaster at St. Martin’s Sherwood, during which time he gained both ARCO and FRCO qualifications. Whilst in Dublin he was organist at St. Ann’s church.

In his talk, Stanley highlighted the importance of engaging a congregation in hymn singing and suggested that some organists fail to understand the different requirements of leading a congregation compared with choir accompaniment. In typical directness, he described such playing as having as much appeal as “a wet dishcloth!” Making good use of the Gt. Principal 4ft and keeping a constant rhythm were amongst his suggestions for effective hymn playing.

Clearly a free thinker, Stanley proceeded in typically colourful, non-politically-correct language to give his views on a variety of non-musical topics which, depending on your point of view, were refreshing common sense or extreme posturing. However, as Stanley himself said at one point, “you mustn’t take it that I necessarily agree with what I am saying!” The stimulation of discussion and debate on important topics was very much the aim and essence of the comments.

At the end of the talk, most of those present joined Stanley and Sue for a very pleasant and convivial lunch at The Waggon in Halam.

Many thanks to Stanley for his stimulating and thought provoking reflections, to Sue for her good company throughout and to David for arranging and hosting the meeting.

*David Hanford*

## NEWS OF THE NEXT GENERATION

*As is well known, we in the NDSO have had in place for several years a scheme to support youngsters in receiving organ tuition. This has been seriously uplifted by two generous bequests from our departed friends, Phillip Mason and David Chapman. Only recently, has it really 'taken off', and we can only rejoice in the interest the scheme has engendered. Two of our beneficiaries have chosen to write about their initial experiences, and it is a pleasure to reproduce these here, verbatim.*

**James Darling** is 13. His first taste of the organ was at Aston Parish Church in the extreme north of the county, at which time their Director of Music was our very own Ian Watts. He writes:

"I have been learning to play to play the organ for around a year now. I have recently played a piece on the manuals of Rotherham Minster organ while people were taking communion.

"A challenge I have faced with learning to play the organ is that I don't have two manuals or pedals to practice at home. However I have found it easier to not think about dynamics when I am playing as the stops do all the work!

"I have learnt four manual only pieces to play at services and two manual and pedal pieces. I prefer the manual and pedal pieces because I can create a louder and more unique sound on these due to having more keyboards to try different stops.

"Mr Wilcock is my organ teacher and also choir master for Rotherham Choristers. I am Head Chorister and I enjoy singing at services at the minster and I enjoy my organ lessons. I like playing the organ because it is such a different and varied instrument and there are endless possibilities to the sounds you can make from an organ!

"I like to play at Rotherham Minster (my favourite stop here is a 8 foot "festival trumpet"! ) and also at Ulley church. Every organ is different and I like being able to try different organs at different places. I have played at Masbrough church for a Christmas concert too.

"The bursary allows me to have organ lessons and have this wonderful opportunity to play a wonderful instrument. Thank you to NDSO for this opportunity."

*James Darling*



**Ascend Jiang** is 18, and writes:

"My first experience with learning the organ started at my local parish of St Joseph the Worker in Sutton-in-Ashfield. There was a time when there was no one to play the organ. I was invited by fellow parishioners to try my hand at the organ since I was already learning the piano. Soon I started playing hymns for Sunday mass, and eventually I got involved in playing service music as well.

"It became apparent that I needed an organ teacher to help advance and improve my organ playing. This was when I met my first organ teacher, Derek Hartwell, where I started to learn how to use the pedalboard, and I did my first organ pieces from Finn Viderø's *Orgelschule*. Soon after, I started undertaking ABRSM Grade 4 Organ.



“Halfway through learning Grade 4, the COVID pandemic broke out and I was unable to continue my organ studies with Derek. He recommended me to David Butterworth who has been my organ teacher ever since. Later on, I completed my Grade 4 and Grade 6 exams, both with merit. Currently, I am doing my Grade 7. Some of the pieces I am learning include: *In Dir ist Freude*, Bach; *Mennet Gothique*, Boëllmann; *Chorale Preludes 4 & 9*, Peeters.

“When I took up the organ, I had already been having piano tuition from Mr Robert Smith of Mansfield, and I recently gained Grade 8 with merit. I am now continuing my piano studies with Mrs Helen Tseu (also of Mansfield) when I am home, with a view to sitting for a diploma in due course.

“I am now in my first year studying Computer Science at the University of Bath. Here I have the opportunity to practise my organ playing at the Church of Our Lady and St Alphege. The organ is a recently installed 1879 Forster and Andrews. It was a miraculous coincidence that my organ teacher helped provide 2 ranks of pipes for this very organ. I have enjoyed playing on it so far, and I hope to become a better organist during my time there.

“Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Nottingham & District Society of Organists for all the assistance and encouragement I am being given in achieving my goals.”

*Ascend Jiang*



*On the right, our benefactor the late Phillip Mason (sister Peggy is central)*

## The Franklin Story, Part 7

In September, we left the Franklin saga on a happy note, in the form of the wedding of organist son Horace Franklin to Miss Rosetta Burdett Turner in St Mary Magdalene Church, Newark. That was in 1904. Yet, only a mere five years later, George's prize house organ – one of the largest domestic instruments in the country – had been disposed of to Castle Gate. We shall never know the half of it, for reasons which will become evident later. But it does seem as though by now we are looking at a steady decline, not so much in the boot business, but rather in his personal well-being. We are already aware of a possible marital breakdown, soon to be confirmed... If we may jump ahead for a moment, the 1911 census of Turnditch (a Derbyshire village which our ex-President Roger must have traversed many times on his way to and from Ashbourne) indicates the residents of Hill Top Cottage as follows:

		Age		Total Children	Still alive	Dead	Status	Born
Elizabeth Franklin	Head	60	Married	10	5	5	Private means. At Home	Bourne
Eunice Franklin		28	Single	-	-	-	"	Derby
Mabel Franklin		23	Single	-	-	-	"	Derby
Horace Franklin		31	Married	-	-	-	No occupation	Hull
Clifford G. Franklin		3	Grandson	-	-	-	-	Hoby, Leics.
R. Douglas Laurie		24	Single	-	-	-	Physician & Surgeon	Derby

We do need to understand that the first census which was self-completed (as opposed to a teller going from door to door) was this, 1911. Thus Elizabeth's figures for children can virtually be taken as hard evidence, of which in many areas we are desperately short! Apparently the little 3-yr. old is Horace's. It is a little disturbing to note that he is described as having 'no occupation', considering that – not long before – he had clearly built up a successful antiques business (but see later). What was he doing here? He may have been visiting or, I suspect more likely, have been on a long 'short stay'. It turns out that his whole business and all its excellent contents were sold off by auction on 24-25 April, 1906. And indeed Horace and Rosetta were about to emigrate to Canada only a short while after the census had been submitted in April. By now, it seems as though Rosetta would soon be expecting again, when Horace George Edward Star Franklin was born on 5 February 1912. The baptismal certificate (7 July) is rather interesting. It now gives Horace the status of 'Organist', which sounds a lot better than 'no occupation'. There is also a nice little footnote on the certificate, issued at St James's Church, Ashton-under-Lyne, which reads: "In Atlantic Ocean *en route* to Montreal." What of the 'Star' in the baby's name? The ship they were on was the RMS Teutonic of the White Star Line! As to the other Christian names, it was very common to name boys after their fathers, but this one got his father and his granddad. Not bad going!

Douglas Laurie was engaged to Mabel. They married on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1912, in Turnditch church, and it is sad to note that 'Profession of [Mabel's] Father' is blank.

We must return to 1906. This is when Horace threw in the towel with his antiques business. It isn't clear whether he was fed up with it, or in financial trouble, or already planning their emigration. But it was a big step, not least evidenced by this newspaper advertisement:

"24-25 April. Auction at the Mart, Derby.

"The collection is undoubtedly the finest and most valuable that has been brought before the Public of this district for many years, and the whole will be offered Without the slightest Reserve, Mr. Franklin having decided to retire absolutely from the business."

As if that were not bad enough, it was only weeks earlier that George himself had retired from his directorship of the firm that he had built up with his older brother William H. There had recently been a merger with another boot company, Lennards, generally operating in a different part of the country, and with whom there was a reasonably cordial relationship. This relationship, however, did not survive the merger, with periodic board disagreements becoming too frequent. Thus, we read in *The Derbyshire Advertiser* of 16 March 1906:

"PRESENTATION TO MR GEORGE FRANKLIN – An interesting presentation was recently made to Mr George Franklin, of The Field, Derby, one of the founders of the Public Benefit and Boot Company. Ltd., and for many years past one of the directors. It took the form of an illuminated address and a silver cigar case subscribed for by the employees of the various establishments comprising the Derby and Nottingham district. The address was admirably carried out by Messrs Bemrose and Sons, and embodied a view of the Metropole, Derby, a photograph coat of arms entwined. The cigar case was also photograph entwined. Mr Schofield, on making the presentation on behalf of the employees, spoke in eulogistic terms of the valuable services rendered to the company by Mr Franklin, and of the genial consideration and urbanity extended to all with whom he came in contact. The address read as follows – "We, the employees of the various establishments of the public Benefit and Boot Company, Ltd., comprising the Derby and Nottingham district, tender you hearty greeting, and in token of our esteem and regard beg your acceptance of this address and silver cigar case as a fitting memento marking the completion of nine years' directorship of this section. We also desire to place on record our warm appreciation of the kind interest which you have always manifested on our behalf, and in recognising you as one of the founders of the company, trust that you may long be spared to assist by your sound advice and judgement in the administration of its affairs.""

This presentation, delightful though it may be, could hardly conceal the disappointment that both George and his older brother, William H., must have experienced at the increasingly unpleasant board disagreements which were developing, post-merger. Truth to tell, George had resigned, and indeed William – the 'No. 1' – had also resigned, months earlier in February 1905. As early as 14 August, 1907, William H died, aged only 61. (He left effects to the tune of £77,860 13s 1d.)

Well, by now we can see what a dynamic life George had led, all sorts of elements spinning around his head at what must at times have seemed an almost giddy pace. Within a little over a year, he had relinquished involvement in the business in which he had played such a pivotal role; he had lost his older brother; his (arguably favourite) organist son, Horace, had sold up a thriving business and was probably already mumbling about emigration; he had dabbled in Masonry and eventually been struck off for non-payment of subs on 7 March, 1906; he had dabbled in local politics (not without event) and 'retired' (?) from that; he was already clearly separated from his wife Elizabeth; I think there is reason to believe that the infant death of Richard Bernard back in 1885 still nagged at him; and then of course, there's Mrs Eugenie Gertrude Brown. How much more can a man take?

It seems that everything must have come to a head by early 1908, when The Sheffield Daily Telegraph of Saturday, 28 March, announced in an engagingly curious mixture of font, a sale by J.&W. Heathcote as follows:

# PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT.

THE FIELD OSMASTON ROAD, DERBY

SALE of the Greater Portion of the Valuable CONTENTS OF THE ABOVE RESIDENCE including High-class Furniture, Carved Oak, 2 Grand Pianos, a costly Orchestrion by Imhof & Mukle, an Old English Chamber Organ in Sheraton Case, an important collection of PICTURES of the English, Dutch, French and Italian Schools; a magnificent Suite of Ormolu and Onyx Life-size Figures (formerly the property of Isabella, Queen of Spain), China, Curios, Plate, STATUARY, Rare Bronzes and other Objet's d'Art" ... "on instruction from G.E. Franklin, Esq., (who has let the Residence on lease, and is removing to the South [sic] of England,) to SELL by AUCTION on the premises as above on TUESDAY, April 14<sup>th</sup> and following days."

## 'The Field,' Osmaston Road, DERBY.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION ON THE PREMISES,

By order of G. E. FRANKLIN, Esq., who is leaving for the South of England

Catalogue of the greater portion of the Contents of the Residence, embracing unusually Valuable

## = Works of Art =

Marble and Bronze Statuary (formerly belonging to the Queen of Spain), China Cabinets and Pedestals, Antique Court Cupboard, a noble Bronze Electrolier,

IMPORTANT CARVINGS IN OAK,

WORCESTER, DRESDEN, DERBY AND SEVRES CHINA;

## Paintings and Drawings,

Barker  
Cooper  
Danize  
Everard  
Holland, Senr.

Hardy, T. B.  
Kneller, Sir G.  
Lance, R. A.  
Murillo  
Mercier, C.

BY

Niemann, A.  
Rosa Salvator  
Shayer  
Snayers  
Stark

Spagnoletto  
Turner, R.A.  
Teniers  
Wouvermans  
Wheatley, R.A.

AND A GRAND GALLERY WORK,

"The Destruction of Idolatry," by George Patten, A.R.A.

SMALL GENERAL LIBRARY, a Full-size BILLIARD TABLE by Thurston,

A 7 $\frac{1}{2}$ -octave Boudoir Grand PIANOFORTE, by Brinsmead; and a  
CONCERT GRAND, by Erard;

A fine OLD ENGLISH CHAMBER ORGAN in original Sheraton case,

## A GRAND ORCHESTRION

By IMHOF & MUKLE,

English, Persian and Turkey Carpets; Antique Carved and Gilt Drawing Room Suite; Tiger, Leopard, and Bear Rugs;

A SET OF OAK DINING ROOM APPOINTMENTS,

Two Costly Chippendale Bedroom Suites,

Brass Bedsteads and Bedding, Mirrors, Curtain Screens;

The Well-known BROOD MARE 'LADY DENMARK GOBANG,' by 'Sir Horace,' out of 'Lady Mabel' and the highly promising YEARLING COLT 'FIREBANG,' out of the above, by 'Fireboy.'

A Bay Carriage Horse, Show Gig, a Light Trap, Show-ring and other Harness, Garden Statuary and Vases, Plants, Implements and Miscellanea; by

Messrs. J. & W. Heathcote,

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

Messrs. Knight, Frank & Rutley

ON THE 14th DAY OF APRIL, 1908,

and two following days.

On View Saturday and Monday prior from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Catalogues 6d. each of the Auctioneers, Messrs. J. & W. HEATHCOTE, The Mart, Exchange Street, Derby; or of Messrs. KNIGHT, FRANK & RUTLEY, 9, Conduit Street, London, W.

J. W. Simpson & Sons, Printers, Derby.



It has been possible to piece together a complete copy of the catalogue from two extant part-copies. Some of the content is routine enough. Obviously, all the antiques, paintings, carpets, etc., are *de rigueur* in a sale of this nature, as are the many domestic items, in this case covering virtually everything from three parrot cages to a 16" Archimedean Lawn Mower. For the writer, however, it is the inclusion of George's three ponies which really hit hardest. It must have been heart-breaking for him to lose these faithful friends – possibly even his best friends if one may be permitted a moment of rank speculation. Take for example:

Lot 639. BROWN BROOD MARE. 10 years; 13.1½ hands. "LADY DENMARK GOBANG", by "Sir Horace"; dam. "Lady Mabel" by "Denmark". *Entered in Stud Book*. No. 17470. (Note that 'Horace' and 'Mabel' are the names of two of his children.)

Just about the only items not to appear in this gigantic three-day sale of 716 lots were George's personal clothing and his magnificent 'Chamber' organ. So, how did this 4-manual Leviathan end up in Castle Gate ???

*David Butterworth*

### Share and Share Alike

It isn't so long ago that, within the trade, organ builders kept themselves very much to themselves. They had their own secrets, their own techniques, and woe betide any trespassers! The 'others' were regarded first and foremost as competitors, rather than colleagues. This was particularly rife amongst the bigger boys – at least at management level – and it obtained abroad just as much as on these shores.

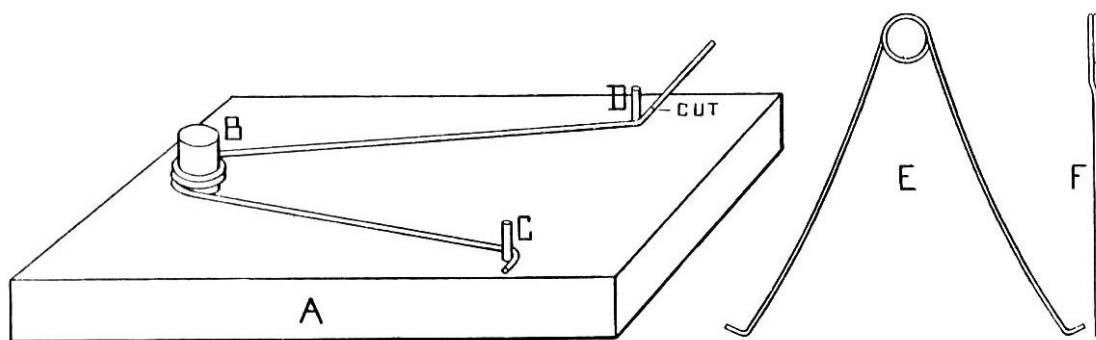
All that has changed. Both the I.S.O.B. and especially the newer I.B.O. now hold regular training days, various firms hosting their colleagues in all manner of disciplines, some fairly predictable, some more abstruse. It takes a lot to prepare and run a training day, and it involves a good dollop of generosity in the sharing of both time and expertise. The host workshop is tied up for the duration, or at least part of it is, and that means ill-spared lost production. The cost of just one workshop day for one qualified organ-builder is likely to be in the region of £250. There is a significant cost to attendees, too.



It is thus that on Friday, 28 October, I was able to attend such a course, for the third time, at our old friends, Goetze & Gwynn, in the charming surroundings of Welbeck. This one was entitled ‘Wirework’ and I must confess that, at first, I wasn’t sure whether this was promising us all the bits and pieces that make up an organ’s action, or whether we were to be regaled with the latest in electrics and even electronics. Any doubt just a couple of years back would not have arisen at G&G with their enviable reputation in the tracker field, both new and in challenging restoration work. But, since then, the firm has developed its resources by way of a partnership with Balfour-Rowley. As well as being a fine, all-round, organ-builder, Rob Rowley is a dab hand with electrics, such that the (joint) firm now numbers amongst its small regular maintenance practice the famous Wurlitzer in the Blackpool Tower Ballroom!

So, who would spend a day away from their bench and travel 130 miles each way to play with bits of wire? Sadly, not many on this occasion – four from Harrison & Harrison (you can always pick them out just by listening!) and two from Nicholsons. Of these six, three were apprentices, and none had reached his fortieth birthday, a welcome bucking of the trend. Adrian Yap headed up the Harrison contingent, whilst the senior of the Nicholson duo was David Roskelly; we had met David on our Malvern trip, and you can spot him on p.5 of our May issue, standing by a large soundboard which he was in the process of constructing. If anyone can claim to know all about organ building in the UK, it must be these two firms; yet it was they who made the effort to send their staff – over considerable distances it might be said – on a mission to hone their already considerable skills. I was impressed. The absence of others more conveniently placed, however, seemed regrettable. *C’est la vie!*

Dominic Gwynn led the day, and he was joined for much of the time by Rob Rowley, Chris Davies and Abi Balfour. The (half-) morning session was devoted to an introductory discussion of the different materials available, the ubiquitous phosphor-bronze being by no means the only candidate. Brass also featured, along with good old plain steel (especially in like-for-like restoration work); aluminium; stainless steel; and German silver. This last is quite popular. It isn’t really German, its origins going back further apparently to China, and it isn’t silver (though it looks like it.) It comprises at least 50 % copper, the rest being roughly equal portions of zinc and nickel, possibly with a touch of tin and lead. It is malleable yet strong and – importantly – doesn’t corrode or oxidize (a particular problem with some aluminium actions.) We then proceeded to the forming of simple ‘eyes’ – the sort you will see at the bottom - exposed - end of a pulldown wire (that’s the bit that goes into the soundboard to pull down (literally) the pallet. By now we had been introduced to an amazing array of pliers of all shapes and sizes; of course, for making eyes, the round-nosed type is essential.



The morning then progressed to pallet springs, and amidst this wonderful array of pliers, Dominic produced one of the firm’s patent home-made devices. All organ builders have them! This one had a rotating handle and, for all the world, looked like something out of my grandmother’s kitchen. The design of the pallet spring hasn’t changed for centuries! Each end

has a short right-angle return to hold it in place in little holes respectively on the pallet and on a spring rail just above the bottom of the soundboard, to ensure that it stays in place – which it usually does. An especially vigorous player, however, can cause the pallet spring to jump out of its mooring. Actually getting it out from wherever it has jumped to without upsetting its neighbours can be challenging in itself. Then there is the business of replacing it accurately – another black art, even with the right equipment! Making pallet springs gets easier with practice. Leaving aside G&G’s wonderful machine for the moment, the accepted way is to wind the wire around strategically placed pegs fixed on a board. But small ones can also be made purely by hand, gripping the wire with two pairs of pliers to retain tension. One of these needs to be round-nosed (cylindrical, not conical as one would find in your average tool shop), around which the loop is formed.

The afternoon session first looked at tracker ends, adjustable and non-adjustable, tapped and untapped, and to which Abi made a considerable contribution. The finished products may or may not have a winding of thin red nylon cord, which in turn will be fixed with a coating of hot glue or PVA. Chris Davies was on hand with the firm’s tapping machine, a device which looks like a cross between a hand drill and an old sewing machine (tracker action, of course.) The ‘cutting’ bit doesn’t actually cut the wire (which would weaken it) but rolls it. Tapping machines are like gold dust. Not everyone has one, whilst Manders had four of them, none of which worked properly!

Finally, we looked at reed pipe tuning springs. At first glance, this does look a little bit like another of those black arts! But, with confidence having gradually built up during the day, everyone by now was ‘hands on’, and here it was notable how well the apprentices fared in their first attempts at tuning springs which – so far as I could judge – would have worked.

All in all, this was a splendid and highly instructive day. If anyone thought that wirework was a mere side-issue in the context of such things as pipe-making, cabinet-work, etc., etc., then such thoughts would have been dispelled. There was a great atmosphere throughout, further enhanced by hot sausage rolls and pasties, real coffee and abundant cakes and biscuits. Well done, all at Goetze & Gwynn, for giving up generously of your workshop day to help your competitors – sorry, COLLEAGUES!

*David Butterworth*

## **Food for thought**

*Spoken by Calvin Coolidge, 30<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America, 1923 – 1929:*

“Nothing in this world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan “Press on” has solved and always will solve problems of the human race.”

*And, lest it should be thought that wisdom is a modern invention ...*

“We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we would be re-organized.

“I was to learn later in life that we tend to meet any new situation by re-organising, and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress while producing confusion, inefficiency and demoralisation.” (Caius Petronius A.D. 66)

*Can you match any of these sentiments to the world around us in 2023?*

## NEWS FROM ORGAN BUILDERS

It's high time to look at our organ builders' activities, this time around those of our more local friends.

Goetze & Gwynn have experienced some changes over the past year, without in any way compromising their core values of internationally-respected historic awareness and top quality craftsmanship. Their order book is solid for at least two years, and indeed at the present time they are advertising for an additional full-time, experienced, organ builder to join the team. Locally, they have recently completed the installation of a one-manual and pedal instrument for St Peter's R.C. Church, Melton Mowbray. In the process, it has been conservatively restored and, in its west end position in this quite small church, it sounds absolutely stunning. The organ is of uncertain provenance, but it can be seen that, at some stage, it has been 'upgraded', rather well actually, so that the Open Diapason now runs down to CC, and there is a standard radiating and concave pedalboard. At the quieter end of the spectrum, there is a lovely Bell Gamba, much of its pipework having had to be remade (which of course G&G can do in house). A rather splendid curiosity is in the form of some of the bellows weights. They are of archetypical Walker three-lozenge form, stamped JWW – but made of concrete. Does this suggest the Great War and the great purge on all available metals for the arms industry at that time?

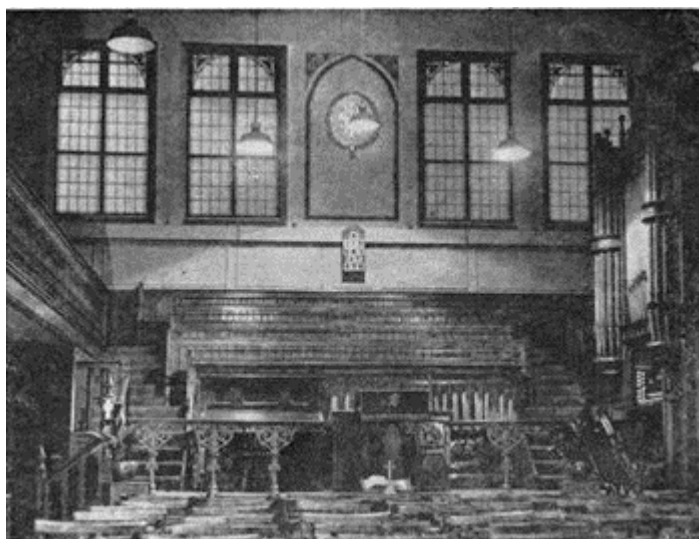
G&G's most interesting project for 2023 is the re-instatement / reconstruction of the 1813 George Pike England organ in St John's Chapel, Chichester. Again, this will involve making some new pipework to complete that which is missing, in carefully matched style. Although of modest size, the award of any such complex project is always a feather-in-the-cap. Then their major undertaking for 2024 will be the comprehensive restoration of the 3-manual Nicholson & Lord organ of 1880 in Minchinhampton Parish Church, Gloucestershire. Originally built as a two-manual incorporating much historic pipework, a Choir organ was added in 1937 by Hill, Norman & Beard on electric action. This is very forward-looking for its date, its chorus including a Spitzprincipal 4, Nasat 2 2/3 and a Quartane at 19.22 pitch; surely inspired by the organ they built a year earlier for Lady Susi Jeans, with pipework by Eule? Choir organ aside, in 1984 a Roger Newton of Nailsworth added a Tromba rank on a unit chest mounted on top of the Swell box. I would love to have seen Dominic's face when first he set eyes on the chancel case replete with the not-quite-vertical Tromba resonators sticking out over the top!

Chris Hind (officially Aistrup & Hind) has been complaining about being rushed off his feet, too, with one small-ish job after another. His staged restoration of the lovely little Taylor organ in Kneeton St Helen's is now complete, with the total refurbishment of the soundboard. This organ, installed by your Editor in blizzard conditions in early 1977, is built like a battleship. The (tin/lead) front pipes must rank amongst the heaviest 8' basses this side of Bletchley Junction, and one also recalls that it took four strong farm hands to lift the one-piece impost into place. Much of Taylor's pipework was made in Germany. Whilst the operation did not come with the benefit of an accompanying supply of strong German beer, the routinely supplied flask of hot soup was supplanted by a bottle of Bell's on a particularly cold evening (well below freezing); half of this still sits inside the organ, on the backfall beam, and is now fondly regarded as one of the 'features' of the church. Talking of Kneeton, there has been another restoration at Stretton (Rutland) of an almost identical Taylor. On to Scawby, this is thought to be an old Gray & Davidson (according to the bellows weights) and it is one of those organs that still sports a 'bellows' stop to wake up the pumper; there was indeed one of these at Holme Pierrepont until it sadly disappeared after a recent restoration. The work at Scawby involved restoration of the pedal department which had fallen into disrepair. Similar work was also



carried out on the F&A / Principal Pipe Organs instrument, well known to your Editor, at Hessle Parish Church; this after an ingress of the weather. At Grantham, Christchurch Wesleyan Methodist Church, Chris installed a new Swell engine – unremarkable in itself, perhaps. But this is Margaret Thatcher's old church, which reminds one of Henry Groves' recent project at Teresa May's church in Maidenhead. Is there something special we should know about our local chaps? Finally, and delightfully quirkily, Chris has restored and installed a Casson Positive organ on a mezzanine floor in a brand new house in Crich. A bit of amateur sleuthing suggests that this may have come from one of an extraordinary number of small non-conformist chapels in the area, maybe Fritchley Congregational. It's a brave man that tackles a Casson with all its patent pneumatics, but I have yet to see Chris fazed by anything pneumatic!

Like Chris Hind, Hy Groves & Son are basically a two-man outfit, yet manage to pull in some surprisingly weighty contracts from time to time. What is understood to be their *magnum opus* to date is under way at the Church of the Ascension, Lower Broughton, Manchester. This fine brick edifice had been the recipient of a generous Heritage Lottery grant at the turn of the century, to replace the ailing roof and make other essential repairs. But as early as 2017, it lost its new roof and interior to arson, following which a campaign was immediately launched by the staunch parishioners to rebuild it once again. Now that the church is again fully up and running, the new organ is being built by Groves in their established style; it should be completed by the end of February. It will comprise 53 stops based on a core of traditional Nicholson pipework, on direct electric action (Groves's 'modular' system), from a terraced console built by Renatus. It will incorporate a Tuba on 12" wind pressure, this pipework being made and voiced by Booths of Leeds. At St James's, Alveston (Warwicks), Groves are rebuilding the Nicholson organ of 1959, again with their direct electric 'modular' action. The organ has a very nice case front, by Temple Moore, with sumptuous carving.



*Blooms Grove Congregational Church*

Somewhat nearer to home, the Lloyd organ formerly in the Blooms Grove Congregational Church, Nottingham (satellite of Castle Gate, on the corner of Norton Street and Denman Street and only recently demolished), was re-installed at St Michael's Church, Brimington (Derbys) in 1981. It was rebuilt by Groves with electric action in 2000. It has now been rebuilt with another new electric action, apparently following a power surge in the church. This phenomenon is not unknown to the writer. Power surges used to be a curse at St Mary's, when light bulbs were repeatedly blowing – most especially in the chancel where the choir was expected to be able to read its dots and dashes - requiring various builders and electricians to perform circus acts on triple ladders which, today, would send H&S screaming to the nearest cherry-picker. The matter was only eventually resolved by the purchase (by the writer) of a complete set of higher-voltage bulbs installed by his regular builder. One wonders what the 'surge' risks might be today for electronic organs in particular. Is any reader able to expand on this? Looking further ahead into this year, Groves are scheduled to rebuild another, massive, three-manual instrument, last rebuilt by Walkers, in the Church of St Philip & St James, Holywood (Northern Ireland.)

## OTHER NOTES AND NEWS

Many friends and customers will be delighted to know that Windblowers IS back in business, as of 1<sup>st</sup> December. Margaret Frogson and David Oldershaw may now rest even more content in the knowledge of all they have achieved for the musical life of Nottingham; what a wonderful innings. Thank you! Naturally, there are some changes, but a key part of Windblowers II is Nick Millburn, a friendly face already well-known to many of us, who will be the Manager. The co-owners behind the relaunch are musicians Richard Cox and James Beard, and the new location is at Unit 29, Technology Drive, Beeston, just by the railway station. The services offered are similar to those existing, with repairs and refurbishment of musical instruments being particularly prominent. They also expect to expand their sales to embrace second-hand instruments (refurbished, obviously) though it is doubtful whether this will extend to pipe organs. Beeston might not be quite so central for some of us, but at least one will now be spared walking up that dreadful hill! Best of luck, all of you at Windblowers. You deserve it.

Albeit no definitive dates can yet be offered, it is hoped to offer a varied programme of three (or perhaps four) concerts at Halam Court over the spring and early summer, specifically in aid of a Ukrainian charity for pets and domestic animals. One cannot fail to be moved by the terrible plight of millions caught up in the conflict, a situation which, as one writes, does not seem to invite any kind of quick resolution. Whilst it could be argued that animals are less important than children, the elderly and indeed any humans, they are in many cases a lifeline – the only thing some folk have left in the world to comfort them in their extreme deprivation. These little friends should not be forgotten for their essential role and value in any decent civilization. News on progress of the series will be issued as it develops.

Sad to note that our member John Catling passed away on 11<sup>th</sup> May. He had experienced a number of medical problems which ultimately caught up with him, seriously compounded by a very heavy fall. We shall miss his ebullient and friendly presence at meetings; he was a truly good member of N.D.S.O. And we send our heartfelt sympathy to his wife Jo, and hope she may feel able to continue to be ‘one of us.’ Ian Hepburn has also passed away after a long illness. He was for around twenty years the organist – or, as he liked to be described, the ‘acting organist’ – of St Edmund’s, Holme Pierrepont, having followed his long-time friend and our former Hon. Sec., Walter Esswood, in that role. Another delightful character, Ian will long be remembered for his unique pedal technique, which involved drawing the Bourdon, without any couplers, and then marching randomly up and down the pedalboard completely independently of the manuals. With these strange noises having been initially ascribed to heavy traffic on the nearby A52, it was a long time before Ian’s special technique was finally rumbled (if you’ll pardon the pun); even then, not before the organ tuners had been called in to find out what was wrong with the pedal pneumatics. Fond memories indeed!

There has been just a little movement amongst local organists. Philip Sherratt has moved from St John’s, Beeston, to be Assistant Director of Music at St Peter’s Church. Our member Ben Green has had his commitment at St Mary’s, Clifton, reduced to once a month as they can’t afford a regular organist any more. With that one Sunday off each month, Ben has now taken up as Organist of All Saints’, Raleigh Street. Ben is due for a cataract operation on 8 February, and I am sure we would all want to wish him well with that.

Have you got something you would like to write about? Please put on your thinking-cap; see if you can’t come up with an idea or two, and take a little bit of the load off your long-suffering editor!

*Following Stanley's visit to the N.D.S.O. in early December, it seems apposite to follow up David's report with a few words from Stanley himself, namely his typically thought-provoking 'blog' for Christmas Day. As we continue to enjoy the Christmas period, it is timely to absorb the spirit of his final words in particular...*

### **Felix dies nativitatis - A Christmas Message from the Monkhouse**

Imagine the birth. Mary pushing, shoving, moaning, yelling. Imagine the placenta, umbilical cord, blood, fluid. Imagine for a moment that the stable and animals are not fiction. Imagine the noise, the animal dung, the smells, the hay getting places it shouldn't.

Imagine the mess. The nativity is messy. The infant is born into mess. My life is messy. Your life is messy. If you say it's not, I don't believe you. Being human is messy. But being human is what the nativity is all about.

People try to clean up Jesus. People try to clean up God. But the truth is that God is not present *only* in things that are cleaned up. God does not demand tidiness or purity. God does not demand cosmetics or fig leaves to cover up bits of us that we would like to be hidden away. God does not demand that we pretend. If God were to demand anything (which it doesn't), it would be that we hide nothing – that we accept the reality of the mess we're in.



God is present in you and me, in your mess and mine — the mess of the world. God works with mess: disorder to order, chaos to cosmos. We have no need to pretend. Pretending is exhausting. I have no energy left to waste on pretending. As it says at the beginning of St John's Gospel, every single one of us is a child of the Divine. I am. You are.

The message of the incarnation is that you and I are like Mary — agents of the divine. Let Jesus grow in you as Mary let it grow in her. As it says in verse 4 of "O little town", *O holy child of Bethlehem ... be born in us today*. Everything you do to make life a bit better for somebody else is you acting as God's agent. Everything you do to make life more difficult or unpleasant for somebody else is you acting as Satan's agent. Choose well.

You will make mistakes. You will get things wrong. You are not perfect. Get over it. Enjoy being human. Help others to enjoy being human. Help others to glimpse joy and delight, even if only for a moment. Then, you are letting the holy child be born in you again and again.

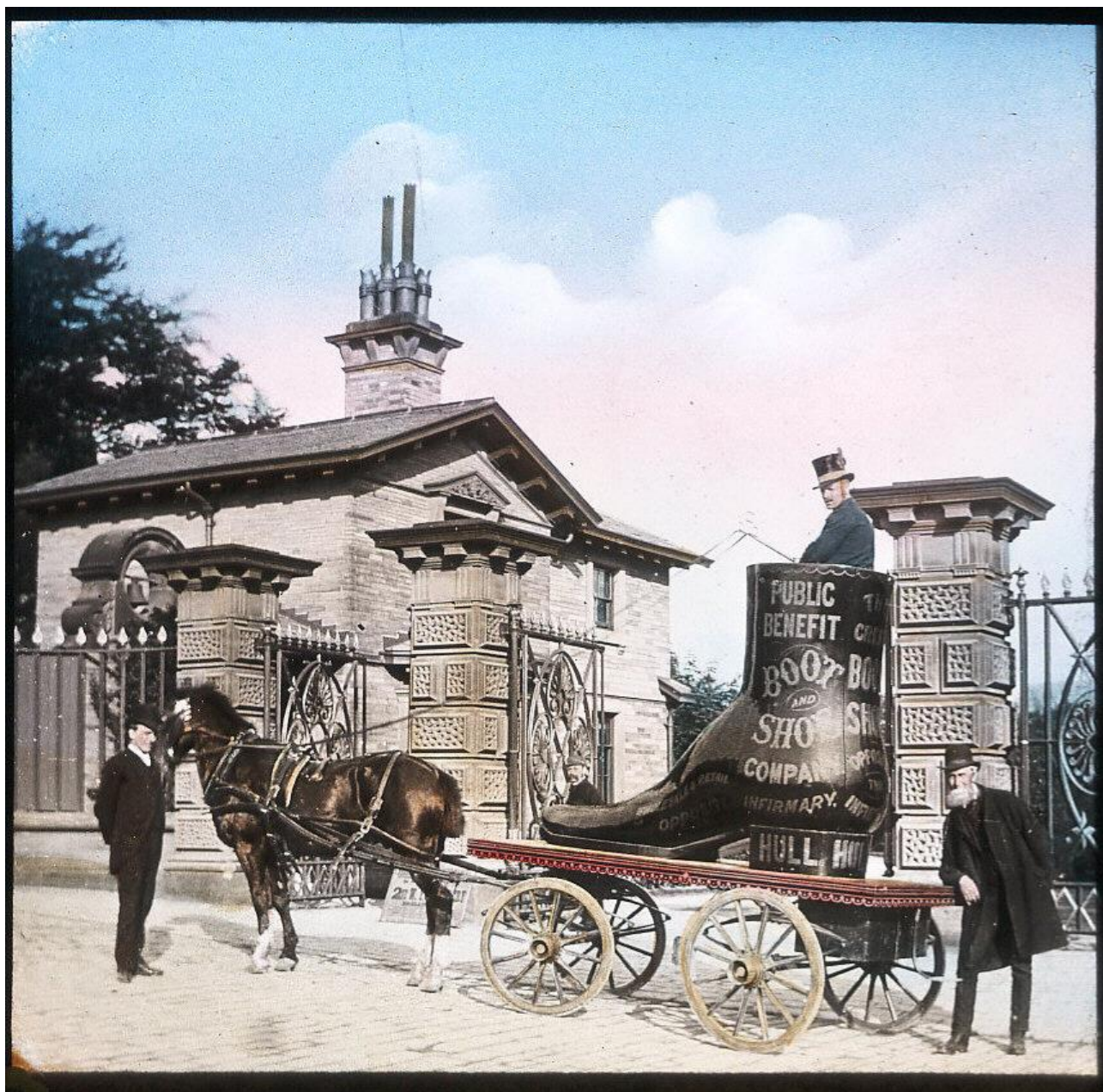
The Christmas message is not about making yourself sick on chocolates, or stuffing your face, or arguing about what to watch on TV, or about reliving your childhood. The Christmas message is about bringing joy to the world — and helping others do likewise.

Happy Christmas. Mess is made divine

*Stanley Monkhouse, Christmas Day 2022*



Does any reader recall the vehicle shaped like a Terry's Chocolate Orange that used to be driven around Nottingham? Or the one shaped like a toothpaste tube? Then there was the van with an oversized Singer sewing machine bolted onto the top? The picture below reminds us that there was nothing new in that overtly pictorial form of advertising. George and William Franklin certainly got there a lot earlier! This picture was taken outside the Royal Infirmary, Hull, where your Editor was born. (Small world ...)



*Useful things, boots ...*

Many thanks for help with the pictures, to Martyn Stone, Laurence Rogers, Mei Jiang  
David Butterworth, Brian Seddon, Alexandra Kingswell and Charlotte Darling

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Typeset by Peter Siepmann. Printed by Temple Printing, Ltd