



Kent County Organists' Association

February 2020 Journal



Kent County Organists' Association

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THE KENT COUNTY ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION welcomes new members with an interest in the organ and its music. Also those who enjoy visiting churches with appreciation of architecture and heritage. Membership of the Association is not based on the ability to play; we welcome equally those who enjoy listening, as well as those who enjoy playing.

President's Notes

By Michael Cooke

FIRST OF ALL please allow me to wish you all a happy and prosperous 2020. We have, to my mind, some interesting visits lined up, the recent January visit to Sevenoaks and Otford proved particularly so.

Looking ahead, we have a visit to Ramsgate in February, where our first venue is St Ethelbert R.C. Church with its 1903 *Griffen & Stroud* organ, maintained since 2009 by *F.H.Browne*. Then we go to Holy Trinity Church where the organ was built in 1866 by *J W Walker*. It has been considerably altered since 1866 and now has a 3-manual detached console at the east end, the organ being at the west end, between which is the new church room, so the sound has to speak over the top of this (which it does very well) in order to reach the church. This will be followed by tea (taken between the console and the organ), and evensong.

In March we will visit the 1877 *Willis* organ at All Saints Church, Hastings, which replaced an 1846 *Holdich* instrument which went to Dallington in Sussex. The *Willis* was rebuilt in 1915 by *Dalladay of Hastings*. After this we visit a very unusual venue – an organ in a Guest-House is surprising enough, but when it is a Baroque Organ, well – a MUST for us. The house was divided into three flats but has been lovingly restored to Victorian splendour by Paul Oxborrow and Stephen Groves, right down to the handles of the teaspoons! A fascinating visit where we get to play the organ, have a tour of the house and a delightful Victorian after-

noon tea. I didn't know that there were any Spanish organs in this country – or any Baroque ones, come to that, but I commend all of these visits to you.

Whenever I 'invent' something, e.g. a system, somebody else has already come up with it, so please forgive me if this is the case here. A few years ago I gave a lunchtime recital on the organ of Maidstone Parish Church, which, as you may know, has a sequencer (a very useful device). The method I invented is, to me, simple. It will allow a player to prepare any piece, to be played on any organ which has a sequencer.

First, work out where stop changes are required; then draw a circle in black ink and enclose it with a + sign for a forward step, or a – sign for a backward step. At the end of the piece, place another + sign. This will step forward to the first combination for the next piece. At the start of each piece draw two squares, in black ink. Fill the left hand one with the channel number, e.g. 74, and the right hand one with the General Piston number on that level e.g. 6. Use a soft pencil for this as it will not suit another organ and must be rewritten to suit that instrument's system. Before playing the first piece, make sure that the numbers in the squares and the numbers on the console display agree and adjust if necessary. When you press the + piston after the end of the first piece, the number to which the stepper advances should agree with the numbers in the squares on your second piece, and so on. At the end of the day, every piece in your repertoire should have two blank squares above the first staff, and a series of 'rifle-sights' where the stop changes are to come. It may sound complicated, but is infinitely easier to do than to explain. I hope it works for you!

Review of recent Meetings

The President's Dinner

MEETING AT KINGSNORTH, just south of Ashford, Kent, a suitable venue had been organised at The Queen's Head public house for our President's Dinner. Adding to the interest of the meeting, Malcolm Hall had arranged for St Michael's & All Angels Church, Kingsnorth, to be open for us prior to the Dinner.

Several took advantage of the occasion to visit this Grade I listed church, which is the most historically and architecturally significant building at Kingsnorth. The church dates from the late 14th century, with a simple layout comprising nave, chancel, west tower and south porch. Constructed

in Kentish ragstone, it is in the late decorated or early perpendicular style.

However, although much of interest, it was the organ we had principally come to see, a relatively modern instrument built by *Tom Robbins* in 1969. It has just one manual with a coupled pedalboard and six stops, they are: *8 8 4 2 1 and Sesquialtera 11*. The organ's voicing can only be described as aggressively classical, and is better played with its front case doors closed for services. Although originally prepared for, there is no pedal stop to counter-balance the higher manual ranks and hymn accompaniment is better kept to the 8ft and 4ft stops, alas not aided by its present tuning and regulation, which is regrettable as the instrument has much character. However, it is a visual delight, set at the back of the church close to a south window.



Norman Harper with his wife Marilyn

Photo C. Jilks



St Michael's Kingsnorth, Tom Robbins organ

Photo C. Jilks

Moving on to The Queen's Head, we found an eighteenth-century grade II listed public house with low beams and appealing character. A room had been set-up for our expected twenty members and after-dinner speaker Norman Harper and his wife. There was time for drinks before a simple three course meal was served, with vegetarian options.

Many members remember our speaker, Norman Harper, from our visit to Southwark's Roman Catholic Cathedral at Kennington last year, where, prior to his retirement as Director of Music, he gave a wonderful demonstration of the *John Compton* organ. Norman spoke of his early years, but more recently of the advancement of women organists to cathedral posts, a subject dear to his heart as his wife is also a FRCO musician. They have both been teachers, encouraging younger musicians in new repertoire as well as improvisa-

tion, which he suggested should be practised and enjoyed. Contrary to perhaps the purist view, he advocates playing a wide range of music on the organ, with pieces written for piano or orchestra. Michael Cooke thanked Norman for his engaging speech, before proposing the loyal toast and a toast to the *Kent County Organists' Association*.

Concluding the evening, Deputy President, Colin Jilks, made a presentation to Rosemary Clemence thanking her for her eighteen years' service as Secretary to the Association. Colin confessed to having lost a Secretary and Treasurer when he was President in 2001, and is forever grateful to Rosemary for taking on the awesome responsibility and continuing until 2019. Husband Christopher was also presented with a small gift, recognising and thanking him for his supportive role over the years.



Colin Jilks thanks Rosemary Clemence for her 18 years' service Photo C Clemence

Three Maidstone Churches

*St. Michael & All Angels,
The Unitarian Church &
St Philip's Church*

ST MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, Maidstone is a mid-Victorian church built to a design by Arthur Blomfield (later Sir); it was dedicated and opened in 1875; St Philip's Church dates from 1860, although its landmark spire was not added until 1878. In contrast, Maidstone's Unitarian Church was opened over a century earlier, in 1736, as a meeting house for dissenting Presbyterians. In spite of the disparity in age of these churches, their organs all originate from a close mid-Victorian period: *Father Willis* 1878, *Bevington* 1870, and *Beale & Thynne* 1880.

Meeting first at St Michael & All Angels, it was disappointing to find that only some eight or nine members were present as we were greeted by St Michael's organist Garath James. Nevertheless, our President demonstrated the organ for us playing several hymn tune variations he had composed. The original *Father Willis* 3-manual and pedal organ of 1878 was rebuilt in 1927 by *Henry Willis 111*, and included an electric action and a bold Great open diapason; the reeds were also re-voiced, resulting in an instrument of unquestionable colour and



St Michael's Maidstone, Willis Photo C.Jilks

character. The organ is devoid of any mixture or mutation stops, the Great organ extending only to a fifteenth, plus a trumpet and clarion, and the Swell to a 2ft flageolet. The organ's specification is: *Great Organ, 16 8 8 4 2 8 4; Swell Organ, 16 8 8 8 4 2 8 8; Choir Organ, 8 8 8 4 8; Pedal Organ, 32 16 16 16 8 8 4, with usual couplers*. Set under the music desk, the distinctive *Willis 111* rocking tablet couplers are also a feature of this 1927 console.

However, the renowned *Willis* voicing, especially of the reed stops, convinced many listeners that mixture stops were present, so rich and colourful is the sound of this instrument. Deputy President, Colin Jilks, spoke briefly about the organ and of his time



Maidstone Unitarian Church Photo C. Jilks

working under *Henry Willis 111*, observing *Willis's* voicing techniques used in creating his trade-mark tonal colours. This was during Colin's apprenticeship years, which were finally completed with *Willis 111* signing his qualifying indentures. Looking back, as *Willis* kindly shook young Colin's hand, the thought occurs that this was perhaps a moment in history for Colin, as he was, without doubt, shaking the hand of a man who had shaken the hand of *Father Henry Willis*.

Moving on into the centre of Maidstone to find the Unitarian Church, the weather had become particularly unkind, the wind and rain worrying the boats at their moorings as we crossed the river. It was necessary to park and walk to the church, the

narrow street in which the church stands, off Earl Street, now pedestrianized.

With a greater number of some twenty members present, Patricia Preece, the church Secretary, was most welcoming and gave a short talk on the history of the church. As mentioned, it was built in 1736, and although enlarged and re-modelled, still retains many historic features. The Church has a remarkable architectural attribute of a suspended ceiling, held up by an inverted tree trunk; its gallery and pulpit remain listed parts of the church. The church's original box pews were replaced in 1881, but in keeping with the building, providing greater comfort and practicality.

The *Bevington & Sons of Soho* organ is



Unitarian Church, Bevington Photo C. Jilks

a relatively recent addition to the church, being installed some thirty years ago in the west gallery. This is a two manual and pedal instrument with all stops enclosed in a Swell box, apart from a Pedal bourdon 16ft and the Great diapason 8ft, which sit outside of the box, its basses providing the front pipe display, beautifully painted and stencilled in mid-Victorian designs and rich colour.

Michael Cooke tried the organ and demonstrated its warm compelling abilities. It has a diapason chorus of 8 4 and 2, with a stopped diapason, claribel, gamba, harmonic flute and Pedal bourdon: all actions are mechanical, including the pedals. Its full specification is: *Great Organ, 8 8 4 2; Swell Organ, 8 8 4; Pedal Organ, 16 with usual couplers.*

With three organs to visit during the afternoon, only a few members had

time to venture into the gallery to try the organ before setting off to find St Philip's Church where we had the promise of another interesting organ and tea.

The organ at St Philip's was originally built in 1880 by *Beale & Thynne*, an organ that was subsequently rebuilt, in 1954, with new exhaust pneumatic actions by *Hill Norman & Beard*. The organ is now a two-manual and Pedal instrument with a generous specification: *Great Organ, 8 8 8 8 4 4 2; Swell Organ, 16 8 8 8 8 4 111 8; Pedal Organ, 16 16 8*. It has the usual couplers, but with a *Sub Octave & Super Octave* to the Swell.

We were not expecting an organist to play for us. However, Lionel Marchant from All Saints' Church, Maidstone had arranged for Maria Vittoria Baggio, a music student from Italy to



Maria Vittoria Baggio, a music student from Italy

Photo C Jilks



Beale & Thynne 1880, rebuilt by Hill Norman & Beard in 1954 Photo C Jilks

demonstrate the organ for us. Apparently, Maria had been looking for an organ on which to practise while she was in England, and therefore we were most fortunate to hear her play. She played Boëllmann's *Prière à Notre-Dame* and 1st movement of Bach's *Concerto in A Minor after Vivaldi BWV 593*.

Colin Jilks spoke about the organ, which he has tuned for many years, and especially the exhaust pneumatic actions, installed by *Hill Norman & Beard* in 1954; a tried and trusted action that works as quickly and as responsively as any modern electric action. The organ has a rich warm English sound, with engaging Swell

Strings building to a lush full organ, particularly enhanced by the Swell mixture and trumpet.

There was time for members to try the organ before a superior cream tea was served in an inviting upper meeting room by the St Philip's ladies, concluding a very full and interesting afternoon. One wonders if the three organs and venues might have been more appreciated if we had had just two to visit, allowing a little more time at each, which may explain the low numbers at St Michael & All Angels, which considering it is such a fine instrument, was unfortunate. However, we must thank David Shuker for arranging the afternoon for us.

St Peter's Church Fordcombe & St Luke's Chiddingstone Causeway

SET DEEP in the Kentish countryside, the two churches we visited in November were not, as one might expect, ancient medieval buildings steeped in history, but relatively modern mid- to late Victorian churches, with St Peter's Church, Fordcombe dating from 1848 and St Luke's Church, Chiddingstone Causeway, 1897/98. The architect for St Peter's was Henry Isaac Stevens of Derby, who designed and constructed a simple

rectangular chapel, which was extended in 1883 with a north wing, designed by Edward Tarver, added to accommodate a vestry and the organ.

Strangely, the organ at St Peter's is older than the church, having been built in 1845, three years before St Peter's was completed. It was designed by John Stevens and built by *Joseph (now J.W.) Walker*, at a cost of £240, for the Crisp Street School Room in Poplar, London; one of the schools founded by General Gordon for the poor. It was purchased for £237-11s-4d by Rev William Green, Rector of Peshurst from 1852 to 1878. It is unknown why it was dismantled and moved to Kent after only four years' service at the school, but it arrived at St Peter's in May 1850, a year after the consecration of the church. The cost of dismantling and rebuilding the instrument was £73 which did not include its oak case and its decorated



Joseph Walker brass name plate, St Peter's Church, Fordcombe Photo C.Jilks



Joseph Walker console Photo C. Jilks

front pipes, matching the architecture of the chancel. The organ has mechanical action with a specification of: *Great Organ, 8 8 8 4 4 2 11; Swell Organ, 8 8 4 8; Pedal Organ, 16 with usual couplers.* The organ's two-rank mixture had been enlarged to a three-rank some years ago, although the added 17th was apparently not liked and the mixture was returned to its original 19/22-12/15 configuration.

We were welcomed to the church by Church Warden Peter Whitehall, who spoke about the organ and the church's history. St Peter's Organist, Bob Wilson, kindly demonstrated the instrument for us. The organ's diapason stops are distinctly "Walker" in tonality, sounding more modern than the organ's stopped diapason, dulciana

and Swell 4ft, which sound more in keeping with its 1845 English period. The Swell trumpet is bright and vibrant, again reflecting its 1845 vintage. Regrettably, a screen has been built in the organ chamber arch, which rather hides this attractive instrument. There was then time for members to try the organ before finding our way to Chiddingstone Causeway, a few miles away.

Standing just outside the village of Chiddingstone Causeway, St Luke's Church was built in 1897-8 to a design by John Francis Bentley (1839-1902), the architect of Westminster Roman Catholic Cathedral. It replaced a temporary corrugated iron building erected in c.1873 to accommodate the expanding population based on the development of the cricket bat and



Joseph Walker case pipes Photo C. Jilks



1903 Norman & Beard, St Luke's Chiddingstone Causeway

Photo C. Jilks

ball factory in the village. Pevsner notes that the new church was paid for by the local Hill family, and John Singer Sargent, the portrait painter, recommended John Francis Bentley as architect for this project; it is his only Protestant church. The church guide indicates that a choir screen, tower clock and bells were also planned by Bentley, which alas, for whatever reason, did not come to fruition. Nevertheless, the church's barrel nave roof and choir are distinctive in design, leaving a lasting legacy to Bentley's work.

The organist, Bob Wilson, from Fordcombe, who also plays at St Luke's, spoke about the organ before he demonstrated it with *Chaconne* by Joel Martinson, using its rich strings then full diapasons. The organ was

built by *Norman & Beard* in 1903 with exhaust pneumatic action, and its bold specification is: *Great Organ, 8 8 8 4 4 2; Swell Organ, 8 8 8 8 4 8 8; Pedal Organ, 16 8 with usual couplers, including Swell Octave and Swell Sub Octave.*

Its voicing is typical of the late Victorian period, having lush strings, bold flutes and rich diapasons; its two Swell reeds, of oboe and corneopane are also full and fertile.

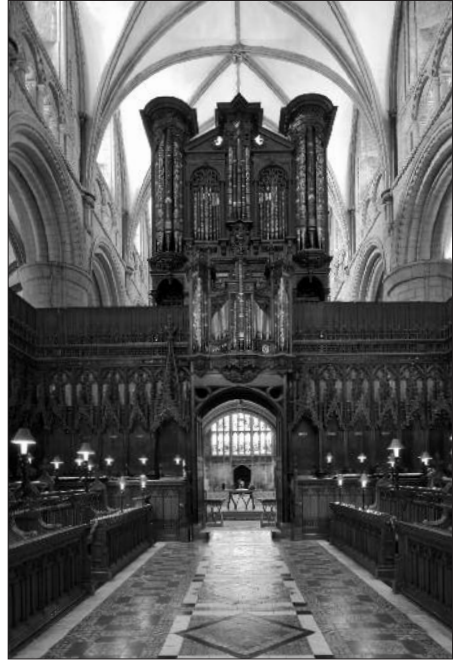
Although the church was without heating and rather cold, several members did enjoy trying the organ; nevertheless, in time, a warm church hall and tea enticingly beckoned. Both churches and organs were of interest, especially the early *Joseph Walker* instrument, and we must thank Bob Wilson for being our benevolent organist and host for the afternoon.

Front Cover

By Paul Hale

THE GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL organ originally stood at the head of the south transept, facing north/south, and was made in 1663-6 by *Thomas Harris*, replacing an organ of 1640 by *Dallam*. Much discussion has taken place over the years concerning the difference in style and quality between the 'Great' and 'Chaire' cases, but happily both retain their original painted pipes. *Henry Willis* rebuilt the organ several times between 1847 and 1899. In 1920 the instrument was modernised, re-actioned and revoiced by *Harrison & Harrison* as a 50-stop four-manual on tubular-pneumatic action. This was the organ known and loved by *Elgar*, *Brewer* and *Sumsion*.

John Sanders, on arriving as cathedral organist, was faced with a dated and worn-out organ. He set in place a process which, in 1971, resulted in an instrument which was largely new, designed and tonally regulated by consultant *Ralph Downes* and made by *Hill, Norman & Beard*. It was planned entirely along the Baroque-revival lines which *Downes* always employed, and despite the re-use of much old pipework (revoiced) the new flue pipes (made by *Stinkens*) were voiced with no nicking, in the 'open foot' style, the reeds being decidedly 'French'. The case was reduced in depth and restored, the decoration of the front pipes being conserved by the Hon. *Anna Plowden* and her team. There are some 200 *Harris* pipes remaining. Other pre 1971 pipework (reeds and 16ft open metal basses) is by *Father Willis*,



Gloucester Cathedral, Thomas Harris Photo C. Jilks

with one stop originating with *Harrison & Harrison* – all thoroughly revoiced in 1971.

The Great and small Pedal are at the top of the case, on three soundboards, the Swell, West Positive and Choir at the lower level. Some Pedal basses live in the screen to the north of the main case. There is a unique *HNB*-designed multi-magnet direct electric action to the slider soundboards. The wind is supplied via sprung inbuilt regulators. The 4-manual 1971 console is detached on the south side of the organ loft. Some additions and alterations to the specification were made by *Nicholson & Co* in 1999, 2000, 2003 and 2010, along with selected revoicing, new pallet magnets, restored wind regulators and upgraded console controls.

(Photographs by Colin Jilks)



Gloucester Cathedral, Thomas Harris case viewed from the Nave Photo C.Jilks

Derek William Childs

Derek William Childs

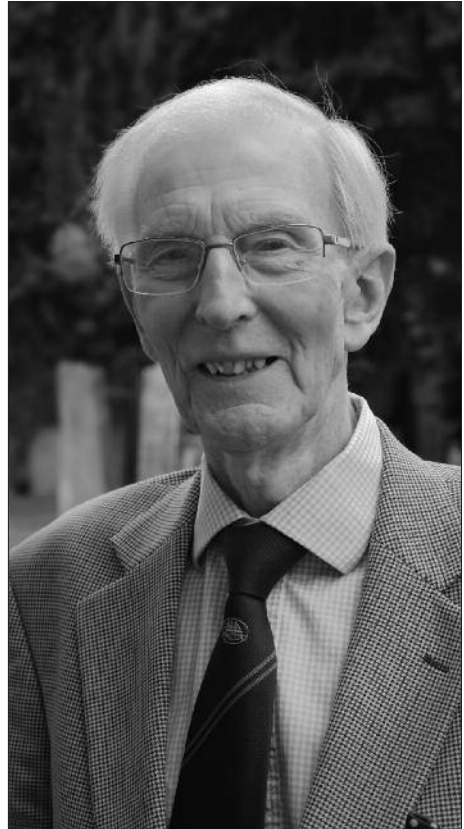
22 February 1933 - 20 October 2019

By Brian Moore

A SERVICE OF CELEBRATION for the Life of Derek Childs was held on the 1st November 2019 at St Margaret's Church, Halstead. The KCOA was well represented, some members joining the choir of Otford Parish Church, together with former members of the Sackville Singers, who were friends of Derek's. Kevin Grafton played the organ and directed the choir.

The masterly eulogy was given by Derek's lifelong friend John Andrews, who perfectly captured the essence of Derek with touches of humour and anecdotes of adventures from their younger days.

The service was led by The Reverend Christopher Johnson, and the hymns were *The Lord's my Shepherd*, *The day Thou gavest, Lord, is ended*, and *Angel voices, ever singing*. The excellent choir



Derek Childs at Hadlow Church 2017 Photo C. Jilks

also sang Purcell's *Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts*, and the final chorale from J S Bach's St John Passion *Ah! Lord, when my last end is come*. At the end of the service Kevin played the *Menuet from Suite Gothique* by Boëllmann.

Derek was a devoted family man who had a very full life and was the subject of the short profile in our August 2017 Journal. He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

New Members

Stephen Banfield - Canterbury

The most important stop

By Janus

AN OLD ADAGE is “*the most important stop on an organ is the building*”. The truth of this was demonstrated at the KCOA November 2018 meeting. We saw two village churches in West Kent, both with similar sized instruments and both by reputable Victorian builders, but whereas one was able to fill the church with consummate ease, the other struggled badly.

The Leigh Church instrument by *William Hill* was banished to a remote corner without a great deal of headroom and it struggled to project its sound to the nave. So bad was it that

an electronic organ had been added to deal with congregational singing, not as an addition but as an alternative to the *Hill*. It was sad to see a decent instrument demoted and languishing in its dingy corner.

By contrast the Chiddingstone Church organ, by *T C Lewis*, found itself situated to one side of a roomy nave and with ample headroom. At first sight there was something odd looking about the organ and after a while it became apparent that the front display pipes were situated with larger gaps between them than is customary. This would certainly help the sound to escape from its interior. The easy way in which this organ filled the entire church was in marked contrast to the *Hill*. A closer look at the *Lewis* on a follow-up visit showed that there



Chiddingstone organ by T C Lewis

Photo by Janus

was a great deal of spotted metal in the Great organ and a closer look revealed that there were one or two cone tuned pipes still in evidence. It seems likely that most of the fluework would have been cone tuned when new, however decades of tuning has probably damaged the pipes to the point where many had tuning slides added. The 8ft flute on the Great was labelled as a Rohrflute but the pipes were ordinary stopped pipes. The entire Great diapason chorus comprised one 8ft open diapason and one 4ft octave. No 2ft or mixture. This did not prevent the chorus from speaking clearly and quite powerfully into the church.

Those of you who are used to having two or even three diapasons available may think the above would be too constricting, however a chorus that is less

powerful is obtainable by using the dulciana and 4ft flute together. The Swell organ is based on an 8ft Gedact and a 4ft octave; these if coupled to the Great do not add a lot. Gedact excepted, there are no flutes on the Swell and the only concession to a string sound is an 8ft Viol d'Orchestre which only goes down to tenor C. There is a mixture on the Swell labelled as a 11 rank Quertain, this does not sound as though it is very high pitched. There is a single reed on the Swell, a mild-sounding trumpet. This can be added or removed from the ensemble by a double-acting foot pedal. Perhaps a manual octave coupler would be expected but is absent on this particular instrument. The only pedal stop is the usual 16ft wooden rank, labelled as Sub Bass, with the



Chiddingstone organ, T C Lewis Great Organ pipework

Photo by Janus



1890 Walker organ at Langton Green

Photo by Janus

usual manual couplers. Thus we have an eleven stop organ which, within its limitations, is doing a very good job for Chiddingstone.

Of course there are many examples of organ designers and builders having problems with the acoustics of a building, the most noteworthy in recent times is the struggle that Ralph Downes and *Harrison & Harrison* had with the Royal Festival Hall, an organ that despite its troubled beginnings is an organ that I have always enjoyed hearing. Architects can sometimes be the problem themselves. Quite a few Victorian and Edwardian church buildings or 're-orderings' put the organ into an 'organ chamber', where it is often cramped and surrounded by stonework. Although this gives a nicely ordered appearance to the church it is the downfall of many instruments. If the organ builder then crams the open-

ings to the chamber with closely packed display pipes the sound actually escaping into the church can be disappointing.

The picture shows an 1890 *Walker* organ at Langton Green, crammed into such a chamber. The closely packed pipes must act as a sound baffle. I took a tape measure and calculator when I went to photograph the organ: the gaps between the pipes are no more than 0.5 inches. Adding up all the gaps an area of 4.5 square feet, equivalent to a small 2 x 2ft window is all the gap available for the sound to escape. There is a similar opening facing on to the choir which gives a total area equivalent to a 3 x 3ft window as the only means of escape for the sound.

It would be an interesting experiment to remove all the blocking pipes to see what effect this would have.

Singing at a Coronation – or two

by Harry Coles

ON CORONATION DAY, Wednesday 12th May 1937, in travelling from my home at Deptford SE8, how was one to get to SW1 in time, through the multitudes in the streets? To them, it was the most prodigious day in their lives. Not twenty years had passed since 1914-18, with its privations of rationing and zep-pelin-raids on the populace, being their lot. And in the Forces, the awful slaughter of the land's finest manhood in that just terrible War. The land was left eventually with a superfluity of spinsters. In some villages not one man in the King's Forces had returned.

To get to SW1 one showed one's orange Choir Pass, mine No. 362, and with the assistance of the Police, the crowds exultantly happy, they parted like the Red Sea to let one through. It was also our Hook number for robes, one's place in the Procession to the Abbey and, eventually, one's seat number. We were to be robed by 8.00 a.m., seated by 8.30. We got away eventually about 2.30 p.m. Before and after the Service, we were allowed to consume what could go into a cassock pocket, but no liquids! Of the latter, recommended before starting out from home, was half a glass of milk. First aid, etc., was within call.

Zero hour for us was 7.45 a.m., to assemble in the Hall of Westminster School, Dean's Yard. Though having been at work then for over a year with a firm in Whitechapel, E1., I was then still a treble chorister of 18 years 3 months at the Cathedral and Collegiate Church of St. Saviour and St. Mary Overie, Southwark, but at weekends only. I'd

joined in January 1931, when nearing 12 years of age. At St. Olave's and St. Saviour's Grammar School ("STOGS" — Royal Charters granted in 1562 and 1571) by Tower Bridge, to where the Chapter sent us, we elder choristers sang tenor or bass, but at the Cathedral treble, not alto!

This phenomenon was peculiar to our beloved Dr. Edgar T. Cook, CBE, Organist there 1909-1953, that being London's first Gothic structure. When aged about 14, further down the choir then, we all heard the top boy on decani, approach Cookie with: "Would it be possible, Sir, to leave the Choir after the August holiday?" "And why?" "Well you see, Sir, it's like this; I've already left STOGS, because I've been successful in winning a Choral Scholarship, in Tenor, to Kings!" Ernest Watkins was duly there at Cambridge under its famed Boris Ord.

On entering the School Hall, in one hand I held my precious crimson-covered score of the Music and the Rite, and in the other, my green pork-pie hat! A congenial gentleman approached, whose wireless voice was far more familiar than his visage, with a: "Good morning, Sir; and are you a Tenor or a Bass?" And I, in my very deepest early-morning voice of an 18-year old, replied: "Treble, Sir Walford!", and left others to pick him up, and dust him down.

Dr Cook had chosen his top three boys from decani and cantoris sides. Later, we found ourselves on cantoris, right in the very front, above the pulpitum (which held specially-chosen orchestral players, with Dr. Ernest Bullock, our conductor, (Organist of the Abbey), but below the organ pipes. One had the advantage there over those opposite, in having a direct view across to the Royal Family, seated on the south side of the Sanctorium!

But who later should come and sit next to me, I being at the end of the row

which was the first bay east of the pulpitum, a sub-conductor, he now resplendent in Court Dress with buckled shoes and cravat, but Sir Walford Davies, Master of the King's Musick. We got on together like a house on fire. A sweeter person one could never have met, just as lovely as his music.

On a previous day, duly robed, all had gone into the Abbey Garden, where the panoramic Coronation Choir and Orchestra, May 12th, 1937 photograph was taken. The writer may be the only one alive now to name the Doctors of Music therein assembled, they in their beautiful convocation gowns and hoods; but it being some 40 inches wide and 10 inches deep, my copy is particularly dilapidated after 66-years' handling.

Of trebles, St. Paul's Cathedral sent thirty and the Abbey likewise, plus their respective men, and other singers from Royal Chapels, Cathedrals, and of Oxbridge Colleges having a full Choral Foundation, as required. Printed booklets on the two coronations contain names and other relevant data and 1937's revealed a cathedral organist who, having submitted his own name (in lieu of one of his lay clerks), sang as a bass.

In 1937, the Abbey's organ was undergoing a rebuild by *Harrison & Harrison Ltd. of Durham*, in readiness for the coronation, the Dean & Chapter having thus relegated its lovely Pearson Organ cases to the Abbey's triforium! Its north case is the memorial to England's greatest composer, Henry Purcell, Organist there, 1679-1695. The firm's M.D., Arthur Harrison, had died in November 1936, so the instrument was rather hurriedly got together ready for the great event, housed then in a kind of battleship-grey wooden structure, which this chorister thought rather hideous.

At the coronation there was orchestral music before and afterwards, and we heard Dr. Peasgood, Sub-Organist, if memory fails one not, regale all with the

great *Prelude in C minor, BWV 546*, of Bach, which was a particular thrill. Well before 1953, the instrument had been superbly restored, its Pearson cases (now filled with pipes), all duly embellished most beautifully.

In 1937, to sing first-performances of works written for the occasion, to us was a particular thrill, and to see the composers of same: Edward Bairstow, Walford Davies, George Dyson, William Harris, and Vaughan Williams, more so, their music is still being sung. Similarly, new works for June 1953 by: Dyson, Harris, Howells, Walton, Healey Willan, and Vaughan Williams, the composers being present, and that in a week horridly cold and wet. Such precluded a 1953 coronation group-photo being taken. Also, with that coronation, Dr. Cook, having died on the 5th March, my having been picked to sing at that one too, was purely by chance. Southwark's Precentor had organised a ballot amongst us six lay clerks. It resulted in two tenors, and a bass attending, myself the latter.

In 1953 too, with my green Choir Pass No. 369, the route there appeared after a 16-year interval, nevertheless somewhat familiar, finding myself, eventually, and very coincidentally, but a yard or so behind my 1937 seat! Nationally, only three sang at both coronations (we're in touch), and each has the two medals from Buckingham Palace accordingly.

On Her Majesty's 40th anniversary, that memorable 2nd June 1993, by prior arrangement the triumvirate (with wives) met at Buckingham Palace, where we were delightfully welcomed therein. We carried a lovely bouquet for Her Majesty as pre-arranged. She had attended the Derby that day. We delighted there too in a very welcome repast. Her Majesty proffers just excellent sherry!

*Harry Coles was a former chorister of Southwark Cathedral; he died in 2006.
(from our 2003 archive)*

Pipes vs Electronics (From our 2003 archives)

by Colin Jilks

THERE IS SOMETHING magical about modern technology, we know that it works, even if we know not how, or why. Television in the 1930s was a new technology that captured the imagination. Although the wireless was commonplace, the magic of pictures through the aether had to be seen to be believed, radio equipment remaining totally incomprehensible to all but the technically gifted. In 1937 Logie Baird and Marconi EMI were locked in technical combat, with Baird's Electro-mechanical 30-line system up against EMI's fully electronic 405 line scanning system and, of course, we all know who won. Some of us were to see the Alexandra Palace test transmissions of dance bands fronted by charming young ladies singing of 'the mystic magic rays that bring television to you', all in perfect BBC English.

But things have moved on a little since then. In our organ world 'Hammonds' with their tone generators and glowing valves have given way to the digital chip and other technological wonders. However, the advertising gurus' beguiling patter of the digital electronic organ that is now 'indistinguishable from the real thing' has to be treated with caution. Technology may be a wonderful thing, and the fact that it works at all may provide its own fascination — as early television demonstrated — but we should hesitate before accepting an imitation as the real thing.

Our recent visit to Mayfield and

its St. Leonards School chapel was of particular interest because of the comparison we were able to make between a modern pipe organ and a digital electronic instrument. As mentioned in our Meetings Reports, the electronic instrument may have been initially entertaining for the listener, but it was still a long way from creating a living and breathing pipe organ sound.

Some members may, indeed, have been critical of the new *Walker* pipe organ, but in truth it produced a quality of sound which would always engage the ear. The electronically produced organ, played through the indispensable loud speaker, has a sameness and simplicity of sound which becomes tedious, if not objectionable, in a comparatively short time, as proved the case at St. Leonards School.

Obviously, the comparison of cost does enter the equation when a church or other institution considers the purchase of a new instrument. Churches, who may opt for an electronic organ, usually do so because they say that it is cheaper. However, figures published recently by *The Institute of British Organ Building*, suggest that the opposite is true.

The average life-span of an electronic organ is 17 years — a figure revealed by the annual surveys in *The Organbuilder* and *Organ Building*, and confirmed by analysis of electronic organs in crematorium chapels. The example used for this illustration is an electronic instrument which is being widely advertised at present, and is to be found in a variety of churches. Maintenance of electronic organs is not required for the first few years, but becomes progressively more expensive as time passes.

Also parts may be difficult to replace, as they become obsolete. Pipe organs have different life-styles, but 100 years is about average for a tracker-action organ in a country parish before major restoration is required, with one lesser cleaning & overhaul during that time. The figures quoted assume one tuning visit a year.

Comparison of a two-manual tracker-action organ with 10-12 stops and a three manual digital instrument.

Cost of pipe organ 2003: £100,000
 Clean and overhaul after 50 years
 Current cost of £15,000
 *£64,000
 Annual maintenance: 100 years
 £10,000 *£61,000
Total cost of pipe organ: £225,000

Cost of digital organ 2003: £15,000
 Average life 17 years
 Replacement cost after
 17 years *£24,071
 34 years *£39,785
 51 years *£65,759
 68 years *£108,689
 85 years *£179,645
 Maintenance *£17,000
 (based on £100 p.a. for latter half of life)
Total cost of digital organ £449,949

* Allows for inflation @ 3% p.a.

It is obvious that the electronic approach is not, long term, the cheapest option. Space for a pipe organ may prove difficult in small churches or in the home, but given a suitable location a pipe organ will undoubtedly be the best option.

When space is at a premium, electronics can, however, prove useful. There are many pipe organs, some in

quite prestigious locations, which have used electronics in adding that elusive 32ft pedal tone. This apparent heresy can be introduced into a pipe organ only if the lowest 32ft pitch is strictly used, allowing the real pedal 16ft, 8ft, and 4ft pipes to provide the full harmonic sequence and tonal colour helping to mask the electronic's deficiencies.

Beyond this limited deep-pedal use electronic's shortcomings become obvious, as was demonstrated this year by the collaboration between the pipe organ builder *Peter Collins* and *Allen electronics*. *Peter Collins* provided some six or seven ranks of real pipes to supplement an electronic organ installed in the Parish Church of Trönö, in central Sweden. The Carlo Curley CD recorded to demonstrate the instrument, although dashingly played, was most unconvincing and, in truth, it was just the well-known "Allen electronic" in sound and colour. Carlo Curley is well known for his promotion of Allen electronics, but then, perhaps, the true costs of providing and maintaining pipe organs should be more widely published and considered.

The 'man on the Clapham omnibus' may not be aware of the electronic organ's shortcomings as is often painfully illustrated by any film or television programme which depicts an organist, whether it be at a small village church pipe organ or playing something larger; the organ we hear is always an electronic, usually of cathedral proportions. But those of us who are charged with the responsibilities of organ installation or maintenance should be fully aware and act accordingly. We live in changing and sometimes difficult times for our pipe organs and raised awareness of what the 'real thing' has to offer can only be to everyone's advantage.

A First World War memorial organ

Rededication of a First World War memorial organ in Tenterden

By David Shuker

IN THE AFTERMATH of the First World War memorials of all kinds were dedicated to the memory of those who gave their lives in that great conflict. Occasionally an organ would be installed as a war memorial and one of these is to be found in Tenterden. In 1919 Tenterden Methodist Church installed a new organ by *Griffin and Stroud of Bath* as a memorial to the twelve young men of the town who were killed and on November 13th 2019 the centenary of this event was commemorated with a special service of rededication. During my time as President of the Association I was contacted by Mr David Smith, who at that time was seeking funds to undertake the restoration of the organ and I was able to put him in touch with Dr Alan Thurlow as chairman of the ON Organ Fund. This contact resulted in successful applications to the War Memorials Trust and the Pilgrim Trust who each gave 50% of the required funds. The restoration and repair work was carried out by Alistair Curtis, who was present at the service, as was Alan Thurlow.

The service was preceded by a procession from the Town Hall in the company of the Mayor of Tenterden and the Town Crier, as befits the historic Cinque Port of Tenterden. During the service the rededication of the organ, using text



Griffin and Stroud Tenterden Photo D Shuker

from the original dedication a century ago, was lead by the Rev Helen Hollands, Assistant Chair of the South-Eastern District of the Methodist Church.

The service was also a poignant occasion with students from the Homewood School taking an active part – four girls gave a very good account of themselves in singing the first two verses of ‘*O Valiant Hearts*’ accompanied by Dr David Flood on the organ, before the rest of the congregation joined in. Later in the service twelve boys and girls presented a flower for each of the fallen as their details were read out by a serving officer. David Flood provided a suitable accompaniment to this part of the service with Purcell’s ‘*When I am laid in earth, remember me*’ and Walford Davies’ ‘*Solemn Melody*’.

(Continued on page 28)

Matthew Young

A short Profile

ON BASTILLE DAY, 14 July 1943, the Battle of Kursk was raging in the Ukraine. Here in England, however, the greatest worry for Muriel Young was whether her taxi would get her to the maternity nursing home in Woodford before her third child was born. It did, and our Secretary's arrival brought forth a very welcome concession from the War Office, for Matthew's father, John Young, who had been conscripted into the Royal Army Pay Corps, billeted near its headquarters, at Footscray, Kent. With the addition of a third child, adding to the two daughters already at home, he was allowed to stay at home with his family in Wanstead and commute daily. Matthew's father, prior to the war, had been a clerk in the East Ham Treasurer's Department, but conscription had changed many people's lives. Matthew's only memory of the consequences of war, is of being in a room with boarded-up windows, the result of a flying bomb landing in the lake opposite their house in June 1944, the lake he remembers being frozen over during the winter of 1947.

Returning to civilian life following the war, Matthew's father retrained as a teacher and the family consequently moved, in 1948, to Margate joining the staff of the new Thanet technical College at Ramsgate. In time, two more daughters arrived and with two older and two younger sisters Matthew was now piggy in the middle - the rose

between thorns, Matthew suggests? Nevertheless, Margate proved to be a good place in which to grow up, the summer days making full use of the family's beach hut near Palm Bay.

Prior to the war, during the 1930s, a local lad named Alfred Deller had joined the choir of St John the Baptist, the Parish Church of Margate, where he had progressed from boy treble to male alto and then countertenor, overseen by its Organist and Director of music, Hector Shawcross, a former sub-organist of Rochester Cathedral. Hector was still there after the war and piano tuition for Matthew and his sisters was entrusted to Hector's wife, Betty Shawcross. In those days, the Associated Board exams in Margate could be a bit terrifying. Held in a rambling Victorian house, one waited in semi-darkness under the glass-eyed stare of big-game hunters' trophies, to be called to sit at a full size grand piano with an unaccustomed touch and highly-polished slippery keys: it was not for the faint-hearted.

Singing under Hector Shawcross at St John the Baptist was not feasible for Matthew as the Youngs' new home was at the far end of Cliftonville. Instead, it was a walk across the cabbage fields (now housing) to join a small but enthusiastic choir of boys and ladies at St Anthony of Egypt, a multi-purpose hall on the edge of the Millmead Estate, where he sang the communion settings of Merbecke and Martin Shaw in the morning and Anglican chant at evensong. Matthew's father served as one of the two organists who took it in turns to pedal away on whichever of two old suction reed organs they preferred, with congregations greatly enlarged

during term time with the arrival of a crocodile of boys from a nearby prep school. Occasional visits by the choir to the Parish Church introduced Matthew to the sound of a pipe organ and, later, aware of his growing interest, Betty Shawcross very generously gave Matthew much of Hector Shawcross' organ music following his death.

When a change of parish boundaries rendered St Anthony's church redundant, the family's allegiance shifted to "the high church of Margate", All Saints, Westbrook, which had a four part choir, which also sang in the chapel of the nearby Royal Sea bathing Hospital. At a confirmation service, for long-stay patients, the bishop walked from bed to bed in the chapel to lay hands on the candidates. Sadly, the hospital has now become housing and, following the theft of stained glass windows, birds have entered the empty chapel and their copious droppings have rendered its delightful little organ unplayable.

Betty Shawcross remained Matthew's piano teacher until he was fifteen, when his parents decided that with four sisters, and no brothers, a few years as a boarder at an all-boys school would be a good idea. Sir Roger Manwood's School, Sandwich had an organ and Matthew started lessons with Bert French, a blind man who played everything from memory. Mr French had large hands and when demonstrating something would often say "you probably can't manage this chord". School and chapel choirs, a life in the CCF band and violin lessons added to Mathew's musical activity. Matthew sang bass in the school choir when his voice settled, although the School's music master got him to sing

countertenor as there were no altos, but continued to sing bass in other things, singing a bass solo in HMS Pinafore

Matthew spent a year after leaving school in sub-arctic Canada in Labrador, having been accepted for Voluntary Service with the Moravian Church (The Unitas Fratrum). Daily work, general property maintenance and teaching, still allowed time for music: trombone in the village band, violin for the Inuit (Eskimo) church choir and playing the church's powerful German reed organ with 16ft, 8ft and 4ft throughout its full compass. It was this fine instrument that left an abiding interest for Matthew in the free reed and its capabilities. The Eskimo liturgy was a clear legacy of the original German missionaries: translations into Inuit of 18th Century German chorales with the original tunes and harmonies. Returning home from Canada, his college years were followed by work as a technician in medical, industrial and teaching laboratories, until at forty years of age he made a career change switching to insurance.

Matthew married in 1969, and with the subsequent arrival of five children (not all at once), including twins, it left little time for music; but, with four boys and one girl, it was an interesting reversal of Matthew's own childhood.

By 1980 organ playing had resumed and Matthew offered temporary help to St Vincent, Littlebourne, until they could find a permanent organist. But temporary turned into thirty-one years and four different vicars. These days, Matthew returns occasionally to play at Littlebourne, although he now helps regularly at Canterbury's St Thomas Catholic Church, St Nicholas Thanington, and the Huguenot Chapel



Matthew Young

Photo C. Jilks

in the Cathedral Crypt, all the while keeping a watchful eye on www.organistsonline.org for the chance to play somewhere new.

Matthew's abiding interest in reed organs has accumulated what his daughter once described as a "reed organ sanctuary", but which is difficult to quantify as some are in bits, awaiting repair and rebuild, including a 2-manual & pedal Estey (the most prolific American builder of reed organs) and a 3-manual & pedal British-built "University" organ. Acquiring the 2-manual & pedal Estey was particularly important to Matthew as it helped our late member, Gary Tollerfield, to keep a promise to its dying owner, that it would not be scrapped.

Music continues down the generations, with one son playing the saxophone, another singing in a choir in Poland and a daughter whose stage career takes her from pantomime in Liverpool to cabaret in Darjeeling, with a year and a half in *Fascinating Aida* along the way.

Not wanting to retire, Matthew still looks after his insurance customers both old and new, two generations in one family, with another customer leaving a request that he play for her funeral. Singing tenor in Whitstable Choral Society is a great pleasure, and he still finds the time to be a Trustee of the Oddfellows Friendly Society, and has two grandsons in London whom he likes to visit.

It was our late member Dr Kenneth Somer (who sang in the choir at Littlebourne) who invited Matthew to a *KCOA* meeting in the 1980s where he became a member. We are especially pleased, and most grateful, that he became our *KCOA* Secretary last year, maintaining a flow of useful emails and information for our members.

(From page 24)

David Flood brought the service to a resounding conclusion with Karg-Elert's 'Nun danket alle Gott', attracting a round of applause.

The Tenterden Methodist organ has pride of place at the front of the church and the fine case has stood the test of time well. The organ is listed on the National Pipe Organ Register (N17868) and has the following specification: *Great - Open Diapason 8, Clarabella 8, Dulciana 8, Harmonic Flute 4; Swell - Violin Diapason 8, Lieblich Gedact 8, Geigen Principal 4, Horn 8; Pedal - Bourdon 16*. Apart from the fitting of tuning slides and the cutting down of the harmonic flute to a flute, the pipework is all original.

It is hoped that the organ will not only continue to be a suitable memorial to the fallen but will also be used by a new generation of young organists as they develop their skills. It would be wonderful if a young organist from Tenterden, having practiced on this organ, were to be a future competitor in the *KCOA Organ Competition*.



Griffin & Stroud Console Photo D Shuker

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