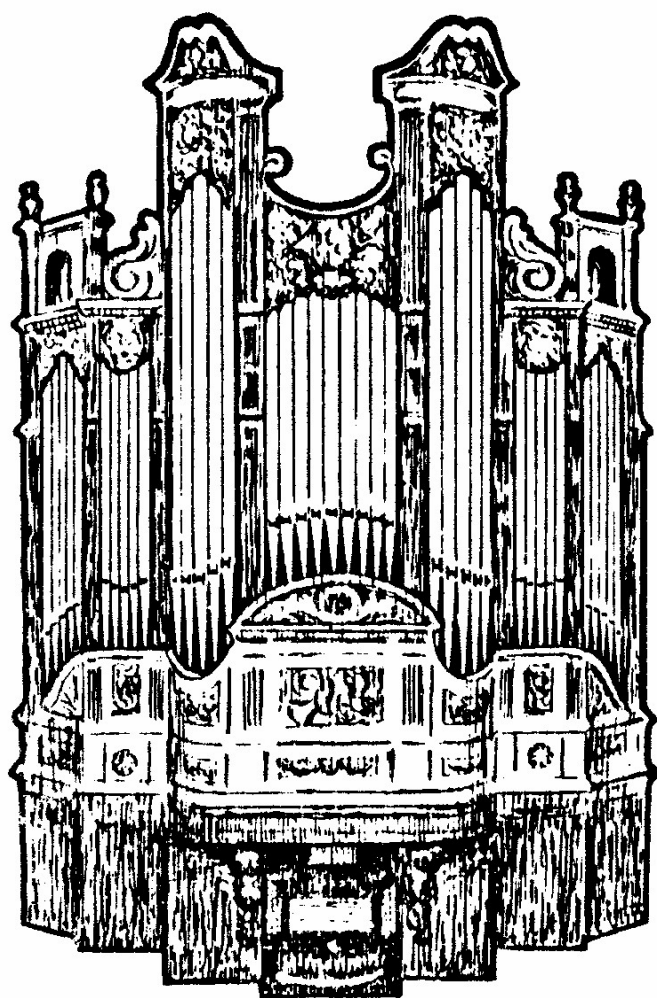


# *The Berkshire Organist*

ISSN 0265-1971



*Number*  
**61**

**2008**



## **Patron : Gillian Weir DBE**

### **President 2007-2008**

Christopher Cipkin BA MA ARCO  
22 Victoria Street, Reading, RG1 4NQ  
(0118) 958 6537

### **Acting Hon Secretary**

Donald Hickson  
29 Langhams Way, Wargrave  
Reading, RG10 8AX  
(0118) 940 3209

### **Hon Treasurer**

Mark Jameson  
92 The Hawthorns, Charvil  
Reading, RG10 9TS  
(0118) 934 4212

### **Hon Programme Secretary**

Christine Wells BMus FRCO  
LRAM  
Lynton Villa, Pheasants Hill  
Hambleden, Henley-on-Thames  
Oxfordshire, RG9 6SD  
(01491) 571588

### **Editor, The Berkshire Organist**

Graham Ireland MMus FRCO  
Firle Cottage, 5 Heath Road  
Southend Bradfield, Reading  
RG7 6HQ  
(0118) 974 4987  
gaireland5@aol.com

### **Publicity Officer**

Donald Hickson  
29 Langhams Way  
Wargrave  
Reading, RG10 8AX  
(0118) 940 3209

### **Benevolent Fund Steward**

Ruth Weatherly-Emberson  
Lockerbie, Yaverland Road  
Sandown, Isle of Wight  
PO36 8QP  
(01983) 402 226

**Webmaster** David Pether

### **Other Committee Members**

Derek Guy  
Jim Wooldridge  
Julian Greaves  
Roger Bartlett

Ian May  
Jonathan Holl  
Jill York  
Harry Russell

### **Editorial Committee of *The Berkshire Organist***

Jim Wooldridge   Michael Pickett   Michael Humphries  
David Pether [Production]

Neither the Editors nor the Association accept any  
responsibility for opinions expressed in this Journal

[www.berkshireorganists.org.uk](http://www.berkshireorganists.org.uk)

# THE BERKSHIRE ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No.298088

The Berkshire Organists' Association was founded at a meeting held on 19 April 1921, arranged by Mr. Percy Scrivener (Founder President) and Mr. Archibald Lusty, who subsequently served as Secretary for 46 years. The Association was affiliated to the National Union of Organists' Associations, which became the Incorporated Association of Organists in 1929, and to which we are still affiliated. In 1988 we became a registered charity.

Our aims as an Association are:

- to promote the art of playing the organ
- to encourage the public to appreciate organ music
- to provide help and advice to church musicians
- to enable organists to meet each other.

These aims are of equal importance, and we aim to achieve them in three ways.

(a) Organising events for members.

We endeavour to cater for as many tastes as possible by promoting organ recitals and concerts, master classes, talks on organs, discussions on church music, publishers evenings, choir workshops, social evenings and visits to interesting organs.

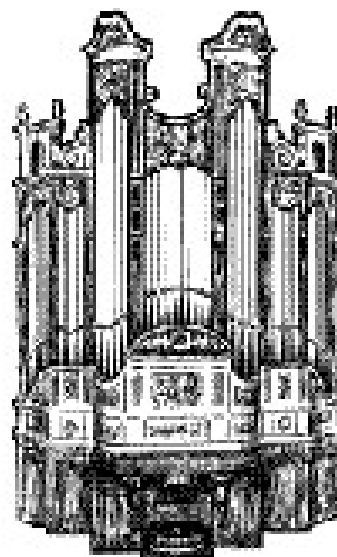
Starting in 1965 we arranged regular celebrity recitals on the historic Father Willis organ in the Reading Concert Hall until these were suspended when the Hall was closed prior to restoration. They have been resumed under the auspices of the Borough Council since the restoration of the Concert Hall in 2000.

(b) Communication with members.

We issue a newsletter approximately every two months, and each year since 1948 we have published this magazine which has few equals amongst other organists' associations.

(c) Exercising an influence in the outside world.

We consider it important to be, and be seen to be, a source of help and advice to all organists and church musicians. We are striving to raise our profile in Berkshire, along with the Newbury and Windsor Associations, in order to involve as many people as possible in achieving the four aims listed above.



## CONTENTS

Editorial.....	1
The 88 <sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and Recital.....	2
The President's Report.....	3
Elections.....	5
Members' News.....	6
All-Berkshire Organ Day.....	7
Visit to Shellingford, Faringdon and Shrivenham.....	9
Travels in Devon and Cornwall.....	11
Annual Dinner.....	16
President's Social Afternoon.....	17
Visit to Henley and Remenham Churches.....	17
Visit to Newington and Dorchester.....	19
Visit to Hampton Court Palace.....	23
Reading Town Hall Lunchtime Organ Recitals.....	24
Michael Heighway.....	24
Mark Swinton.....	25
Philip Aspden.....	26
Roger Sayer.....	27
Andrew Sampson.....	28
David Pether.....	29
Reading Town Hall Celebrity Organ Recitals.....	31
Wolfgang Abendroth.....	31
David Briggs.....	32
Nigel Allcoat.....	33
Crossword.....	34
Association Local Recitals.....	36
Lunchtime Recitals at St Mary's.....	37
Reading Blue Coat Recitals.....	37
Woodley Festival.....	39
Heritage Open Day.....	39
Ars Longa Vita Brevis.....	41
Sybil Stephenson.....	42
Christine Wendy Watson, FRCO.....	44
A Day in Windsor and Eton.....	46
Hubert Gordon Hands.....	48
A Hidden <i>Pastorale</i> ?.....	51
My Visit to Foster-Waite Organ Builders.....	55
Organ Academy, Alkmaar.....	56
Harry's NCO Week.....	61
CD Review.....	62
Crossword Solution.....	64
Officers of the Association.....	65



## EDITORIAL

Like many editors, the writing of my editorial is left to the last minute. Obvious reasons for its delay are a complete absence of anything to say, which might be important, relevant, and topical for the publication date, a certain procrastination when other more pressing demands crowd out any original thoughts, and the lack of a clear deadline. Each time I listen to a succinct commentary on the radio by a well-known broadcaster, or read an editorial in a newspaper or musical journal, my instinctive reactions to them centre round, 'well, I could have said that', or occasionally, 'did they receive payment for those comments?' A certain level of envy soon crowds out my lack of ability to express similar trains of thought, but is solaced by the fact that such commentators and broadcasters are in fact professionals. This coupled with the daily demands of each day's routine, which suddenly become far more important and pressing, banishes further thoughts into a future activity.

From time to time however, my thoughts do return to the editorial, and some topic springs to mind. If it is still with me after a few days I often work on it only to find that its relevance is questionable. With today's methods of communication and recording, tearing up one's morning's work to rid us of our frustrations is a delight no longer available to us, we just press on with the next idea. For this particular editorial, however the relevant and important spring to mind immediately. The deaths of Sybil Stephenson, Wendy Watson and Gordon Hands seem a poignant reminder not only of the inevitability of our brief lives, but with the almost unacceptable realisation that we shall see them no more. Their contribution to the musical life of Berkshire was incalculable, effected "quietly" and without any fuss or need for reward. Eloquent tributes by close friends appear in this issue, accentuating the close bonds that music enjoys with all of us, both young and old. All three of our departed friends realised the necessity to foster and encourage the love of music in people of all ages, especially the young, by providing worthwhile opportunities for music making in a happy environment. They gave their all unstintingly right up to the end.

What better way in conclusion can we find but to quote two verses from the hymn of Bernard of Cluny, translated by J.M. Neale, which run;

There grief is turned to pleasure,	The morning shall awaken,
Such pleasure as below	The shadows shall decay,
No human heart can utter	And each true-hearted servant
No human heart can know.	Shall shine as does the day.

**Graham Ireland**

# **THE 88<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND RECITAL**

**held at  
Emmanuel Methodist Church, Reading  
Saturday 3 May 2008**

We had been kindly granted permission to hold this event at Emmanuel Church, through the good offices of our Honorary Member, Derek Guy, who is the resident organist there, and it was a great pleasure to enjoy the very modern facilities that are available at this venue.

Our proceedings began in the afternoon with a recital by Jonathan Holl, who demonstrated the new Makin organ's colours with a varied collection of pieces, which we all enjoyed.

The tea that followed was masterminded by Jen, very much at home in the Emmanuel kitchen, assisted by Margaret and a couple of helpers who we are always pleased to see at our AGMs. Christopher Cipkin, our President, expressed his thanks, on behalf of us all, for the mouth-watering refreshments.

At the AGM itself there was little change in the appointments of officers, except to regretfully accept the resignation, on health grounds, of Alan Kent, from the post of Secretary. David Pether's rôle as Webmaster would now be given full officer status in the Association. The function of the Benevolent Fund Steward's rôle would be reconsidered during the coming year. Our Treasurer, Mark Jameson demonstrated that our funds are such that we do not need to increase our subscription rates for the next year. We were delighted too that Christopher Cipkin will be our President for another year. Finally all of the officers were thanked for the work they have put in to keep the Association functioning so successfully.

On a sad note, we had to record the death, only that morning, of one of our oldest and long-standing members, Gordon Hands. We stood for a few moments as a mark of respect to him, and to Sybil Stephenson and Wendy Watson, who had died since our last AGM.

**Jim Wooldridge**

## **AGM ORGAN RECITAL PROGRAMME**

Duo [en Cors de Chasse sur la Trompète]	Jean François.Dandrieu
Tierce en taille [Messe pour les couvents]	François Couperin
Passacaglia in C minor	J.S.Bach
Chorale Prelude on a theme by Tallis	Harold Darke
Concerto in B flat [Op. 10 No. 3]	John Stanley
Etheldreda Rag [Homage to Scott Joplin]	Arthur Wills
Scherzo Symphonique	Alexandre Guilmant

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I would like to begin my report by recording my thanks to Jonathan Holl for his excellent recital. Having been in his shoes last year playing for the assembled gathering of organ *aficionados*, I know what I challenge it is! We also owe thanks to Derek Guy and the authorities here at Emmanuel for allowing us to hold our AGM here, and to Margaret Wooldridge and Jen Guy for so kindly providing a delicious tea for us.

Second, I wish to extend a heartfelt word of thanks to all on the Committee, and its various sub-committees, for their hard work and support during the past year. As I somewhat apprehensively settled into my new role as your President this time last year, I personally came to value the quiet words of advice, frequent telephone calls and email updates on developments I needed to know about, and generous offers of help to keep the wheels turning, so to speak. Although we cannot rest on our laurels, we can justly use this occasion to stand back and be really proud of all that we have achieved in 2007/8. I think I'm right in saying it was an audience member at a recent Reading Town Hall recital who was overheard remarking that we are still an 'active' association. It is good that that is how we are perceived and it is due to the collective activity of those on your Committee that we remain so active.

It seems somewhat invidious to single out certain individuals for special mention, but I do think it is right and proper to take this opportunity to thank, in particular, Alan Kent, who has given sterling work as the Association's Secretary for many years now. Alan cares passionately about the Association and its long-term future. It was Alan who prepared a Committee discussion paper to stimulate thinking about our future direction. The outcomes of that discussion have formed the basis of much of our activity over the past year. So, we owe him an enormous debt of gratitude and we wish him all the best as he retires from Office.

There are also a host of other people who are not on the Committee who give their time and efforts to assist the work of the Association and their contributions this year have also been hugely appreciated. Graham Ireland (Journal), Michael Humphries (Newsletter) and Ruth Weatherly-Emberson (Benevolent Fund) are some I would particularly like to thank.

The year has seen a number of highs and also, regrettably, some lows. To start with the lows, these have been the sad deaths of Wendy Watson, Sybil Stephenson and, as a few of you may have heard, Gordon Hands, who passed away this morning. They were all, in their own ways, musical pillars of their respective communities and highly respected members of this Association. I am grateful to those who kept me posted about news of the passing away of

members, and those who kindly represented the Association at their funerals when work commitments prevented me doing so.

On a more positive note, we have continued to offer a popular programme of local recitals (which I am pleased are also involving our student members), visits to places near and far, and social events. I have greatly enjoyed attending these, when possible, and meeting many members of the Association. We recently invested in a smart new publicity board and this is certainly helping to raise our profile when we adopt a presence at Reading Town Hall events and elsewhere. Spreading our wings somewhat, last Summer we supported an all-Berkshire Organ Masterclass with Ann Elise Smoot in Newbury. Thanks in particular to Don Hickson for his lead on this. We are now beginning to discuss the possibility of another event aimed at young people, possibly in association with Berkshire Maestros (formerly the Berkshire Young Musicians' Trust).

Finally, I would like to thank all members of the Association who completed my President's Survey. The purpose of the survey, and one which I feel has been achieved, was to ensure your President and Committee are in touch with what the membership wants. Your responses are already providing us with several ideas for new ways of doing things and events you would like to see organised for you. Copies of the findings are available for you to see at this meeting.

So, for your Committee, it will be back to continuing our work in progress after this AGM, feeling proud of what we have achieved in 2007/8, but with plenty to do in the months ahead. New blood is always welcome on the Committee to share the load and bring in new ideas, but we will come to that later on our agenda today.

With thanks and best wishes to you all.

**Christopher Cipkin**

## ELECTIONS

As a result of the elections at the AGM, the Association's key posts are filled as follows:

<b>President</b>	Christopher Cipkin
<b>Secretary</b>	<i>Vacant</i> *
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mark Jameson
<b>Committee</b>	Roger Bartlett, Ian May, Jonathan Holl, Jill York, Harry Russell (for 3 years) Julian Greaves (for 2 years) Derek Guy, Jim Wooldridge (for 1 year)
<b>Programme Secretary</b>	Christine Wells
<b>Publicity Officer</b>	Don Hickson
<b>Webmaster</b>	David Pether
<b>Benevolent Fund Steward</b>	Ruth Weatherly-Emberson
<b>Editors; <i>Berkshire Organist</i></b>	Graham Ireland
<b><i>Newsletter</i></b>	Michael Humphries
<b>Auditor</b>	Bill Potter

\* Don Hickson subsequently volunteered to become Acting Secretary and has been co-opted to this post by the Committee.

## MEMBERS' NEWS

This edition containing news of our members, is by no means exhaustive, and relies on the willingness of member to pass on information to the editor. So please contact him with items of interest. Our newest member is **Harry Davidson**, who is in his second year at Reading School. He sings in the choir of St. Andrew's, Harrogate Road, Caversham, along with the rest of his family. Amongst his interests and passions, which does include the organ, is playing the bassoon, on which instrument he gained a distinction in his Grade VIII, Associated Board exam. He was also selected to play in the National Children's Orchestra. Congratulations to you Harry, we shall follow your career with much interest. About the same age is **Edward Reeve**, and he goes to Blue Coat School, in Sonning. Members will note that he is organist of Holy Trinity in Henley, where week by week he coaxes sounds out of an ailing pipe organ. He is an active member of our association, attending many events, and following his own interest in the organ. We congratulate Edward on passing his Grade VII piano Associated Board with a distinction, which was only seven marks off the 150 scale. In June of last year **Alistair McIntosh** and **Richard Mayers** both sat their GCSE exams, and were thrilled with their results which came out in August. Now the serious business of AS and A2 study has begun for them. In the recent Associated Board Examinations, **Paul Manley** gained a distinction with 136 marks for his Grade VIII piano. Alistair McIntosh successfully passed his Grade VII piano exam. We offer both of these promising pupils our congratulations. Following his year as Musician in Residence at Haileybury School in Hertfordshire, **Huw Jones** was appointed Assistant Director of Music at Stowe School, for the academic year beginning in September. Hardly had Huw found his feet in the classroom and on the pedal board of the chapel organ, when his Director of Music abruptly left the school, leaving Huw in charge. It was certainly a baptism by fire, but knowing Huw, he rose to the challenge, which included collecting in course work from his students. **Nicolas Walker**, the contributor of articles in previous editions of our magazine about his experiences as a chorister at Chichester Cathedral, has hung up his cassock for the final time. In September he begins the next stage of his secondary education at Charterhouse, after having won a prestigious music scholarship offered by the school. We all send him every best wish for his new life at Charterhouse. On Corpus Christi, the organist and choir mistress of Hambleden Church, our own **Christine Wells**, celebrated fifty years loyal service there. It was a very considerable achievement, marked by a choir of fifty, a packed church, and a reception in the village hall. Tributes were paid to Christine by the clergy, old friends and choristers, both near and far, who had come to share in Christine's happy day. A toast was proposed to Christine who assured all those present that she had no plans to retire.

Ed.

## ALL-BERKSHIRE ORGAN DAY

Saturday 23 June 2007

St. Nicolas Church, Newbury, was the venue for an important occasion in the Association's programme of activities last year; a joint event with the Windsor & District, and Newbury District Associations. The day took the form of a two hour master class, given by Ann Elise Smoot, Director of the St. Giles Junior Conservatoire, and a recital by her following afternoon tea. This educational day was jointly funded and organised by the three Berkshire Associations with an additional grant from the IOA, and it proved to be an excellent opportunity to cement or re-establish links between our various associations. The portable console of the three manual organ was moved to centre stage for the day, giving the audience a clear view of both the master class and recital. All four students in the master class were from the Newbury and District Association, but this did not matter as both players and about 25 onlookers alike were able to benefit from Ann Elise Smoot's informal, positive and encouraging criticism, which also allowed for audience questions along the way.

James Woodhouse commenced proceedings with Frank Bridge's solid *Allegro Marziale*. The focus of attention was on creating a romantic interpretation and sense of Edwardian pomp. She argued for a degree of physicality when playing, in part to avoid repetitive strain injury, but not the use of gesture in place of carefully controlled articulation. She also had useful advice on preparing for seamless piston changes by reading ahead and ensuring careful preparation of 'hovering' fingers.

Steve Bowey gave a fluent rendition of Hubert Parry's *Chorale Prelude on Dundee*, which he had prepared for his ARCO examination. Ann Elise Smoot discussed the notion of metronome markings and urged caution about adhering to them too rigidly. Her convincing argument is that composers often set their markings while seated at a domestic piano, and so they appear to be too fast when transferred into the more spacious acoustic of a church. Following on from her remarks about tempo came the advice on the Brahmsian 'lift'. Indeed, it was her desire to make music breathe and have nuanced shape which emerged as one of the recurring and most inspiring themes of the day. Given Steve Bowey's pending examination, she also recommended that performers spend time when not practising, imagining themselves at an organ. Visualising yourself at the examination console in front of others is useful mental preparation, and will help to instil self-confidence.

Billy Kilpatrick chose Dietrich Buxtehude's *Prelude and Fugue in G minor*, and this gave Ann Elise Smoot the opportunity to explore the historical context and interpretative problems of Buxtehude's *oeuvre*. Her first call was to let

loose as demanded by any music written in the *stylus phantasticus*. The object of such a piece as the Buxtehude *Praeludium* was to reawaken and stimulate the congregation at the end of a three hour service! Colour, ornament and contrast should all feature, but there should also be some continuity of tempo between episodes. She also suggested it is not always necessary to place a *ritenuto* at the end of the piece. Making mention of the Royal College of Organists' Buxtehude Project, Ann Elise Smoot also described the problematic issue surrounding a lack of autographed scores, the prevalent use of tablature and the resulting discrepancies between various modern editions. Thus, for example, it was argued that it may be more appropriate to play some passages on the manuals only, even if the edition suggests using pedals.

The final student was Alistair Davies who performed Bach's Prelude from the *Prelude and Fugue in E minor [BWV 548]*. With this work, we were urged to make a connection [which would have been immediately obvious to an eighteenth century performer] between the brooding minor key and our approach to performing it. Drama, confusion, strife and pain were all the adjectives used to encapsulate the mood of the work. Thus, the opening needs to be arresting and have an internal sense of ebb and flow, of diminuendo and crescendo even though the piece does not require changes of registration or use of the expression pedal. Inner parts need to be followed, especially when they are syncopated, and articulation should never be clipped, echoing the earlier points about giving the music space to breathe.

All of the students performed extremely well, given that most were relatively unfamiliar with the Newbury organ and had a live audience. They also showed a high level of receptiveness to the advice given, an aspect of the day which especially gratified Ann Elise Smoot. My only slight criticism is that it would have been nice to have included a French or contemporary work in the programme to provide as broad a national and stylistic coverage as possible, but this is a very minor point.

#### **PROGRAMME GIVEN BY ANN ELISE SMOOT**

Epiphanie  
 Chorale Partita, 'Sei gegrüßet, Jesu gütig'  
 Theme and Variations in D  
 Partita sopra 'Nun freut euch'  
 Fête

Gaston Litaize  
 J.S.Bach  
 Felix Mendelssohn  
 Lionel Rogg  
 Jean Langlais



After a splendid tea and time to chat informally to the students as well as other attendees, we experienced an uplifting recital which gave all of us an opportunity to see Ann Elise Smoot's advice put firmly into practice. Attended by about 35 people, including the Mayor of Newbury, the recital consisted of two fiery pieces enclosing 'three theme and variation' works. The format worked well as it enabled the performer to show off the full organ sound of the instrument in the opening and closing works, and then demonstrate more subtle colours and different national and historical styles of performance in the central works.

Finally, thanks must go to Don Hickson who represented the Berkshire Organists' Association on the planning committee for this event, and who gave a significant amount of his own time and energy to seeing the project come to fruition. We left Newbury inspired by what we had heard, and keen to see a similar event held in Reading before too long.

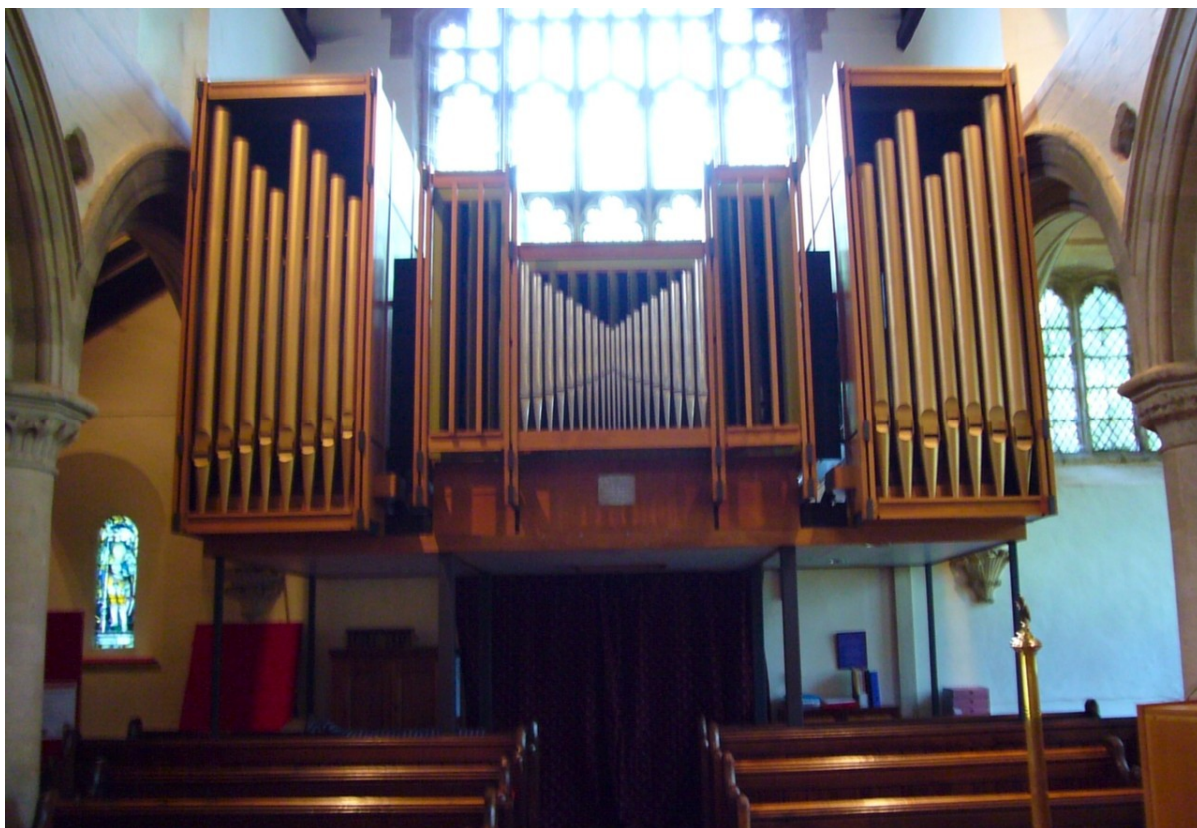
**Christopher Cipkin**

## **VISIT TO SHELLINGFORD, FARINGDON AND SHRIVENHAM**

**Saturday 14 July 2007**

I must admit that I had never heard of Shellingford until our hardworking programme committee arranged this trip, but it turned out to be a delightful village nestling on the edge of the Cotswolds, with the small church of St. Faith's boasting a spire. Inside, about a dozen or so of us were surprised to see a fairly new organ almost filling the west end. Although it has had its fair share of mechanical troubles during its short life, it is now in good order, and several of us had an opportunity to play it and put it through its paces. Personally, I found it rather strong in the upper registers, [and I don't like black keys and stop-knobs!], though many of our party found it satisfactory.

We then journeyed on to Faringdon [only one "r" note] to visit All Saint's Church. This looked just like a miniature Winchester Cathedral, with its squat square tower, which once boasted a spire, destroyed unfortunately by Cromwell in the Civil War. Again, the organ, which was comparatively new, filled the west end, though its console was detached and had stop tabs over the Swell manual instead of traditional drawstops. This was much more of a concert organ than the Shillingford one, and I found it a much sweeter instrument. It certainly catered for the varying demands of the organ repertoire.



**The 1969 Grant, Degens & Bradbeer organ at All Saints' Church, Faringdon**



**The Henry Jones organ at St Andrew, Shrivenham**

On entering the church we had been given what I thought was an order of service, which turned out to be a menu for the Red Lion, newly restored and lying close by. Twelve of us were taken there, where we enjoyed a very satisfying lunch. [Unfortunately, for some of our party who had brought their dog, animals were not allowed, and they had to eat elsewhere].

Finally, we drove to Shrivenham, about eight miles away, where we were welcomed by the organist of St. Andrew's. He gave us a talk about the small two manual organ presently in use. This one was considerably older than the two we had previously played, and had been much altered over the years.

At each of the churches we were warmly welcomed, with an added bonus of good weather all day, making the drive from Reading all the more pleasant. Well done to those who organised this very successful trip.

**Jim Wooldridge**

## **TRAVELS IN DEVON AND CORNWALL**

**2-5 October 2007**

The seven members and two wives who undertook this tour were fortunate to be based at the excellent White Hart Hotel at Moretonhampstead with its award-winning restaurant. It was certainly an experience too for those driving the narrow and winding A road into and out of Moretonhampstead, especially in the dark. Its situation is quite lovely, set on the edge of Dartmoor. In the course of the tour we visited three cathedrals, one abbey, two large churches and one smaller parish church. Apart from the journey to Wells, when it was a little misty with some fine rain, the weather was very kind to us, with bright sunshine and the countryside looking superb. The meant that we were able to sit outside, on our final visit to our Devon members, the Martins, and enjoy the cream tea so kindly provided for us.

Our first stop on the tour was to visit the majestic cathedral at Wells. We were allocated a 30 minute slot just before the quiet hour. Unfortunately, Matthew Owens, the Organist and Master of the Choristers, was delayed, and this meant that there was only 20 minutes for a brief description of the history of the organ and a demonstration of it. In 1857 Father Willis rebuilt the organ, which was subsequently enlarged by Harrison and Harrison in 1910, and in

1973/74. It sounded versatile and probably capable of covering a reasonably wide repertoire, but it seemed to lack any individual character. A realistic appreciation of the instrument could not be gained, however, in the short time available to us. It was not possible to go up to the console either, because of the apparent lack of space, which would only accommodate the player and one assistant. [AK found the visit of particular interest because he discovered, at last, the location of two lion heads that the master mason had incorporated in the complex retrochoir vaulting to cap two surplus vaulting ribs!].

Truro was our next cathedral, where the organ scholar met us. He gave Robert Sharp's apologies as he had been delayed by a previous engagement, and then introduced us to the organ. In conversation we discovered that the assistant was an American who had seen the vacancy advertised, applied for it, and was appointed. He told us that he was very happy at the cathedral and it had lived up to his expectations when he applied for the post. Apparently Truro offered a far wider range of activity that was generally available in the USA, from rehearsing the choir to playing for the services. What one can learn from these visits! Returning to the point of our visit, he demonstrated the organ, and soon we were joined by Robert Sharp, the Organist and Director of Music. He explained more of the instrument's history to us. Tonally it remains as Father Willis had left it in 1887, before the cathedral nave was complete, although the action has been altered. It does seem incredible how well the instrument sounds throughout the cathedral. The console was moved to the south choir aisle, placed just above the choir stalls and opposite the pipes. This work was undertaken by Willis III, who changed the action when the console's position was moved. Sometimes this procedure does alter the overall tonal effect, but we were assured that this had not been the case here. In 1991 Mander's was asked to undertake a complete restoration. The main change was to bring the Tuba stop to the front of the pipe layout, from its somewhat buried position at the back of the instrument. The organ itself has certain similarities to 'our' Willis, since both are moderately-sized four manual instruments. [Note David Brigg's views quoted in the review of his Town Hall Concert.] Even before we reached Truro some in the party were singing the organ's praises, and once we had heard it we could agree with their comments.

Robert Sharp gave an enthusiastic and comprehensive demonstration of the instrument which gave rise to question the necessity for large instruments to be found in other cathedrals. Fortunately time did permit those playing members a worthwhile opportunity to enjoy the instrument. Most of the pipework is situated high up in a vaulted chamber at the triforium/clerestory level which must aid the dissipation of the sound throughout the cathedral, which was very evident as we walked around the building. Some of us stayed to attend Evensong, and heard the excellent choir perform some works by Rachmaninov. So our first day ended on an enjoyable note.

Incidentally those members who watched the Boscastle TV programmes will be interested to know that Robert Sharp considered that the episodes concerning the future existence of the cathedral choir were somewhat overplayed, and added that the financial position of the choir had stabilised. The programmes did however bring in substantial additional donations, so perhaps the overplaying could be excused somewhat!

Exeter was the last of our cathedral visits, and was blessed by glorious mid-day sunshine. Here the party was greeted by Andrew Millington, the Organist and Director of Music, who had previously been Organist at Guildford Cathedral. Our party greatly appreciated being given two hours playing time. Andrew Millington gave us a brief introduction to the organ, which for the most part is housed in the beautiful Loosemore screen-mounted case, although very few pipes remain from that era. This is another of the Father Willis/Harrison and Harrison instruments, rebuilt Willis in 1891, and then rebuilt at various times by Harrison and Harrison from 1931 to 2001, which included having certain 'baroque' additions/alterations ultimately removed. A new addition has been to provide a nave organ placed in the Minstrels Gallery to provide more support for nave services and large public events. Andrew Millington gave a short recital introduced by birthday greetings to our Devon member, Gwen Martin, who had joined us at this stage. To a non-player Exeter's organ seemed to have more character than the one at Wells, but of course we were allowed more time here. The acoustic is very sympathetic, and the sound carries well throughout the cathedral, aided no doubt, by organ's location on the screen. Tonally it combines the Willis/Harrison characteristics so suited to the cathedral repertoire. Playing members made full and good use of the ample time allotted to them, offering us a very wide range of pieces, including some Messaien which did not drive visitors out of the cathedral as was the case at Buckfast Abbey. The cathedral looked magnificent with the sun streaming through the clerestory windows. Our access to the organ screen gave us a wonderful view of the superb vaulting, which, unusually, which runs continuously from the east to the west end. All in all this visit combined both visual and aural pleasures.

It was on a bright and sunny morning that we visited the picturesque grounds and Abbey of Buckfast. The effect was quite glorious. At the Abbey we were greeted by the Warden Geoff Pring. Here we found a 1939/47 J W Walker & Son instrument, with Ralph Downes as consultant, retaining its original stop key console, which certainly required the player's concentration to master, as it is a large four manual. Its sound retains the best of the JWW era as influenced by Downes, bold and dynamic, aided by the excellent acoustic of the abbey church, speaking well into the nave. Members played a wide-ranging repertoire with the French school coming across well. This is an organ of character which the ongoing section by section refurbishment should bring back to its full glory. Mind you, one member played some Messaien which apparently was not



appreciated by other visitors to the cathedral, even though the performance was finely polished. Messiaen certainly is an acquired taste.



**Ian May mastering the console at Buckfast Abbey**

Of the larger parish churches the first to be visited was at Crediton. It is a large church by any definition. Here we were greeted by the Vicar, Nigel Guthrie, who left us to explore the organ. This is a large three manual Harrison and Harrison built in 1921, rebuilt in 2001, with the addition of a fine organ case in English oak, by a local builder by the name of Michael Farley. The organ has a clear lively tone with some substantial reeds, and retains its original mixtures. It does not have that smooth lush sound of later Harrison's. Nigel Guthrie likened it to the Harrison in St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, and said that some people referred to it as a smaller Redcliffe. The comparison supports itself. Members again played a wide ranging repertoire, with which the instrument coped easily, as it spoke throughout the church.

Ottery St. Mary was the second of the large churches visited, and indeed was our last. Like Crediton it is one of the large spectacular Devon churches, brilliant in the sunlight. Here we were met by the Organist, Michael Farley, who is also an organ builder, the one responsible for the rebuild at Crediton. He gave us an account of the organ's history. Basically it is a Holditch rebuild of 1901 from an older instrument. It was restored in 1969 by the Exeter firm of Eustace and Aldbridge, and Michael Farley continues to work on the instrument as funds permit. This is a sizeable two manual organ with a versatile bright sound suitable for this large building. It sounded well in the French romantic repertoire using the fine manual flue registers, the reeds and the pedal stops.

Our small church, not that small either, a short step from our hotel, was St. Andrews, the parish church of Moretonhampstead, positioned on a hilltop. We were met by Carole Seymour, the organist, who had cancelled a piano lesson to be with us. The organ is an untouched three manual Hele, built in 1903. It has retained some quite unusual stops, including a 4ft Spitzflute on the Choir, together with some other fine flute stops. The organ is a good country instrument considering its age, but was not helped by the poor acoustic of the church.

One of the highlights of the tour was organ connected, but not organ based. We were invited by our two Devon members, Gwen and Bill Martin, who live close to Ottery, to visit them for a cream tea. What a cream tea it was too! We enjoyed looking round their large garden, although at least one of the party, whilst delighted at being shown around it, was pleased that he did not have to keep it in order. This was the last visit of this most enjoyable tour, and it was back to our hotel for our final dinner.

Once again our thanks go to Christine Wells for organising another excellent tour, and finding a hotel to match. Where does she find them? At each of the tours we have been on with the Association, Christine has found us somewhere first class to stay, aided by the most attractive small towns in which they are located. This tour certainly ranked highly in this respect. We did, however, cause some consternation at the hotel, because one night virtually everybody chose the same dessert, and supplies had run out. Forewarned, however, we were all catered for on the next night.

**Roger Bartlett and Alan Kent**

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

**Saturday 3 November 2007**

Our Annual Dinner had been planned well in advance by Derek Guy to take place at the Quality Hotel, on the Oxford Road, where we had congregated the previous year. On making the final arrangements Derek was informed that we could no longer be accommodated there, as the hotel had been taken over by the Travel Lodge Company. Undeterred, Derek rearranged the date, and venue, letting us all know, at relatively short notice, that the new date would be November 3<sup>rd</sup>. It transpired that this new date was more suitable for those of us who were involved with the British Legion commemorative celebrations at this time. The dinner was held at The Six Bells Pub, in Beenham, a few miles west of Theale. David and I were delighted to return there as we had celebrated our Ruby Wedding there two weeks previously.

In all thirty four folks sat down to the meal at a horseshoe-shaped table decorated with terracotta coloured tablecloths and napkins. The choice of menu was excellent, running to a sorbet between courses. This was not unexpected as Glenys and Chris who run the establishment, had been put forward for “Restaurant of the Year” by the Reading Post the previous week.

Our guest speaker was David Titterington, Head of Organ Studies at the Royal Academy of Music. His talk was both interesting and humorous. He emphasised the necessity of encouraging young people to become organists, and asked us to support them, as the prohibitive costs of tuition and accommodation deterred many aspirants. At the conclusion of his talk questions were invited, among which was one concerning the acceptance of students with high practical skills but less developed academic ones. His positive reply was that some means would be found to help such an applicant. He also stated that contrary to general opinion, interest in the organ was not waning, and that a suitable post would present itself to an applicant without the tag of a tricky incumbent attached to it.

Formal proceedings having drawn to an end, we all returned home, with a warm glow inside, after a most enjoyable and interesting evening.

**Anne Bolam**



## **PRESIDENT'S SOCIAL AFTERNOON**

**Saturday 12 January 2008**

Each of our Presidents has the opportunity to entertain the membership of the BOA in his or her own way, and our present incumbent chose to hold the event this year on his home ground of Wesley Methodist Church, where, of course, he is the organist.

Christopher started the proceedings off by reading some letters to us extracted from Victorian newspapers, which revealed some interesting insights into the choirs and organists of those days. A breach of promise case concerning a well-known member of a famous Devon organ builder kept the courts busy for a while, and another case involved an organist and his choir who sang an anthem disapproved of by the vicar, resulting in another legal action.

Following this we had a quiz, where four teams of us had to find the names of songs containing a colour. Another round involved us trying to remember some of the BWV numbers of some of Bach's works. We had also to identify a collection of photographs of famous people in the organ world. Not surprisingly, the quiz was won easily by the team which included both Jonathan Holl and Christine Wells!

The final item was a tea, lovingly prepared by Jen and Margaret, which was, as expected, well up to their usual high standard.

It was a pity that there were not more members present, although wives and other guests did make up the numbers somewhat.

Our sincere thanks must go to our President, Christopher Cipkin, for single-handedly arranging this most enjoyable event.

**Jim Wooldridge**

## **VISIT TO HENLEY AND REMENHAM CHURCHES**

**Saturday 9 February 2008**

One wintry day, members enjoyed a visit to Henley and Remenham churches. Weather-wise, it was cold and gloomy, but the spirits of the organists attending were much the opposite. The visit started in St. Mary's Church, Henley. It's organ is a magnificent 3 manual with many distinguishing features. For the first half an hour, however, no playing was actually possible, largely due to a missing key. By the time I had found it, a few members had already given up hope. Despite its size and grandeur, the organ is not without

imperfections. It does, in fact, need major improvements. The electro-pneumatic action has deteriorated so much that only the metal contacts remain. There is also a huge distance between the console and the main casework [Great, Swell and Pedal windchests], which produces a distant, unclear sound to



**Edward Reeve at St Mary's Henley**

the player and the choir. Nevertheless, the organ has a large variety of tone colours and interesting stops, including a Double Open Diapason 16', two Open Diapasons 8' on the Great, a Harmonic Trumpet 8' on the Swell, an Acoustic Bass 32' on the Pedals, and some unusual mutations such as the "Nineteenth 1 1/3' ". A Positiv manual was added in 1964, and the pipes are situated on a separate windchest, above the console. Many members played the organ, playing pieces from all periods, and in all styles and different registrations.

After this we made our separate ways for lunch before meeting again at Remenham Church.

Remenham Church hosts a smaller, but far less temperamental organ. It is a 2 manual pneumatic with traditional Walker stops. The pedals are unusually stiff, and the stops are curved tabs which are easy to accidentally depress! The instrument was built by Walker in 1882, but the console was built in 1930, resulting in there being 61 keys but only 58 notes! Unfortunately the organ has no casework, simply an opaque screen. The instrument is very powerful for the small church, but it sounds very quiet at the console, which is hidden around a corner, thus blocking any potential view of the congregation. As before, a large variety of pieces were played.

I am sure all of the members who came on this visit thoroughly enjoyed it, and I hope to invite the Association to my church [Holy Trinity, Henley] in the future.

**Edward Reeve**

## VISIT TO NEWINGTON AND DORCHESTER

Saturday 8 March 2008

March is a lovely month to make a foray over the hills to the heart of the upper Thames Valley to visit historic Dorchester and the hamlet of Newington. The hedgerows and roadside spring flowers were delightful.

The initial plan was to visit just Dorchester Abbey; however, it was decided to include a second venue, perhaps at Warborough. Ian May, our visit organiser, found that organ was not in good order and the organist suggested he might like to see the house pipe organ belonging to Graham Ashley-Carter at Newington Manor.

Thus at 11am the big white gates opened and we entered Newington Manor grounds where we were welcomed by Mrs Jane Ashley-Carter, her husband unfortunately had an appointment in Oxford and could not be with us. The home organ is located on the first floor of a purpose built barn, which Mrs Ashley-Carter told us was built by her husband and son using wood from a tree which had fallen into the Thames at Wargrave. The ground floor serves as a garage and the upper floor as a music room.

The organ was built by William Drake in 1997. Encased in a decorative case, it was a joy to play. Jonathan Holl led the playing, 13 members attended, and we were treated to coffee and biscuits by our host.

**Jonathan Holl at  
Newington Manor**





### The Organ at Newington Manor

Manual I (C to g3)		Manual II (C to g3)	
Open Diapason [tenor c]	8	Stopt Diapason [tenor g]	8
Stopt Diapason	8	Flute	4
Principal	4	Nasard	2 2/3
		Fifteenth	2
Pedal (C to f1)		Temperament: Thomas Young	
Stopt Diapason [C-B]	16		

*The bottom notes for the short Diapason ranks, and the upper 18 notes of the pedal stop are borrowed from the Manual I Stopt Diapason.*

*[The parish church of St. Giles next door was not visited – the 1898 Martin & Coate 1m/p being in poor state, P.Bourdon 16, OD8, SD8, Dul 8, Prin 4 & 15<sup>th</sup>].*



**The organ at Dorchester Abbey  
(Photo: Tim Cook)**

All too soon it was lunchtime and the group either lunched in Warborough or Dorchester.

At 2pm we began our visit to Dorchester Abbey where we were welcomed by the Abbey organist, Jeremy Boughton. After a brief talk about the organ and a short demonstration, members were allowed to play.

The Abbey of St. Peter and St. Paul Dorchester was founded around 634 and is a very early Christian Shrine. After the Norman Conquest, the bishopric was moved to Lincoln and in 1170 the cathedral became an Augustinian abbey, this was the start of the existing church, the Saxon church may have been redeveloped as part of the existing nave. The east end was totally rebuilt in c14 with the famous Jesse window and period glass. The building was saved from destruction in 1536 when it was purchased to become the local parish

church, all monastic buildings were demolished except for the guest house west of the church that survives as the museum and tea shop. The tower was rebuilt in about 1630, and other alterations made. By the 19c it was in poor condition – William Butterfield carried out a major restoration between in 1846 and 1853. Music has long played its part here – the tenor and 7<sup>th</sup> bell date back to 1380. Bells 6 to 4 were cast in Reading between 1591 and 1603, bell 3 dates from 1651 whilst the second and treble bells date from 1867. They were last re-hung in 1987. It is somewhat surprising that there are no records to be found about organs prior to 1870 when the existing instrument started life.



**Dorchester Abbey - Console**

In 1870 J W Walker commenced build on an organ; the parish paid £642 towards the cost of the instrument, but were unable to pay the total order price. As a result only 633 of 2070 planned pipes were fitted over three manuals [56/29] – the organ being placed in the north aisle, St. Birinus Chapel, behind the choir stalls. The next work I can trace was in 1959 by R H Walker of Chesham with more extensive activity including action work in 1961, again by R H Walker [56/30] when it was moved one bay westward. Far more extensive work was carried out in 1980 by Bishop & sons when the organ was relocated

to its current gallery position and more of the prepared stops were inserted. Peter Collins 2007-8 rebuild has moved it 9 inches deeper into the gallery, with vastly improved visual appearance and new gallery, and not least much lighter action dealing with a long term problem with the instrument. The original Walker stop knobs are retained, and newer ones have been blended to match. New display pipes both side and east facing enhance the overall appearance. The organ is now reached by new steps on its east side. The organ retains its mechanical action to manuals and pedals, but with electric stop action.

Once again our members played a fine selection of music to demonstrate this new organ and finally Ian May brought our visit to a close playing Mendelssohn's Sonata No.3.

**Brenda and Mark Jameson**

<b>The Organ at Dorchester Abbey</b>					
<b>GREAT</b>			<b>SWELL</b>		
Open Diapason	1870	8	Double Diapason Bass	1870	16
Wald Flute & Stop Bass	1961	8	[29 notes]		
Salicional	1870	8	Double Diapason Treble	1870	16
Principal	1870	4	[27 notes]		
Flute	1961	4	Open Diapason	1870	8
Twelfth	1961	2 2/3	Stop Diapason Bass –	1961	8
Fifteenth	1961	2	Clarabella Treble		
Mixture [15.19.22]	1981	III	Echo Dulciana	1870	8
Trumpet	1981	8	Vox Angelica	1981	8
			Principal	1870	4
			Harmonic Flageolet	1961	2
			Mixture [12.15.19.22]	1961	IV
			Horn	1870	8
			Oboe	1961	8
			Clarion	2007	4
<b>CHOIR</b>			<b>COUPLERS</b>		
Dulciana	1870	8	Swell Super Octave		
Harmonic Flute	1870	8	Swell to Great		
Flute	1961	4	Choir to Great		
Piccolo	1961	2	Swell to Pedal		
Clarionet	2007/ 1870	8	Great to Pedal		
Sesquialtera	2007	II	Choir to Pedal		
<b>PEDAL</b>			Solid-state combination system		
Open Wood	1870	16			
Bourdon	1903	16			
Principal	1961	8			
Bass Flute	2007	8			
Trombone	1981	16			
Balanced Swell Pedal	1903				

## VISIT TO HAMPTON COURT PALACE

Saturday 19 April 2008

It was an uninviting, cold wet day, but not so much as to discourage a goodly number from attending the chapel of Hampton Court Palace. We were also joined by a few members of the Windsor and Eton Association as well, and one or two from the Organ Club. A number of us had arrived an hour or two early to take advantage of the chance to visit other parts of the palace.

We were warmly welcomed by the Organist and Assistant Director of Music, Rufus Frowde, [formerly Organist of Pangbourne College]. He gave us a brief history of the organ, interspersed with some short pieces. It was in 1712 that Christopher Shrider built an organ for the chapel. This has two manuals and 13 stops. In 1840, William Hill added pedals, a Cremona, and a short-compass Swell manual. In 1899, a full compass Swell was added, and in 1972 the action was converted to electro-pneumatic. A major rebuild took place in 1993, carried out by Hill, Norman & Beard. Much of the Shrider pipework was retained, and a new console fitted with all modern playing aids. Situated high up on the south side, the organ is adorned with a splendid case by Grinling Gibbons. With 47 speaking stops, the organ [although somewhat buried] speaks well into the chapel. There are many delightful sounds including some soft mutation stops on the Choir organ. The Tutti is rich, and with somewhat smooth reeds naturally gives a very 'Romantic' English sound.

Rufus Frowde played three pieces to us, namely *Voluntary in D* by Tomkins, a *Cornet Voluntary* by Goodwin, and *Fantasie* by Langlais. The organ was then available for all to play, and it was good to have with us one of our very young members, who played one of Bach's *Eight Short Preludes and Fugues*.

Later Mr. Frowde showed us the second console, situated downstairs. Not often used, it has two manuals, but any two of the organ's three manuals can be selected electrically!

By late afternoon the rain had virtually ceased, and it was possible to take a walk in the gardens - what a spectacle.

A very interesting and convivial day for us all.

**Jonathan Holl**

## READING TOWN HALL LUNCHTIME ORGAN RECITALS

**Michael Heighway**  
**[Eton College]**  
**Wednesday 4 July 2007**

Prelude and Fugue in E minor 'Wedge'	J.S.Bach
Two Chorale Preludes Schmücke Dich, O liebe Seele Mein Jesu, der du mich	Johannes Brahms
Prelude, Fugue et Variation	César Franck
Divertissement and Élégie from <i>24 Pièces en style libre</i>	Louis Vierne
Symphonie No.6 in G minor, 1 <sup>st</sup> Movement	Charles-Marie Widor

So, the 2006-7 lunchtime recital series ended in great style, with a slightly smaller but respectable audience numbering between 70-80. This was the second of what may be called the Eton Recitals, and as with last year's, Michael Heighway's did not disappoint us. He gave what many of us would term, a "proper" and well balanced recital, and his page turner, whom we were pleased to see, was Ben Sheen, last year's recitalist.

The main impression I gained from the recital was one of a maturity beyond the player's age, and I wondered if it was the influence of his teacher, David Goode. It came as a pleasant surprise to find some Brahms and Vierne in the programme, and also the not too often heard Franck. I did enjoy the "Wedge" too. In my opinion our recitalist certainly obtained the best from our Willis, which all added to my enjoyment of the recital. All the items came over well, in particular the French ones, which have not been as fashionable as they might, and well deserve a playing. I wish too that the Brahms preludes would feature more in concert programmes. The concluding item brought the recital to a rousing finish.

I look forward to next year's Eton recital, and hope that another recitalist can be produced to match Ben and Michael. For the second year running, what a way to finish a season!

**Alan Kent**



**Mark Swinton**  
**[Bath Abbey]**  
**Wednesday 5 September 2007**

March in C	Louis Lefébure-Wély
Organ Concerto No.13 in F major	George Frideric Handel
Sonata No.4	Felix Mendelssohn
Tuba Tune	Norman Cocker
Humoresque "L'organo primitivo"	Pietro Yon
Paeon	Percy Whitlock

The lunch time series last season finished on a high note, and the new season's first concert has now opened on one. Given by Mark Swinton, it was a well balanced and well played programme, which gave full play to the quieter stops of the instrument. This was particularly apparent in the arrangement of the Handel concerto, which was excellently interpreted. It was a joy to hear Mark's particular performance of the Mendelssohn sonata. The Tuba Tune came across as expected, with similar response from the Yon piece on a single stop, for both make good concert pieces. A satisfying conclusion to this most enjoyable recital would have been provided by the Whitlock piece, but when offered an encore, enthusiastically accepted by the audience, Mark rewarded us with a Sortie in Eb by, yes, you have guessed correctly, Lefébure-Wély. Mark added an extra dimension to his recital by adding programme notes about the works and the composers, some of which were new to me, in particular the interest shown by the clergy of St. Sulpice in the "lighter works" of Lefébure-Wely, as opposed to "serious Widor".

It is a pleasure to report that the audience numbered 104, with several people stating that they would attend the next one. Mark, in my opinion, is a name to watch.

**Alan Kent**

**Philip Aspden  
[Reading School]  
Wednesday 14 November 2007**

Variations de Concert	Joseph Bonnet
Benediction Nuptiale	Camille Saint-Saëns
Chorale varié sur la thème du 'Veni Creator'	Maurice Duruflé
Cantilène improvisée	Charles Tournemire Transcribed Duruflé
Carillon de Westminster	Louis Vierne

This was an excellent and well-attended recital which attracted a record audience of 142 people. The programme was unashamedly French Romanticism, which might have accounted for the large audience. It was introduced by the recitalist, who repeatedly said that he felt very nervous giving these introductory speeches. If his nervousness carried over into his playing, then it certainly got his adrenaline flowing. The Bonnet for example, is not often heard these days, probably because it demands a performance such as we were treated to, to make its true impact. In fact, much of the programme is not often played, even taking the names of the composers into account, which is a pity. Could Saint-Saëns be under-rated these days, because we do not hear very many of his organ works? The Duruflé and Tournemire pieces were also very welcome. To conclude the recital in rousing fashion, our recitalist played what must have been the most familiar item in the programme, namely the Vierne, dedicated to Willis III.

French Romantic music with a player who knows both works and organ, comes over extremely well on the Willis. William McVicker in his introduction said that it had been a very long time since Philip Aspden had performed at one of these recitals, and hoped that a return visit would not be as long again. This was a sentiment shared by us all.

**Alan Kent**

**Roger Sayer**  
**[Rochester Cathedral]**  
**Wednesday 16 January 2008**

Symphonie No.6, *Allegro*

Charles-Marie Widor

From the Orgelbüchlein

J.S.Bach

*Herr Christ, der einig Gottes Sohn*  
*Christum wir sollen loben schon*  
*Wir Christenleut*  
*Das alte Jahr vergangen ist*  
*In dir ist Freude*

Choral Fantasia *Halleluia Gott zu loben*

Max Reger

Chorale No. 2 in B minor

César Franck

Symphonie No.6, *Finale*

Charles-Marie Widor

These lunch time recitals go from strength to strength both with the increase in attendance numbers, and the excellence of the performers. On this occasion there were 119 in the audience. Roger Sayer's recital from all points of view was an excellent one. French Romantic music always seems to come over well on the Willis, but the Bach items featuring quieter stops were an absolute delight to me. I do like Reger, although he is not always best served by some British instruments, even by those offering a wide choice of colours, where the highly chromatic, rather dense writing comes across as a muddle of sound, totally lacking in real clarity. This was not the case with Roger Sayer's registration, which kept the writing clear at all dynamic levels, enabling us to appreciate the real worth of the work. César Franck's B minor Choral is possibly not so well known as the other two, perhaps because it is in *passacaglia* form. It is certainly not in any strict classical structure. It grows on me the more I hear it. This splendid recital commenced with the first movement of Widor's Symphonie No. 6, and concluded with the Finale from the same work, both given a rousing performance.

Sitting in the Concert Hall proved to me that however good a recording is, it is no substitute for a real live performance. Roger Sayer, in his introduction stated that prior to his visit he was aware of our Willis, but he was unprepared for its actual sound, where the variety and blend of the stops are wonderful. I very much hope that Roger Sayer can be prevailed upon to come to Reading again.

**Alan Kent**

**Andrew Sampson**  
**[St Matthew's, Westminster]**  
**Wednesday 12 March 2008**

Toccata and Fugue in D minor BWV565	J.S.Bach
Voluntary in D	George Dyson
Villanella	John Ireland
Meditation on John Keble's Rogationtide Hymn	John Ireland
Postlude in D	George Dyson
Cantique de Jean Racine	Gabriel Fauré Arr. Sampson
Pièce Héroïque	César Franck
War March of the Priests	Felix Mendelssohn Arr. Sampson

Andrew Sampson's recital programme truly had 'something for everyone', with music ranging from the opening fireworks of that most popular of organ works, through unfamiliar novelties by English composers, to transcriptions of choral and orchestral pieces, and a masterwork by a giant of the organ loft.

Although the works by Ireland continue, just, to have a toehold in the repertoire, both pieces by Dyson were unknown to me. After this performance, I hope to be tracking down copies of the music soon. Andrew Sampson asked the audience to consider that all four items be taken together as 'An English Suite', a conceit which actually worked well in making it less easy to dismiss them as brief character pieces. They also gave Andrew plenty of opportunity to explore the many softer sounds the Father Willis has to offer, and, as so often in these recitals, I was pleased to note some interesting new combinations.

I've noted with pleasure that over the past few years' recitals we have been treated to most of the organ works by Franck, including the three *Chorales*. This must surely be because, of all the French Romantics, his music seems to fit this instrument the best. Andrew filled a gap in the 'Franck cycle' with a thrilling performance of the *Pièce Héroïque*, leaving me to wonder who will provide the handful of missing pieces to complete the set.

Both of the transcriptions on the bill of fare had been made by Andrew Sampson himself. Indeed, this is something for which he is becoming widely

known, having played his own arrangement for organ duet of Mozart's Symphony No.40 in G minor at no less a venue than Westminster Cathedral. The realisation of the Fauré was particularly effective, with much shifting between manuals to bring out more colour and variation in the solo and accompanimental lines. In the Mendelssohn there is perhaps less scope for imagination, given its generally homophonic texture, but the rousing conclusion in a blaze of C major was no less appreciated.

A superbly balanced and executed lunchtime recital programme.

**David Pether**

**David Pether  
[Reading]  
Wednesday 7 May 2008**

Theme and Variations	Hendrik Andriessen
Prelude: 'The New Commonwealth'	Ralph Vaughan-Williams Arr. Morris
Elizabethan Serenade	Ronald Binge Arr. W.Lloyd-Webber
Fantasia in C minor BWV562	J.S.Bach
Festmusikk from <i>Våg å leve</i>	Mons Leidvin Takle
A Meditation on 'Brother James's Air'	Harold Darke
Pastorale in A	Alexandre Guilmant
Postlude in D	Henry Smart

Over the last few years the bi-monthly recitals in the Town Hall have become more and more popular, with audience numbers now the envy of many a church and town hall around the country. Arranged in conjunction with the Curator, Dr. William McVicker, and David Pether, the Association's link with the Town Hall, the high level of playing and programming has ensured their growing success. It was good therefore to see David himself 'in the hot seat', and those 126 persons present were not disappointed.

David began with Hendrik Andriessen's *Theme and Variations* which gave a solid start with modern [if sometimes stark] Dutch harmonies. In commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Vaughan-Williams, David played an arrangement of the Prelude *The New Commonwealth*. This was followed by another arrangement of the ever-popular and tuneful *Elizabethan Serenade* by Ronald Binge. Arrangements of orchestral works were a feature of organ concerts in times past, and the Father Willis is admirably suited to this kind of music, the popularity of which has returned relatively recently.

Bach's *Fantasia in C minor* [BWV 562] was played in a manner which suited the organ rather than trying to make the organ sound like a North German baroque instrument. The next piece was great fun indeed! It was *Festmusik* from *Våg å leve* by Takle, a Norwegian composer who was certainly new to me and probably everyone else in the audience. Entitled *Dare to Live - a celebration of life*, this music is harmonically and rhythmically from the fairground. You would never have known that David had great anxiety about whether the action of the organ could cope with the fast repeated chords in the left hand.

In complete contrast, David followed this with Harold Darke's *Meditation on Brother James's Air*, which he wrote in 1947. This was given an atmospheric performance, even if the build-up to full organ in the middle was a little restrained, before the piece ends in a mood of utter serenity. Guilmant's *Pastorale in A* was not from the sonata I had expected, but an individual piece from his 16<sup>th</sup> book of *Pieces in different styles*. It was good to hear this charming work. In conclusion, David gave an exciting performance of Henry Smart's *Postlude in D*.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable and well-played recital, which was noteworthy for David's calm and unhurried management of the organ with its sparse aids to registration. I think everyone left the hall 'on a high' - surely the sign of an excellent concert.

**Jonathan Holl**

## READING TOWN HALL CELEBRITY ORGAN RECITALS

**Wolfgang Abendroth**

**Saturday 2 June 2007**

Fantasia and Fugue in G minor BWV542	J.S.Bach
Chorale Prelude 'Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr'	J.S.Bach
Fantasia in F minor KV 608	W.A.Mozart
Sonata No.6 in D minor	Felix Mendelssohn
Prelude and Fugue in Eb major BWV522	J.S.Bach
Two Impromptus Op. 94 No.4 in F minor No.5 in C# minor	Franz Schubert Arr.Abendroth
Prelude and Fugue in G major	Johannes Brahms
Choral No.1 in E major	César Franck

This concert fell outside the regular series of lunchtime and celebrity recitals arranged by Reading Arts [with support from our Association and William McVicar]. It had been instigated by the Reading Düsseldorf Association as part of their Diamond Jubilee celebrations, marking the ever-stronger links between Reading and its German twin over six decades. The audience numbered 74, which is much lower than for the usual celebrity recitals, but quite respectable given the short notice available for advertising the event, and the competing attractions of other cultural activities on a Saturday evening.

Wolfgang Abendroth became choirmaster and organist at the Johanneskirche, the central church of Düsseldorf, at the age of 24. Now, some five years later, he also holds the post of Artistic Director of the Düsseldorf Chamber Choir. Perhaps for a future twinning celebration we'll be able to hear him direct one of his choirs. On this occasion, however, it was his organ-playing abilities which were on show. He had caught an early flight from Germany on the morning of the recital, but showed no sign of fatigue in what proved to be an assured performance.

This was not a light-weight programme, featuring almost exclusively the Austro-German repertoire, with frequent reliance on the uncoupled Great flue chorus up to the Mixture. However, Herr Abendroth's playing had a flexibility which was particularly welcome in the two large Bach works, and avoided any feeling of solidity. He negotiated the many difficulties of the Mozart Fantasia

with ease - a work originally intended to be played by a mechanical clock, not by human hands and feet. The Swell foundations got an expected outing in the Mendelssohn Sonata, but the extended appearance of the Tuba was more of a surprise.

Some novelty was provided by Herr Abendroth's own arrangement of works by Schubert. Their origins as piano pieces were still very apparent, although registration changes in the second piece were used to delineate its formal sections.

The Franck proved to be quite a contrast with everything which had preceded it, and showed that Herr Abendroth has comprehensively mastered the instrument's console in his few hours of familiarisation. Without assistance, he brought out all the colours and dynamics requested by the composer, and provided a thrilling end to a thoroughly-prepared recital.

**David Pether**

**David Briggs**

**Thursday 22 November, 2007**

### **The Phantom of the Opera**

No, this is not a mistake with a film review substituted for the normal recital review!

It cannot be a 'normal' review because the offering to be heard was not the normally expected one. On this occasion the audience was treated to a superb improvised performance by David Briggs, to accompany this classic film. This entailed playing the organ for 1 hour and 35 minutes. I know that films of this nature were accompanied by a player on a cinema organ more or less designed for this purpose, but I doubt that there would have been either such an erudite choice of 'accompanying' music, or such an extensive lengthy improvisation.

During the pre-concert interview David Briggs was invited to outline his career to date, adding his comments on the organs of which he has been in charge. Truro Cathedral with its Willis earned a very high ranking, with his opinion of 'our' Willis being almost as good. It was whilst he was at Gloucester Cathedral that he began his improvised accompaniment to silent films, at the request of the Dean of the cathedral, for a fund raising effort. There was no stopping the idea and it took off from there. This performance numbered No. 85 with this film, with the main ideas apparently noted in several versions to suit the particular instrument at the player's disposal. We were treated to version A,



and what a version it was! Themes from Wagner, Verdi, Chopin and other composers were called into play as appropriate, and the tension towards the end of the film was heightened considerably by his excellent improvisation. Those people who were prevented from attending, certainly missed some wonderful organ playing heard through the art of improvisation.

The audience was not as large as I would have hoped, and it was clear that for several who did attend, the evening's performance was their first opportunity to hear the organ. Considerable interest was shown before and after the performance not only in David Briggs's CDs, but also in the Association's accompanying literature. It is pleasing to report that all expenses incurred for the evening were covered.

**Alan Kent**

**Nigel Allcoat**  
**Thursday 10 April, 2008**

### **Song & Dance**

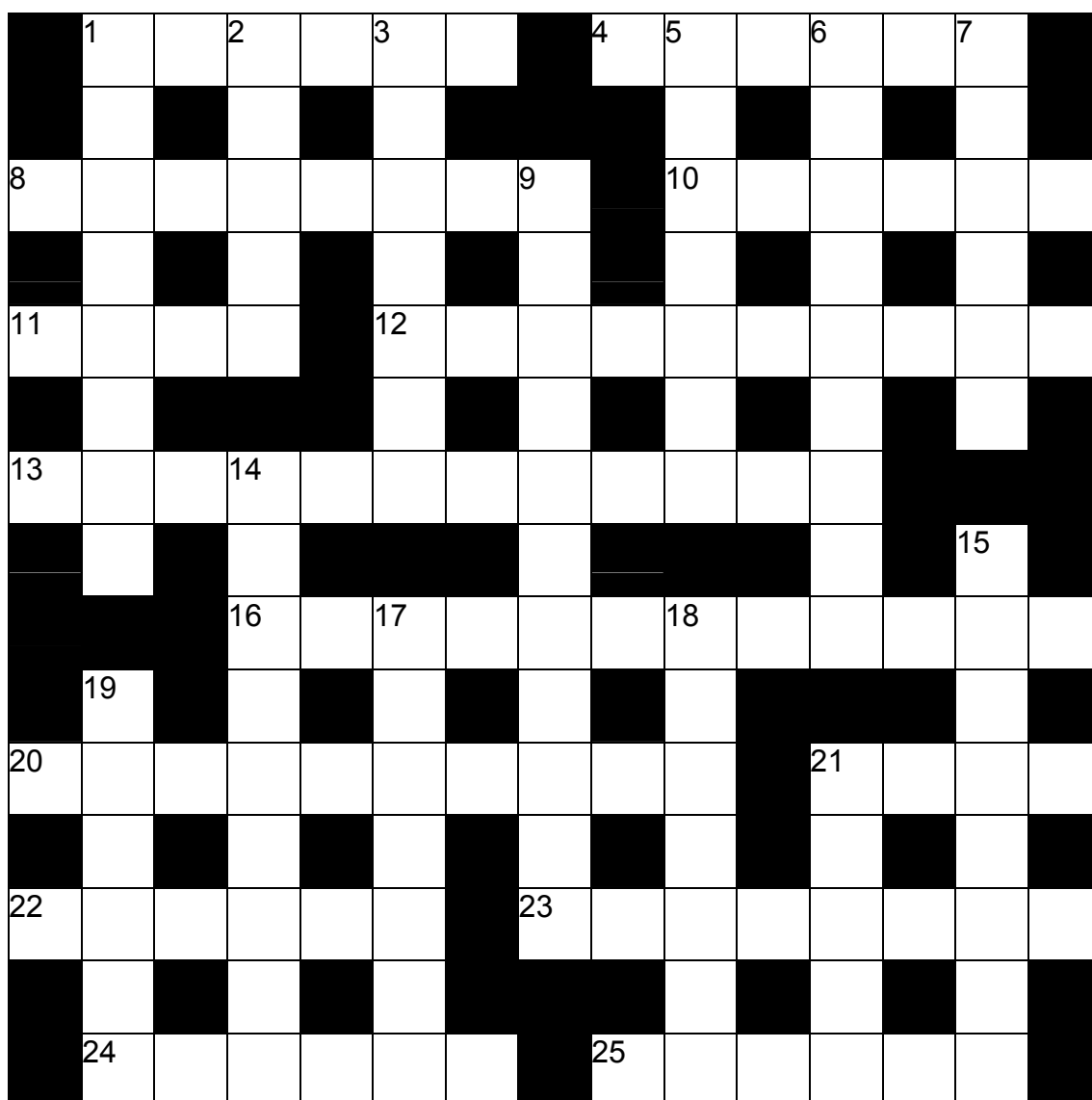
For the second time this season we were treated to an entirely improvised recital. There is no hiding the fact that ticket sales for this event were very disappointing, barely reaching fifty. I wonder whether this is because improvisation is considered to be of interest only to organ 'aficionados', or perhaps the general public likes to see a published programme before venturing into the town centre.

Nonetheless, Nigel Allcoat made a dramatic start by heading straight for the console and opening proceedings with a fanfare in the style of Monteverdi. Then it was our turn to provide inspiration with suggestions of forms to be included in a Dance Suite. After some initial reticence from the audience, the floodgates opened, and Nigel found himself challenged to reconcile, amongst others, a waltz, Scottish country dancing and the rumba. Fortunately, his powers of invention were more than up to the task.

After the interval, names of composers were requested as the starting point for a Ballet Suite, loosely based around a Beatrix Potter story. I'm sure Peter Rabbit has seldom been illustrated in the style of Mahler and Wagner! Freed from the tyranny of the printed score, Nigel Allcoat was able to make full use of the resources of the Father Willis to put maximum colour in his imagined ballet, and brought the appreciative house down with a rousing conclusion.

**Christopher Cipkin**

## CROSSWORD



### Across

1. An opera by R. Strauss [1905] [6]
4. Composer of “Martha” [6]
8. A Spanish gypsy dance [8]
10. Margins surrounding a picture [6]
11. See 13 across [4]
12. Would Oliphant Chukkerbutty have composed music for this “instrument”? [10]

13. and 11. Composer of “Amahl and the Night Visitors” [4] [5] [7]
16. A frequent happening [12]
20. Rudely [arch.] term [10]
21. First word of the second half of the last chorus of “Messiah” [4]
22. A metrical foot [6]
23. Occupies [8]
24. Religious doctrine of Lao-tsze, c. 500 BC [6]
25. Christian name of a Swedish authoress 1907-2002, who wrote “Pippi Long stocking” [5]

Down

1. Composer of the music to Burnand’s “Cox and Box” [8]
2. “-----ad revelationem” refrain from Nunc Dimittis [5]
3. The least quantity in a given case [7]
5. Composer of “Rio Grande” [7]
6. A rugby boundary [9]
7. “By the ----- of Babylon” [6]
9. Composer of “The Merry Wives of Windsor” [4] [7]
14. Slow and dignified [9]
15. Given greater stress [8]
17. Mysterious sects or groups [7]
18. An harmonious recurrence of accent [7]
19. The composer of 41 symphonies [6]
21. Composer of “The Blue Forest” [5]

The solution may be found on page 64.

**Graham Ireland**

## ASSOCIATION LOCAL RECITALS

The Association's roving series of recitals continues in good health under the watchful eye of Ian May. The last year's performers and venues are listed below, with thanks to all who played or assisted with logistics at each location.

### 2007

May 26 - Jonathan Holl at St John the Baptist, Cookham Dean

September 22 – Ian May with The Cameo Consort at St Mary's, Streatley

October 27 – Malcolm Stowell at St Mary the Virgin, Hambleden

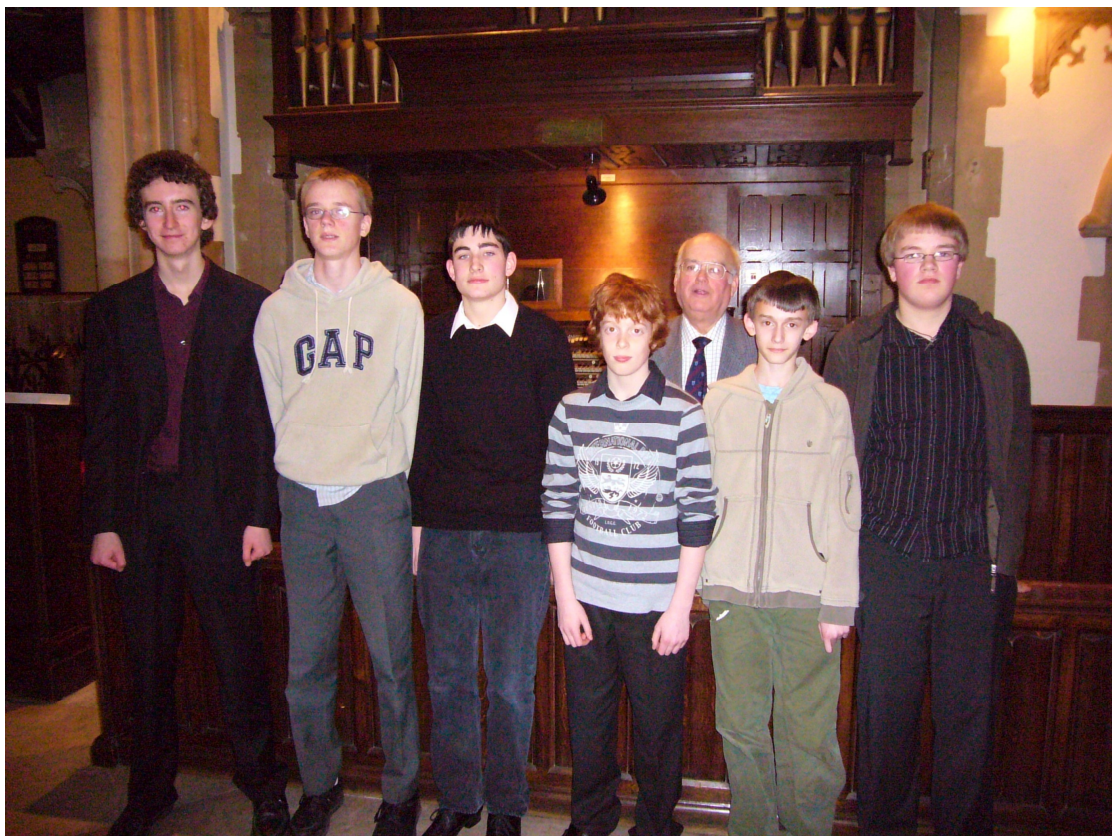
### 2008

February 16 – Young Organists at St Peter's, Earley [See photo below]

April 26 – Graham Ireland at Reading School Chapel

**David Pether**

**Young Organists' Recital [L-R] Paul Manley, Tim Perry, Alistair McIntosh, Harry Davidson, Graham Ireland, Edward Reeve & Richard Mayers**



## **LUNCHTIME RECITALS AT ST MARY'S**

The lunchtime recitals have continued at St. Mary's throughout 2007, and are now entering their sixteenth year. During this time, the collections have amounted to over £10,000, which has been spent on ongoing maintenance of the Willis organ. It is unfortunately in a very parlous condition, and no one can predict its response to the player's wishes from day to day. We are pursuing a make do and mend policy until funds become available for a rebuild, which was last effected in 1935.

Nevertheless we are very grateful to all those good people who have so kindly played for us. We would like to thank Philip Bowcock for setting up the handbills on his computer. This he has done for many years.

Recitalists who gave their time willingly during the year were; Sylvia Collins, Gordon Hands, Mary Harwood, Jonathan Holl, Christopher Hood, Graham Ireland, Margaret Isaacson [piano], Ian May, Malcolm Stowell, Michael Thomas, Wendy Watson, Christine Wells, James Wooldridge. Their programmes reflected a wide catholic interest in the organ repertoire which the Willis organ coped with competently.

There were two recitals given by students from Reading Blue Coat School, reports of which appear below.

**Gordon Hands**

## **READING BLUE COAT RECITALS**

It was a brilliant idea to invite some of the music students from Reading Blue Coat School to give two recitals at St Mary's in the Friday Lunch Hour Recital series when the organ was suffering from its usual inactivity caused by the attacks of heat and cold. Smartly dressed and well-mannered pupils presented a varied programme on both occasions. The first was given by Anton Crayton, an outstanding performer, who played music for cello by Beethoven, Bloch, Shostakovich and Schumann. His prestigious talent came to the fore in all of the pieces, which demanded differing skills and interpretations, ably supported by his mother at the piano. The favourable acoustic of the minster was sympathetic to this duo, allowing us to hear clearly the combination of keyboard and string, whatever the speed or dynamics of the pieces.

At the end of November the programme featured some of the other accomplished players. Edward Reeve played two pieces by John Stanley and



Bach on the Makin electronic organ, and the first movement of Beethoven's Pathétique Sonata on the minster piano. Matthew Wilkinson played two movements of a cello sonata by Vivaldi, Peter Watts played two arrangements of music by Telemann and Purcell, and the programme finished with Nathan Elcox's performance of the famous *Andante* from Haydn's Trumpet Concerto, and an arrangement of "Every Valley" from Handel's *Messiah*. The accompanists at this recital were Mr J Bowler, the Director of Music, assisted by Miss L Griffin, both of whom should have been proud of the achievements of their students, as was the most appreciative audience who showed its pleasure by the volume of its applause. Let us hope that it is not too long before the students give a return recital.

**Graham Ireland**



**Reading Blue Coat Students at St Mary's, Reading**

## **WOODLEY FESTIVAL**

With events spread over nearly the whole of March, the Organ Class of the 38<sup>th</sup> Woodley Festival of Music and Arts took place in Reading School Chapel, on Sunday March 9<sup>th</sup>. The official sponsors of the festival, MANNINGUK, had brought their expertise into the production of an excellent eye-catching programme, containing coloured pictures of academic establishments, one of which featured a competitor in the junior organ class. Once again the adjudicator was Brian Fawcett noted for his helpful and positive comments when adjudicating in such competitions as this one. For the first time since the introduction of the two organ classes, there was an extra competitor. Louise Drewett had come over from Wokingham, and joined Alistair McIntosh, Edward Reeve, and Richard Mayers, to perform the set piece and one of their own choice. After this class Paul Manley played in the Grade VI and above class.

Excitement mounted as Mr. Fawcett collected his papers and began his adjudications. Comments were helpful, concerning registration of the pieces and sticking to the composers' intentions. The Ireland Cup was awarded to Edward Reeve, who gained the highest marks. These ranged from 79 to 86. Paul Manley was awarded the Berkshire Organists' Barkus Cup gaining 91 for his interpretation of Bach's *Fantasia in G minor* BWV 542.

It was a thrilling afternoon, enjoyed by all those present.

Alistair, was awarded the MANNINGUK Perseverance Cup for the student having made the most progress over the past year. His sister was presented with the cup at the Festival Finale Concert, as Alistair was in France at the time.

**Graham Ireland**

## **HERITAGE OPEN DAY**

**Saturday 8 September, 2007**

Each year Heritage Day comes round and this year was no different in that the Museum made arrangements for the Concert Hall to be open, and our Association was again invited to demonstrate the Father Willis, preceded by a mini lecture beforehand. This would be followed by a short demonstration of the instrument, after which visitors would be invited onto the platform to view the instrument close at hand, and ask questions, before taking the opportunity to

try the instrument themselves. Up to three quarters of an hour were allotted to this exercise, allowing a short break to follow before the next demonstration began. So much for the theory, because in practice it did not quite work out as planned.

David Pether was our member on duty, and was taken aback to find out for the first session at eleven am, there were more present than he had talked to over the complete day last year! It was fortunate that Roger Bartlett and myself were there supporting David in the wings so that the increased numbers with their questions could be coped with. This first session did produce a number of questions, and all proceeded onto the platform where they stayed until the end of the session. As they left the hall the next party arrived. Numbers were smaller, but just as enthusiastic, taking up the full session time. The afternoon sessions proved to be very similar. With two of us present David was able to take a break from time to time. One of our student members, Richard Mayers, had attended the second session, and took the opportunity to play over the lunch break to an appreciative audience.

Fortunately on this occasion, David had brought along with him copies of the Town Hall Organ Book, and we had brought recruitment brochures and examples of our Newsletter and Diary. Besides lecturing and demonstrating David sold fifteen books, so that between the three of us a fair amount of literature was disseminated. The Museum had prepared an information sheet for visitors which was given out with the recital leaflet. A number of people, unaware of the recital series, promised to come along to the next one. Membership details were requested by two people, with two families taking brochures away for student membership consideration.

In all sixty one people came along to the demonstrations, not to mention some who just popped in and out. It was a valuable day for the Museum and our Association. I found it quite curious that some of the visitors not only were unaware of the Willis, understandable enough, but did not know what was in the Museum. The Association's thanks must go to David, who surely was exhausted at the end of the day, after four hours of lecturing and playing. This latter in choice and appropriateness was much applauded.

Our Association will need to be mindful of arrangements for the 2008 day to cope with increases in numbers if its publicity is an indication of future developments. The Museum will benefit as well. Roger and I enjoyed the day, although I have to admit that I did have a very lazy evening afterwards.

**Alan Kent**



## ARS LONGA VITA BREVIS

Among the many numbers of musicians who have passed away during the past year, or whose anniversaries have been commemorated therein, two spring to my mind without any research or prompting. We think particularly of **Olivier Messaien** 1908-1992, whose legacy to the musical world in general and the organ repertoire in particular is beyond quantification. His musical appeal is not universal by any means, and if we base our ideas on traditional harmonies and rhythms, we will never come to terms with it. For the organist learning the music and finding an organ on which to play it which will do it justice presents real problems, and no doubt deter many from moving onwards from initial wishful thinking.

The untimely death of **Stephen Bicknell** 1957-2007, surprised and shocked not only those close to him, but many who followed his passion for organ building starting in collaboration with his brother, and his early career in organ building with Noel Mander. With his feet firmly on the ground he lectured at the Royal Academy of Music, and contributed to *The Cambridge Companion to the Organ*, and the latest edition of the *New Grove Dictionary of Music*. His magnum opus, *The History of the English Organ*, is widely recognised as a leading authority on the subject, and for me was written refreshingly and engagingly in a style easily comprehended by a non-technician.

Many other persons of equal note could be cited, perhaps deserving more effusive mention than the above, but it is to those who have died, known to us for their contribution to the musical life of Reading and beyond, that we now turn our attention in this article. Both **Wendy Watson** and **Sybil Stephenson** receive eloquent tributes from close friends, Don, Peter and Michael, who emphasize their dedication to music, even in the face of extreme difficulty. We commend their tributes to you all. The sudden death of **H Gordon Hands** came as a shock to those of us who came across him in his seemingly everlasting musical life. His memory will be perpetuated in the yearly reports on his lunchtime recitals at St. Mary's in our journal, and by the rather sepulchral way in which he introduced his recitalists. As his life touched so many of us, it has been decided to compile a composite tribute from friends across a wide spectrum of his interests, rather than leave it to one person alone. One of the oldest links with the Berkshire Organists' Association came to an end with the death of **Florence "Muriel" Barkus**, at the age of 96. Muriel was the wife of Albert "Bert" Barkus who was one of the only two organists at Trinity Congregational Church in Reading, and Borough Organist before Leslie Davis. Jim Wooldridge played for Muriel's cremation service, and a Service of Thanksgiving will take place at a later date to allow a widely-spread family to gather in one place in her memory.

**Graham Ireland**

## SYBIL STEPHENSON

1915 - 2008

Sybil just made it into 2008, passing away in the early hours of New Year's Day.

I first met Sybil when moving into Twyford with my wife and family in 1972. Over the ensuing years we became firm friends, supporting her through her bereavements and she, in her turn, encouraging my wife's and my organ playing. In 1988 she suggested that I might like to understudy her with a view to eventually taking over at St.Mary's, Twyford. In the event the organ there expired before she did and, with changing musical requirements for services, someone more *au fait* with modern choruses took over the music there! Enough of this, however, as here I want to convey the essence of Sybil's life and I am largely indebted to her friend, Jim Laney, for extracts from his eulogy which gave an overall impression of Sybil's contribution not only to the music of the parish church, but also to the community as a whole.

Sybil was born in Twyford on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1915 to Fred and Alice Wigmore. Both parents were musical and Sybil was put to the piano early on to such effect that, by the age of eleven, she was playing for Twyford Choral Society. However, her real ambition was to play the organ, and one of the first priorities when she started work for the Inland Revenue at age 17 was to pay for lessons. The organist in Twyford, Reginald Brind [who himself had been trained by Gustav Holst] was pleased to take her on as a pupil and she soon became his assistant both at St.Marys, and St.James's Ruscombe. When Mr.Brind moved to Barley in 1939, Sybil took on responsibility for both churches.

Mr.Laney commented that he first met Sybil, or Miss Wigmore as she was to him then, when she spotted him singing in the chorus of the Scout Gang Show in 1937. She was directing the music for the show which was being presented in the Assembly Rooms at Twyford [long since gone] He was persuaded to join the choir and he recalls that the training received by all choristers, both boys and men, was second to none. I must add that Sybil was a keen fan of *Corno Dolce* in the *Organists' Review* and she always kept a copy of the magazine on the organ at Twyford to read during the sermons.

Whilst the Church, organ and choir were probably Sybil's first love, there was very little that happened in the village that didn't benefit from her enthusiasm! She ran concert parties during the war. Her own three-piece band consisting of Bert Withers on drums [he being partially blind], Mr.Stratton on double-bass, and Sybil on honky-tonk piano, were much in demand! After the war Sybil was instrumental in re-starting the Twyford and Ruscombe Theatre Group, acting, directing, accompanying and undertaking many back-stage jobs. She was involved and active in the Theatre Group for many years, eventually becoming its President.

In 1947, Sybil married Joseph Cecil Stephenson, known as David, and they were together for 27 years until he died suddenly in 1975 at the age of 64. David sang in the choir and was Sacristan, and was by Sybil's side when she produced Nativity and Passion Plays in the 1950s. Jim, now a rotund octogenarian, recalled that he had been cast as an angel in one of Sybil's plays, and that their "wings" were very realistic, constructed of crepe paper over wire mesh. These "wings" were hung in the loft of Sybil's home when not required. Inevitably, one day a local electrician was required to climb into the loft and he wasn't warned of the angel's wings. His torch picked them up and he came out of the loft quicker than he had entered it! Sybil's comment: "better to have angels in the loft than bats in the belfry!"

In her spare time (*sic.*) Sybil organised and rehearsed The Stephenson Singers, a group of singers who gave one or two charity concerts each year; she produced concerts of light music given by her Palm Court Orchestra as well as, for eight years, directing the music for the Loddon District Scout Gang Show.

In the late 1980s Sybil formed a close friendship with widower Roland Proctor and they looked after and cared for each other until his death in 1992.

Just a few months after Roland's death, a special service was held in Twyford Church to celebrate Sybil's 60 years as organist, and she was presented with a specially engraved long-service medal from the Royal School of Church Music, together with a new music case and several bouquets. When the Church Centre was built at St.Mary's in 1996, a room was dedicated to her.

More sadness was to follow when, in 2004, Sybil's nephew Brian, her sister Margaret's son, who had been living with Sybil for some years and had become her principal carer, died suddenly whilst in Cornwall at age 61. However, Sybil being Sybil, she played at Brian's funeral at Ruscombe and hosted a gathering of friends and relatives after the service.

In Sybil's own words she had "been under five vicars" She played for over 1000 weddings, in recent years playing for the weddings of families two generations on! Playing for countless funerals and regular church services at both Twyford and Ruscombe ended with her "retirement" in 2000. However, Sybil continued to play at other churches, her last service being on Easter Sunday, 2006 at St.Peter's, Knowl Hill.



**Sybil at St Mary's Twyford in 1992**

The core of Sybil's choir continued to meet regularly on a monthly basis at her home to rehearse music for special services like the Nine Lessons and Carols at Knowl Hill until a few months prior to her death, and she was always interested in what was going on in the parishes where her erstwhile protégés were playing!

Sybil joined the Berkshire Organists' Association in 1932, no doubt encouraged to do so by Mr. Brind and, as with everything she did, she took an active rôle. Many will remember the anecdotal articles which have appeared in *The Berkshire Organist* over the years, but chiefly, I suspect, for the many times she opened her home and lovely garden to the Association for sumptuous afternoon teas, which usually accompanied "organ crawls" to churches in the area. Sybil was awarded Honorary Membership of the Association in May 2007.

Apparently, Sybil found sleep difficult, but she didn't count sheep! Instead, she recited to herself the first lines of the hymns from the English Hymnal in numerical order, viz: No.1 "Creator of the stars of night"; No.2 "High word of God who once did come"; No.3 Behold the bridegroom cometh, etc., etc. She said she never got beyond No.77 "Lord Jesus, think on me" I think the last verse is a fitting epitaph:-

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
That, when the flood is past  
I may the eternal brightness see,  
And share Thy joy at last.

May she rest in peace. Amen

**Michael Humphries**

### **CHRISTINE WENDY WATSON, FRCO**

**1940 - 2008**

Wendy Watson, a long standing member and enthusiastic supporter of the Berkshire Organists' Association, died on 23 January after a comparatively short illness. She was born in East Yorkshire, the daughter of a church organist, and at an early age, with her sister, was allowed to join her father on the organ stool, and help in pulling out the stops, a task which instilled in her a lifelong love of the instrument. She had piano and organ lessons, with a steady increase in preference for the organ, and continued to have lessons on moving to

Berkshire when taking up employment with the Tax Office, first in Windsor, then Maidenhead and Reading. When she was transferred to Maidenhead, and settled eventually in the flat in St. Luke's Road, which was to be her home for the rest of her life, she became Assistant Organist at St. Luke's Church in 1960, taking up the Organist and Choirmistress post in 1989. It was here that she became custodian of the fine 3 manual Hill organ of 1901, supervising its rebuild in 1990, and its thorough cleaning the following year after a fire in the church. While there she successfully brought many choristers to various RSCM medal awards, and had several organ pupils, some of whom have gone on to greater things. She also gained her own FRCO in 1975.

At the BOA we will remember Wendy as a regular supporter of our events, where she was always very keen and gregarious, She was also a regular performer at the Lunchtime Recitals at St. Mary Minster Church in Reading, often giving occasional recitals elsewhere. Further proof of her enthusiasm and dedication was highlighted by the fact that, as a non-car owner, she went everywhere either by public transport, her trusty bicycle, or by getting lifts from her friends. Many members will remember with fondness her love for her "organ" activities. Some of us, however, will know of the other love of her life, her horse, Dancer. Wendy had owned and loved Dancer for 28 years, going from Maidenhead to Taplow by train almost every day, then cycling to his stables to care for him. She and Dancer went all over the place together, ranging in distance from Yorkshire to the New Forest. He was also a regular visitor to St. Luke's, where he gave children rides at the church fete. It is typical of Wendy's love and thoughtfulness, that on her passing, Dancer would stay in the stables which were his home, looked after, and provided for to the standard expected by Wendy.

We did discover at her Thanksgiving Service in a packed church, that matters related to the organ, and her love for Dancer were not the only activities to occupy Wendy's time. It is common for those of us who have retired from full-time employment glibly to say, "I don't know how I managed to find time to go to work", but never was that truer than in Wendy's case, although I never heard her say it. She sang with two choirs in Maidenhead, and the Windsor and Eton Choral Society, was a medal winning ballroom dancer to a very high standard, and very active in keeping the youth club busy. This included training the members to dance, [but only in a straight line!]. Wendy fanatically admired Concorde keeping a meticulous record of its flights over Maidenhead, and she arranged a flight in it as part of a fund raising effort. She revelled in challenges, and would pursue them as far as she was able to.

At her service Wendy was variously described as quiet, gregarious, feisty and determined. This contrasting set of qualities is true of a lady who, though slight of build, had the strength of character that was large in the extreme. She could be very determined at times, but was always ready for a good chat during

which her wonderful sense of humour, always accompanied by her girlish grin, was so obviously revealed. Even when her final illness was diagnosed, and she knew that her days were numbered, to live them was yet another challenge which she met with her usual optimism, remaining cheerful and happy to the end.

With her passing the Association has lost not only a longstanding and loyal member, but also a friend whose life has been an example to us all.

**Donald Hickson**

## **A DAY IN WINDSOR AND ETON**

### **In Memory of Wendy Watson**

In May 2007, The Royal College of Organists held its first “Discovery” event as a day out in Windsor and Eton. Since I was a former resident of the area, I was interested to attend it, and found Wendy there as well. I had got to know Wendy some 7 years ago, when I was looking for a practice organ. She came to my rescue and allowed me to use the organ in St. Luke’s Maidenhead. Often she would let me in to the church, dressed in her riding gear, before going off to see her horse, ‘Dancer’.

The day in Eton began with coffee while we met the rest of the group. Ralph Allwood then gave a talk in the magnificent college chapel, about the choirs, and music-making over the years, illustrated by recordings. We also met David Goode with two of his organ scholars who displayed their skills on the organ.

This was followed by a leisurely stroll through Eton, over the river and up into the precincts of St. George’s Chapel, Windsor Castle. Here we were met by Timothy Byram-Wigfield and Roger Judd, and we were entertained to a delicious lunch in St. George’s House. It felt rather special to be able to see this secluded part of the castle. In the afternoon we listened to a lecture in Vicars Hall given by Judith Blezzard on John Merbecke and his church music. Next to Vicars Hall is the house where Merbecke lived in the 1500s, outside of which a group photograph was taken.

We sat in on the rehearsal for Choral Evensong in the nave of the chapel to be sung by the combined choirs of St. George’s Chapel and Eton College. This event takes place annually and we stayed on for the service.

After the service our group moved up into the carpeted organ loft for a demonstration of the organ by Timothy Byram-Wigfield. We sat in two rows while he enthusiastically talked and played to us, finishing with a bravura

performance of the first movement, *Allegro*, from Widor's 6<sup>th</sup> Symphony. This proved to be a thrilling finale to a very interesting day. I hope that Wendy enjoyed the day as much as I did.

PS. I should mention that Colin Goulden who was with us that day, and also appears in the picture, has sadly died since then. He lived near Staines, and was latterly a member of the organ playing team at All Souls Langham Place.

**Peter Chester**



The above group photograph features Wendy in the front row, second from the left. Colin Goulden stands in the second row immediately to the left of Wendy. Peter Chester is at the back, second from the right. The photograph was taken by Simon Williams, Head of Education and Outreach at the RCO, who kindly gave his permission to reproduce the photograph, not only to mark the first Discovery Event, but to celebrate the life of Wendy Watson.

**Ed.**



## HUBERT GORDON HANDS

1918 - 2008

Gordon's life had come to an abrupt end on the week end of Saturday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, when he was found dead in his house by a caring friend who visited him each morning. It was the day of the Annual General Meeting of the Berkshire Organists' Association, and Jim Wooldridge, a close friend and "neighbour" of Gordon, was able to relay the sad news to members, via the President, gathered at Wesley Methodist Church, for the association's formal proceedings. The Funeral Service, a Service of Thanksgiving for his life, took place in the Minster Church of St. Mary the Virgin in Reading, conducted by the Reverend Canon Brian Shenton, assisted by the Reverend Matthew Stevens, who led the prayers, on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, at 2.30pm. It was fitting that Gordon's service should take place in St. Mary's, not only because of his long association

with the church, but because the life of his dear wife Kay had been celebrated there in January 2002.



**Gordon Hands**

Some seventy or more mourners gathered in Gordon's beloved Minster to listen to the chosen music played by Trevor Stroud and Graham Ireland, *Pie Jesu* from Fauré's Requiem, sung by Alice Hands, a granddaughter, and the tribute and address given by Canon Shenton. In his address the canon outlined Gordon's life, his early days at Reading School, his employment by the Midland Bank until his retirement, his tenure of a number of organist's posts, his abiding love of model railways, and finally his passion for Wagner, shared with his wife.



As his long life in Reading touched that of many members it was appropriate that they were given the opportunity to offer their own personal tribute to Gordon to complement those uttered by Canon Brian Shenton.

**Leslie F Davis** writes:

‘In the more halcyon days of the 20th century, Gordon and Kay were close lifelong friends of Geoffrey Tristram, a fine local organist. They were both educated at Reading School, where Gordon became particularly informed on the works of Gilbert and Sullivan, no doubt prompted by his mentors Frank Terry and Charles Davis. Upon leaving school, Gordon went for a banking career, whilst Geoffrey joined a local estate agent, later making music and the organ a full time job. He eventually became Director of Music at Christchurch Priory, his house was always open to friends, and his hospitality knew no bounds.

Gordon later took over from me, organising the lunchtime recitals at the Minster, with all collections contributing towards the eventual restoration of the Father Willis where Geoffrey had been a pupil and assistant to Dr Daughtry. Having become acquainted with the family, I visited their home on a regular basis to take tea with Gordon and Kay, and accompany them on their walks with Emma, the dog.

After Kay’s death, which devastated him my visits became less frequent, though we did telephone each other in between times. His health following a bypass operation improved, but he did complain of angina, which may have proved fatal.

He leaves his family and wide circle of friends profoundly saddened by the passing of a dear friend, an organist of the old school.’

*We are grateful to **David Corbett** not only for passing Leslie’s tribute to Gordon to us, but also of David’s memories of Gordon’s ascents in to the upper reaches of the Willis organ to stop unwanted sounds, however inconvenient.*

**Gordon Spriggs** writes:

‘It gives me great satisfaction to think about my long-standing friendship with Gordon Hands, who was a member for many years of the Berkshire Organists’ Association, and had recently devoted himself to the upkeep of the Willis organ of St. Mary’s Minster, where tremendous problems had gradually developed since Ewart Masser retired as organist.

Long ago my wife and I met him with his wife and son in a Reading restaurant, and, a generation later, we visited them in their new home in Froxfield Avenue, where he continued to live alone after Kay’s death, as I have also done for the last three or four years.

When he telephoned me, it was announced as another call from “t’other Gordon”, and we discussed [among organ topics] our mutual abdominal injections by the pleasant nurses at Dr. Modi’s clinic to restrain our benign prostate cancer.

He concentrated on the maintenance of the St. Mary’s organ, which had become hopelessly unreliable, and would cost an enormous sum to rebuild. He would open the securely-locked chancel for me to use the console, and also to re-inspect my professional engraving jobs up there, including my hand-cut bronze memorial plate to the memory of the previous Vicar/Bishop under cover of the High Altar floor cloth.

In one of our recent conversations I feel that I was able to convince him more deeply of the need of a real spiritual sincerity in the Gospel faith, and I now rejoice to think of his comfort in the loving mercy of our wonderful Heavenly Father’.

**Philip Bowcock** writes:

‘In recent years Gordon called on me regularly as I used to typeset his handbill for the recitals which he organised in St. Mary’s. These were enjoyable visits, and he was always full of interest, much to do with organs and organists in Reading [and he never failed to criticise the restoration of the Town Hall organ!] His efforts in setting up and arranging those recitals after the Town Hall organ was closed were greatly appreciated, and we can only hope that this side of his work will be continued by someone. [Jim Wooldridge has accepted the invitation to continue the series[[Ed.]].

Gordon also had a great interest in railways, particularly steam locomotives, and was Treasurer of the Reading Society of Model Engineers. While this was a minor interest of mine which I have never had the time to pursue, it was fascinating to discuss features of trains long ago.

Gordon was also one of a minority of people of his generation who tried to keep a foot in the door of modern technology by learning to use a computer and email, and he had recently mastered the art of producing his recital handbills himself’.

**Peter Marr** writes:

‘Whilst a pupil at Reading School, Gordon used to accompany the Boarders’ service on Sunday morning in the School Chapel. During one period of the school’s chapel life the Chaplain had no ability in pitching the note given by the organist for the responses. This naturally irritated Gordon no end. One Sunday he was so exasperated that, before “O Lord, open thou our lips”, or whatever, he played a glissando up most of the compass, and called out, “Take your pick”.

Whether he was allowed to continue playing for the weekly service, I don’t know!’

**Harold Eadie** comments on Gordon's life-long interest in model railways. Using his banking skills he managed the Reading Model Railway Club's funds, and kept them in a healthy state.

**Dennis Tutty** writes:

I only knew Gordon through his work for BOA, and of course the recitals at St. Mary's, and was always treated by him with the utmost courtesy and kindness. He held strong views and was not backward in expressing them quite forcefully.

He will be sorely missed, not least at St. Mary's.

### **A HIDDEN *PASTORALE*?**

I suspect that many organists, having learnt some or all of the Eight Short Preludes and Fugues [BWV 553-560, but in all probability not by Bach], put them to one side and do not make much use of them as voluntaries. A *molto vivace* performance of No.4 in F, BWV 556, that I heard recently suggested that we were not hearing what was intended, and indeed, even those at a more reasonable tempo likewise.

The only surviving complete manuscript of these pieces describes them as *Für die Orgel*, but this was a phrase subsequently added to the manuscript. The possible significance of that will become clearer below. J.C Kittel, a pupil of Bach, may have owned the manuscript, but there is no evidence that he composed these pieces. Half a century ago, Walter Emery somewhat understated the position regarding their standard of counterpoint and overall musicianship:

“The Eight Short Preludes and Fugues have not been proved spurious, and it is unlikely that they ever will be, but their authenticity is highly questionable, and they should never be quoted as evidence of Bach's habits in any discussion of his style”.<sup>1</sup>

A possible date might be about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the composer possibly one of the south-German circle of J.C.F.Fischer. But both are

---

<sup>1</sup> *Notes on Bach's Organ Work Book 1 Eight Short Preludes and Fugues* [1952], p.42.

unknowns. The set, in a progression of keys, is in a variety of styles. For instance, there is the Italian concerto style of No. 1, Prelude No. 3 a durezza<sup>2</sup>, No. 7 is a toccata, and the Prelude in F has characteristics of a more *galant* style. Bearing in mind this variety, where does No.4 really fit in? Is it such an elementary “showing-off” piece as so often it is played?

In this piece there are two points that I should like to make. The first is to do with musical notation and performance. The second is with instrumental performing practice. The pairs of semiquavers in bars 12-13, 18, 22, 27-28, 33, 41-42, and in the *da capo* of the first section, if played as written as duplets, do not ring musically true. And so, it would follow that bars 1-4 and their repeat, plus the bars already mentioned, should be played as *notes inégales*, pairs of equal value, but to be played unequally. In other words, the semiquavers should be played long- short and therefore conform to the predominating rhythm, triplets. Thus the whole Prelude goes smoothly into[effectively] 9/16 time.

There is, of course, an argument for playing this movement quickly, not least because of the frequency in the baroque period for triple time, especially 3/8, to be indicative of a quick rather than a slow tempo. My hunch however, is that this movement should be played slowly and that it is in the style of a *Pastorale*.

The style of 18<sup>th</sup> century *Pastorales* generally varies considerably. What they usually have in common is that they were written for use at Christmas, often for a Christmas Eve service. The origin of the genre is Catholic Italy [Frescobaldi wrote at least two, and some will know the later example by Domenico Zipoli], and they subsequently became popular in South Germany. Their particular use was at Christmas Eve, providing a musical picture for the Christmas story and the crib. It might be argued that that was the limit of their church use. Many were written with minimal pedal parts. The F major Prelude that is discussed here has a pedal part that duplicates the left-hand part. Many have long pedal notes [which this Prelude does not] and considerable use of 3rds and 6ths[which it does have]. The tradition of the organ *Pastorale* and its relationship with Bach’s composition entitled *Pastorella* [BWV 590] has been helpfully outlined by G.B Stauffer.<sup>3</sup>

The next point we might consider is the matter of key and key characteristics, a central feature of music written for and played on keyboard instruments tuned in irregular/unequal tuning systems. *Pastorales* were written

---

<sup>2</sup> The word means harshness and its original use was for harsh effects by means of chromaticism and suspensions. Subsequently it has been used more generally to describe organ works that are primarily in a chordal style. See note 9 below for further thoughts regarding the E minor Prelude.

<sup>3</sup> George B. Stauffer, “Bach’s Pastorale in F: a closer look at the maligned Work”. *The Organ Yearbook* Vol. XIV [1983] pp. 44-60.

in ‘pure’ keys such as C and F to reflect the sentiments associated with nature.<sup>4</sup> It is somewhat surprising that the important work in this area by Rita Steblin<sup>5</sup> has not brought to light much specific reference to F major as a “pastoral” key in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> But it clearly was, and its characteristics are often described as calm and peaceful.

The Bach *Pastorella* consists of four movements, the first [conforming to many *Pastorales* with long held pedal notes] in F but ending in A minor. This pattern of modulation is noted in a specific remark in Thomas Mace’s *Musick’s Monument*<sup>7</sup> quoted by Peter Williams in *The Organ Music of J.S.Bach*<sup>8</sup> regarding the Bach *Pastorella*. He points out that the modulation to the mediant, A minor, is an old idea associated with “movements of gentle tempo”. The multi-movement Bach *Pastorella*, with the first movement ending in A minor, is followed immediately by movement II. Does this suggest another convention? Is the *da capo* in the F major Prelude there for the the Prelude, however short, to stand alone but, should the fugue follow, is the *da capo* omitted?

As regards the related matter of temperament, that is, tuning systems, it seems that, of those irregular temperaments reasonably available today, mainly on electronic instruments, Werckmeister III [one of the systems devised by Andreas Werckmeister, 1645-1706] might be suitable for the Eight Short Preludes and Fugues.<sup>9</sup>

I do not in any way suggest that any one of the above points makes a conclusive argument for my suggestion for a slow tempo for the F major Prelude. It is notoriously easy as well, to make assumptions about *notes*

---

<sup>4</sup> In passing, we can note that, although it is probably of no significance, the Toccata from Bach’s *Toccata and Fugue in F* [BWV 540], his only known Prelude in F, is in 3/8 time and its first two sections have long tonic and dominant pedals. Was there a Christmas association?

<sup>5</sup> *A History of Key Characteristics in the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* [New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2003].

<sup>6</sup> She does note [see pp. 55 and 258] that Kirnberger [1769] uses it for a hunting piece.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Mace, *Musick’s Monument* [1603, R/1966], p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> *The Organ Music of J.S.Bach*, 2003 edition, p. 198.

<sup>9</sup> See the tables in C. Kent, “Temperament and Pitch” in *The Cambridge Guide to the Organ* [1998] for the reader to speculate the optimum temperament, by key, for the Eight Short Preludes and Fugues, especially including No. 3, the Prelude and Fugue in E minor. As hinted above in note 2, maybe there was a reason for the less-than-harmonious key of E minor to be chosen for this style in this set of Preludes and Fugues. In irregular temperaments, key would certainly influence registration. The newcomer to the subject generally might like to read Ross W. Duffin, *How Equal Temperament Ruined Harmony* [W.W. Norton, 2007].

*inégaies*. Together they seem to point in the direction I have indicated.

It was as long ago as 1950 that Susi Jeans argued strongly that, for practical reasons, the use of the pedal clavichord, with one or two manuals, was a common practice instrument for organists.<sup>10</sup> In 1957 Walter Emery partially discounted her arguments<sup>11</sup> and, at least by implication, Peter Williams seems to do so too.<sup>12</sup> However there is little doubt that, *inter alia*, the cost of organ blowers/pumpers [people, not Watkins & Watson!] and access to organs plus evidence about the instruments themselves, marks up a sensible argument regarding the then frequently- encountered pedal clavichords.

That many of the chorale variations had a domestic setting [but not necessarily exclusively] seems likely. J.G.Walther's set on *Jesu, meine Freude*, quoted in the last issue of *The Berkshire Organist*, is a very likely contender. Other works, such as the manuals-only Prelude in D minor BWV 539 suggest clavichord or harpsichord at least as much as organ. The style *brisé* [arpeggio] triplets in the F major Prelude hardly suggest organ music or, being slurred, should they be played legato, holding the first two down until the end of the third?<sup>13</sup> And the fact that although the first *printed* edition of Bach's Canonic Variations on *Vom Himmel hoch* says that they are for the organ, but the autograph manuscript significantly does not, does not disqualify those either. The demands of time to learn to play such works and indeed the Six Trio Sonatas<sup>14</sup> must surely demand a domestic setting in part, on purely practical grounds.

Much music of the eighteenth century has to be seen in the context of the performer and his circumstances. Does this all mean that the Eight Short Preludes and Fugues, this student music, might have a background that I have suggested? They may well do, and the F major Prelude, *à Pastorella*, also a distinct possibility.

**Peter Marr**

---

<sup>10</sup> See Susi Jeans, 'The Pedal Clavichord and other Practice Instruments of Organists' in *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association* [1950-51], pp.1-15.

<sup>11</sup> See his *Notes on Bach's Organ Works, Books IV-V* [1957], pp. 196-201.

<sup>12</sup> The views of these writers are usefully summarised in Joel Speerstra, *Bach and the Pedal Clavichord* [2004], pp. 43-46. The book also contains a relevant analysis of the Bach Passacaglia [BWV 582].

<sup>13</sup> This will be more suitable if they are played on the clavichord. Thurston Dart makes the point regarding slurred triplets in *The Interpretation of Music* [4/1960], p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> See Susi Jeans, 'J. S. Bach and the Pedal Clavichord' in *Musical Opinion*, October 1955, p. 39, although she may overstate her case regarding the Trio Sonatas.

## MY VISIT TO FOSTER-WAITE ORGAN BUILDERS

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2008, I had the pleasure of visiting Foster-Waite Organ Builders at their Newbury workshop.

Foster-Waite is situated in a charming Methodist chapel in a quiet, tranquil area of Newbury. The front of their workshop is decorated with a small section of casework, showing an “array” of pipes.

After an hour long journey, I was made welcome by Eileen Foster-Waite and introduced to the other craftsmen. They have a small but very skilled team of experienced workers, who show continued dedication to organ building. I was also introduced to their dog and the neighbouring Shetland ponies.

I was given a concise and informative tour of the workshop. Firstly I was taken upstairs to the voicing room, where tuning caps were being made for a rank of 8’ string pipes. Tony Foster-Waite demonstrated the “cap-making machine” before showing me how metal flue pipes are tuned and voiced. I was amazed how he could make a single pipe speak like any flue stop you could name. I was then “whisked off” through a corridor where all the pipes of a small church organ were being stored before it was moved to a country estate elsewhere. Next, I was taken into a room where the organ action, windchests, pallet boxes, console parts and pedalboards were being stored and repaired. Tony very kindly answered my numerous questions and explained in great detail the some of the areas of organ building that were new to me, including the mechanics behind couplers.

Eileen then invited us down for some tea and we shared some biscuits that I had brought. I was told some fascinating tales of organs they have tuned and repaired. They regulate hundreds of organs and only one of them is in perfect condition, is regularly played, is kept at an appropriate temperature and is easily accessible! I showed them an organ pipe that I had recently made with my grandfather and they were quite encouraging about it. Another time, I should try to give it a “belly”!

I was finally taken to the wood room, where parts are cut, planed and glued. Foster-Waite do not make their own organ pipes but, when they are bought, they make no sound and they have to be carefully voiced. Each pipe is given a great deal of expert care and attention.

Sadly, my visit had to come to an end but, before I left, Tony gave me some leather to make a stopper for my homemade pipe (which is a middle C of a wood diapason rank) and a reed shallot. Superb souvenirs indeed! Eileen said that she would notify me of her next visit, with Paul Bowers, to tune the organ at Holy Trinity, Henley, where I play, in case I am able to meet up with them. My visit was really worthwhile and I thanked them very much for all of the time they had given me.

**Edward Reeve, Organ Student (12)**

## ORGAN ACADEMY, ALKMAAR

22 – 30 June 2007

The organ academy at Alkmaar runs every two years in parallel with its international organ competition. While the competition is limited to expert players, aged 35 or under, the academy is open to organists of all ages and abilities. It is also open to a few non-playing observers. Participants apply in advance and are asked to choose the pieces they wish to prepare for teaching from a repertoire list. This is limited to the theme of the academy, but contains a wide range of difficulty. In 2007, naturally, the repertoire concentrated on Buxtehude, but there were also early works by Bach, some works by Frescobaldi and Sweelinck. Participants could select from a formidable range of style and form, as well as technical difficulty.

The basic format was six days of master classes in three-hour sessions. Each morning there were sessions in the main church at Alkmaar [Grote St.Laurenskerk, or The Great Church of St. Lawrence]. In the afternoons the thirty participants were divided into three groups of ten, and worked at three other organs in rotation. This year these were the Kapelkerk in Alkmaar [Müller Organ 1762], the Grote Kerk in Beverwijk [Müller organ 1765] and the modern Coulsterkerk in Heiloo [Pels & van Leeuwen organ - a brand new instrument built on classical lines]. Practising was possible at certain times on these and also on two smaller historic Alkmaar organs, another Müller organ [1755] in the Lutherse Kerk, and the 1792 Strumphler organ in the Remonstrantse Kerk.

Three main teachers from the academy were *Pieter van Dijk* and *Frank van Wijk* [respectively main and deputy organists of the Grote Kerk], and *Jan Raas* a freelance performer, composer and retired professor from the Utrecht Conservatory. Each member of the competition jury also gave both a recital and a master class. This year these were, *Pieter van Dijk*, *Andrea Marcon* [Treviso, Italy], *Naomi Matsui* [Tokyo], *Michel Bouvard* [Toulouse] and *Wolfgang Serer* [Hamburg].

There was in addition a Buxtehude study weekend immediately before the workshops. This included a tour of four historic Alkmaar organs - four Buxtehude pieces played on each, an opening concert including cantatas and organ works, a lecture recital by *Peter Dirksen* on the Stylus Phantasticus, a lecture by the renowned organ expert *Cor Edskes* on Buxtehude's organs, a chamber music concert and a closing concert featuring duos for baroque violin and organ. The competition comprised three rounds, the last two each making up an evening concert. In addition there was also an eclectic concert - Heavy Metal - involving Alkmaar schoolchildren and the town orchestra, all pulled together by Jan Raas improvising on the great organ. On the final evening eight academy students gave a public recital.





**Van Hagerbeer - Schnitger Organ in Grote St Laurenskerk, Alkmaar**



So it was action-packed without a break for nine stunning days in a variety of locations and formats! The central and overwhelming impression, however, was of music making on the amazing organs of the Grotekerk itself, namely the Van Covelens choir organ of 1511, one of the oldest playable organs in the world, and the monumental Van Hagerbeer-Schnitger west end organ, originally made world famous by the Bach recordings of Helmut Walcha from 1956-62. Each of these instruments has been superbly restored in the last ten years.



**Müller Organ in Kapelkerk, Alkmaar**

amongst the students. The bottom line was ‘does it work, is it musical, and, can I make it easier for you?’ Thus the central and repeated message was ‘make music as well as you can in your own way, rather than be perfect and careful’. History and tradition have so much to teach us, but are to be respected and understood rather than be slavishly copied.

My main suggestion would be to improve time management within the classes. This was informal almost to complete absence, and tended to favour more self-confident or sometimes more pushy people. I know a number of other students who agreed with me on this point. Of course the rotation of teachers

For the academy students the teaching was generally excellent. Teachers were all stimulating, encouraging and endlessly inventive and original. Naturally they occasionally disagreed on finer points of interpretation which added to the interest. They had to manage a wide range of ability from star students who could well have entered the competition, through a variety of gifted amateurs and regular organists down to humble beginners, like your reporter, who has been learning for just over one year. They managed to make everyone’s contribution feel appreciated and of interest. They were not dogmatic, but rather accepting of a wide range of styles of playing

meant that each was unaware of how much experience each student was getting. Two tips might be [a] don't spend too long on the first one or two players, and [b] each group keep a tally table of who has played what and where. Naturally the groups evolved as groups do. My group became very enabling and supportive. There was little swapping between groups.

The organs themselves taught us much about the music and about ourselves and our approach to playing. Each instrument had its own personality, and it was rather interesting how 'smooth and easy' the modern one at Heiloo was, despite its very traditional specification and lack of registration aids. I personally did not get to play the Van Covelens organ, but here one would be confronted with an unusual console and short bottom octave as well. Most of all the great west end Van Hagerbeer-Schnitger organ imposed its personality on us. An all-mechanical instrument of such a size as this one requires a degree of physical strength and prowess in the player in addition to technical skill. These organs were constantly in use from either master-classes, competition preparation, or practising. Fortunately a rota of practice sessions was eventually organised so we were able to put our teaching into practice immediately. This generally worked well, though there were some hiccups over access to the Remonstrantse Kerk and the Lutherse Kerk. A vital improvement to the week as a whole had been established, and really must be integrated from the start next time.

As we became acquainted our social life grew. Lunch breaks allowed informal groupings in bars and cafes, and groups travelled together by train to the afternoon workshops out of Alkmaar. After each evening concert there was a large bar opportunity where we could often meet judges and performers. On this occasion this took place indoors as the weather was notably cold and wet. In other years outdoor and waterborne parties have featured.

I thoroughly enjoyed the week from start to finish. It was a most wonderful Buxtehude experience on some highly suitable organs which glorified the music. The introductory Buxtehude weekend was a great success, and the evening recitals *all* set a very high standard. By general approbation the peaks were the Buxtehude and Bach performance on the great organ by Michel Bouvard and Wolfgang Zerer.

Finally I speak for all academy participants in praising the work of the organising committee, and in particular, the co-ordinator Chris Bragg, who was completely unflappable, and seemed always available. He was completely unfazed when I was locked out of my unstaffed hotel after midnight one evening! Congratulations Chris!

Look out for the next academy in June 2009. It's best to plan about 6-9 months in advance. The website is:

<http://www.schnitger.nl/index.php?id=117&L=1>

My final hope is that *arrangements for accommodation* will be more helpful. Although the website promised special package arrangements, this proved to be only for the Buxtehude weekend, and not for the nine days of the academy. I strongly recommend negotiation of preferential rates for this long stay [and some participants could perhaps share hotel rooms to save costs]. All of the B&B accommodation was some distance from the centre of town.

**George Freeman**



**Pels & van Leeuwen Organ in Coulsterkerk, Heiloo**



## **HARRY'S NCO WEEK**

Hi, my name is Harry Davidson, I'm 13, and I started playing the organ about a year and a half ago. My main instrument is the bassoon, on which I have just achieved a Grade VIII Distinction at Christmas. During the Easter holiday, after auditioning in the previous summer, I became a member of the National Children's Main Orchestra, my last year with the NCO before I am too old! It was a great experience, a good chance to meet new people, and an amazing opportunity to play in a high standard orchestra with people of my own age in front of a live audience. Our final concert at the end of the week's course took place in Birmingham Town Hall. We played a selection of music consisting of: Overture in D minor by Elgar, Suite from Henry V by Sir William Walton, The Fall of the Leaf by Finzi, Tam O'Shanter by Malcom Arnold [great fun], and finally the 42 minute mammoth, Job-A Masque for Dancing by Vaughan Williams.

I really recommend auditioning if you are able to play an orchestral instrument and are under 14, as it is an unmissable opportunity! The second part of the course is in the summer at Ackworth, before performing in the Birmingham Symphony Hall, and, then off to Ischia in Italy. While we are there we will get the chance to visit Rome, Pompeii, and the house of Sir William himself. At the moment, however, I am in the process of fundraising for the trip.



**Harry Davidson**

## CD REVIEW

I started my review last year with Dame Gillian Weir's recording at Symphony Hall in Birmingham. Now the **Birmingham Town Hall** organ has at last been restored and **Thomas Trotter**, the City Organist has released a recording made in July 2007 in association with the Town Hall management. The disc "Restored to Glory" [Regent RECGCD254] has 75 minutes of listening time and includes Handel's 16<sup>th</sup> Organ Concerto; Thalben-Ball [City organist 1949-1983] Paganini Variations and Elegy; Best's Fantasia based on Men of Harlech, Ireland, followed by Lemare and transcriptions of works by Bizet and Wagner. There are some well-known items on this disc and an excellent demonstration of this famous instrument built in 1834 by William Hill. The specification has altered with fashions and technical developments in 1849, 1889, Willis III in 1932, Mander in 1983 and now in 2007. A good disc!

One organ venue it is very unlikely many of us will visit, let alone have the opportunity to play in, is **Buckingham Palace**. The 1818 Lincoln organ in the Ballroom was originally built for the Royal Pavilion in Brighton, Gray & Davison relocated it to London in 1855. William Drake restored the organ in 2002 and as far as I am aware only one invited audience concert has taken place. So the appearance of a CD is most welcome! **Joseph Nolan** is the artist and Signum [SIGCD114] is the recording company. I do like the programme chosen – starting with BWV582, the Passacaglia nicely leads to Vaughan Williams Rhosymedre. Mendelssohn's Sonata No. 3 follows then the well-known Dubois Toccata. The final piece is Rawsthorne's Dance Suite, which we have heard Jonathan Holl playing, long out of print and totally unobtainable. A very good disc and highly recommended!

In September 2006, a select few members turned out to visit the London University buildings at **Royal Holloway College, Egham**. Those who did not make it missed a real treat. Now at last we have a recording of this excellent Harrison organ, made a year after our visit, by the College Organist, **Rupert Gough**, who made us so welcome. The Harrison is 30-years old in 2008, and this is the reason for the recording. Much of the Pedal still includes ranks from the earlier 1886 Walker. Rupert has put together a programme of 20<sup>th</sup> Century French music, much of which is totally new to me. Rupert opens with Litanies by Alain, then follows two works new to me – "Dix Noels de Provence" by Guy Morancon, and "Quatre pieces sur des cantiques bretons" by Jean-Dominique Pasquet. Both composers are alive and so is the music – a real change to have new music that is great to listen to. The recording ends with Suite Breve by Langlais. The disc is available from Regent as RECGCD272.

Staying in educational circles, Priory [PRCD896] during 2007 released a disc "Organ Music from **Stowe School**" played by **Jonathan Kingston**, the

Chapel Organist and Assistant Director of Music at the school. The Rushworth & Dreaper chapel organ started life in 1928 and was rebuilt and enlarged in 1961 by Davis of Northampton and again by Cousans of Leicester in 2003, however the character is still R&D. There are 18 well-known pieces on the disc with a listening time of 71.30 minutes, ranging from Buxtehude to Wallond. The leaflet with this CD unusually does not describe the pieces, however the organ information is well-illustrated and comprehensive. I like the disc, and it brings back memories of a visit quite a few years ago.

**Jane Parker-Smith** is well-known to many of us. She now has her own label for CD's "AVIE" Her recently released volume 2 of "Romantic and Virtuoso" is played on the Seifert organ of **St Marien Basilika Kevelaer** and features works by Weitz, Edmundson, Ireland, Kromolicki, Raveanello, Ropartz and Vierne – all 20thC music. The Joseph Kromolicki Theme & Variations Op.34 is totally new to me, and Jane's playing is always a treat to listen to. A very comprehensive booklet comes with this disc. The AVIE reference for this disc is 2144.

One American label that consistently produces high quality recordings, with just a few releases a year is "JAV" and these are available directly from them via the internet, or from Allegro Music in Birmingham [see Organists' Review]. 2007 release [JAV169] is now one of the more common Super Audio CD, but my system only accepts the standard CD sound. The artist on JAV169 is **Ken Cowan** with the 4<sup>th</sup> disc in the series of "Art of the Symphonic Organist". Here he plays the 155-stop instrument at the **1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Church at Jackson in Mississippi**. This organ started life in 1939 as E M Skinner's Op.535 with 72 ranks. In 1972 Moller rebuilt it with 231 ranks, so the latest rebuild is a reduction in size, with 19 ranks retained from the 1939 original. Some of the ranks are copied from St. Mary Redcliffe. As always there is a very detailed booklet to accompany the disc. On this disc Ken plays music by Wagner, Saint-Saens, Karg-Elert, Rubinstein, Moszkowski, Poulenc, Bovet and finishes with the Dupre Allegro deciso from Op.57. I can highly recommend this disc.

Finally, returning to this side of the pond, there is a new disc called "Dignity & Impudence" recorded at **St. Mary Redcliffe** and the purpose of the disc is to help fund the restoration of this instrument. The consultant for the project is Dr. William McVicker. The organist is **William Saunders** who serves at Ipswich School. The programme comprises Lynnwood Farnam Toccata, Six pieces by Christopher Steel [Op.33], Alfred Hollins Maytime Gavotte & Intermezzo in D flat; Whitlock's four transcriptions for organ and ends with Basil Harwood's Sonata No.1 – all music ideal for this instrument. Regent recordings REGCD270 is the reference, and again, a great disc.

**Mark Jameson**

# CROSSWORD SOLUTION

	S	A	L	O	M	E			F	L	O	T	O	W	
	U		U		I				A		O		A		
F	L	A	M	E	N	C	O			M	O	U	N	T	S
	L		E		I		T		B		C		E		
G	I	A	N			M	A	T	T	E	R	H	O	R	N
	V				U		O		R		L			S	
C	A	R	L	O	M	E	N	O	T	T	I				
	N		A				I				N		A		
			R	E	O	C	C	U	R	R	E	N	C	E	
	M		G		C		O		H					C	
G	O	T	H	I	C	A	L	L	Y			A	M	E	N
	Z		E		U		A		T		U		N		
D	A	C	T	Y	L			I	N	H	A	B	I	T	S
	R		T		T				M		E		E		
	T	A	O	I	S	M			A	S	T	R	I	D	



## OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

### PATRON

Gillian Weir DBE

### HONORARY FELLOWS

Dr Francis Jackson

Dr William McVicker

### PRESIDENTS

1921 - 23	<i>Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL</i>
1924 - 26	<i>A C P Embling MusD FRCO</i>
1927 - 28	<i>Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL</i>
1929 - 30	<i>F G Goodenough FRCO</i>
1931 - 34	<i>B Probert-Jones MusB FRCO</i>
1935 - 37	<i>Albert Barkus FRCO</i>
1938 - 42	<i>A Yould FRCO ARCM LRAM</i>
1943 - 45	<i>Archibald H Lusty ARCO HonFTCL</i>
1946	<i>Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL</i>
1947 - 48	<i>W Hugh Rowe ARCO</i>
1949 - 50	<i>Albert E Rivers</i>
1951 - 52	<i>A Warren FRCO</i>
1953 - 55	<i>Prof H C Barnard MA DLitt</i>
1956 - 57	<i>F Gordon Spriggs</i>
1958 - 60	<i>Leslie Pratt FTCL</i>
1961 - 63	<i>Roy N Nash</i>
1964 - 65	<i>Miss E G Goodship ATCL</i>
1966 - 68	<i>H D Anthony MA BSc PhD FRAS</i>
1969 - 71	<i>Leslie F B Davis</i>
1972 - 74	<i>R P J Pepworth</i>
1975 - 76	<i>J C Lawes</i>
1977 - 78	<i>Donovan L Jones</i>
1979 - 80	<i>Mrs Evelyn A Fisher</i>
1981 - 82	<i>Harold H Hartley MA BSc FRAS MBCS</i>
1983 - 84	<i>Peter B Marr PhD GTCL FRSA ARCO</i>
1985 - 86	<i>Derek M Guy AFCM</i>
1987 - 88	<i>Christopher Hood BA</i>
1989	<i>Christopher J Kent MusB MMus PhD FRCO ARMCM</i>
1990 - 91	<i>David Duvall MA FCA</i>
1992 - 93	<i>Philip Bowcock BSc MRICS</i>

1994 - 95	Graham Ireland BA BMus MMus FRCO
1996 - 97	Donald Hickson MCMI
1998 - 99	Christine Wells BMus FRCO LRAM
2000 - 01	Graham Ireland BA BMus MMus FRCO
2002 - 03	Jim Wooldridge FSCA
2004 - 06	Jonathan Holl ARCO LRAM ARCM
2007 -	Christopher Cipkin BA MA ARCO

## SECRETARIES

<i>1921 – 1926</i>	<i>S T Chamberlain</i>
<i>1927 – 1931</i>	<i>Sidney Collins</i>
<i>1932 – 1976</i>	<i>Archibald Lusty</i>
<i>1977 – 1983</i>	<i>Ron Pepworth</i>
1984 – 1986	Christopher Hood
1987 – 1991	Norman Hutt
1992 – 1993	Graham Ireland
1994 – 1996	Donald Hickson
1997 – 1998	Christine Wells
1999 – 2000	Graham Ireland
2000 – 2001	Jim Wooldridge
2002 – 2007	Alan Kent
2008 –	Donald Hickson

## HONORARY TREASURERS

<i>c1930 – c1954</i>	<i>A.L Warman</i>
<i>c1954 – 1958</i>	<i>Leslie Pratt</i>
<i>1959 – 1960</i>	<i>Mrs S Stephenson</i>
<i>1961 – 1976</i>	<i>Leslie Pratt</i>
1977 – 1979	J G Davies
1980 – 1982	Peter Marr
1983 – 1989	David Duvall
1990 –	Mark Jameson

All dates given above are the year of election.

## EDITORS OF THE BERKSHIRE ORGANIST

*1948 – 1973*

*Albert Rivers*

1974 – 1977

Leslie Davis

1978 – 1983

Gordon Spriggs

1984 – 1997

Gordon Spriggs and Philip Bowcock

1998 – 2004

Philip Bowcock

2005 –

Graham Ireland

