

A photograph of a large, ornate pipe organ in a Gothic cathedral. The organ is multi-tiered, with numerous pipes and intricate carvings. It is set against a backdrop of high Gothic arches and stained glass windows. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the details of the organ and the architecture.

*Kent County Organists'
Association*

August 2021 Journal



Kent County Organists' Association

Patron: The Bishop of Rochester

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

President

James Bryant
13 Hog Green,
Elham,
Kent.
CT4 6TU
01303 840421

email: james_bryant1@sky.com

Secretary

Matthew Young
9 Harcourt Drive
Canterbury
Kent
CT2 8DP
01227 767608

e-mail: acqz@btinternet.com

Treasurer

Kevin Grafton
34 Dartford Road
Sevenoaks
Kent
TN13 3TQ
01732 452117

email: kevingrafton@hotmail.com

Journal

Colin Jilks
9 Rosemary Close
Steyning
West Sussex
BN44 3YT
01903 810395

e-mail: colinkjilks@aol.com

President Emeritus

Brian Moore

Past President

Michael Cooke

Deputy Presidents

Colin Jilks
Nicholas King
David Shuker

Elected Committee Members

Berkeley Hill	(Serving second year)
Andrew Cesana	(Serving second year)
Malcolm Hall	(Serving first year)
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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.

Our President writes

By James Bryant

Extraordinary Times!

I'M SURE many members will recall moments of sadness and grief during the Pandemic and there will be others who have found it frustrating not to have been involved in their normal music making. With this in mind we send our sympathy and best wishes. As I write the government has once again insisted on no more than six singers in amateur choirs. However thank goodness many churches have been able to use the organ in imaginative ways.

Despite the above you have continued to engage with us and many members have attended our on-line events which have obviously been appreciated. It is interesting to note higher attendances than at some pre-pandemic meetings; our thanks go to those who have loyally supported us and to our presenters. It is good to see a small increase in membership and long may it continue.

We have met more regularly in Zoom sessions as a committee and have suffered none of the problems associated with a well-documented council meeting. Ours have been good humoured, productive and nobody has been forcibly removed! At this point I must thank colleagues for their hard work and efforts to ensure continuity.

Good intentions moving forward

As we address issues for the future we intend to reschedule meetings which should have taken place before the pandemic and look toward to new initiatives in an attempt to

make meetings more relevant in a changing climate. In this respect we will look closely at best practice and recent output by the RCO. Many of you will have seen the educational material presented during the February 'Conference Week' - some of which is still available on the RCO's website and YouTube channel.

There are many who feel the wealth of material and recitals on-line has been an ideal opportunity to present the organ to a wider audience often outside the context of its position in worship.

I very much hope to have a focus on young people and would like to promote 'taster sessions' and visits to schools where possible. We should not lose sight of the fact that this can also present valuable cross-curricular opportunities involving many other subject areas. Indeed many associations are already engaged in such initiatives.

Turning to other events and opportunities, it has been suggested we might arrange master classes, study sessions with an element of social interaction and visits to places of interest not necessarily associated with the church. However these will of course continue to be our prime focus.

Next year will hopefully see the resumption of our biannual competition and we hope to see increased numbers. Please try to support this if at all possible and encourage any prospective entrants.

Finally do feel free to make contact with us through our secretary if you have any thoughts or suggestions for the future. In this way we can ensure we are providing relevant opportunities which reflect your wishes as members. Our website should be the first point of contact for news and updated information.

I send my very best wishes to you all for a much better future and look forward to seeing you in person rather than on a Zoom screen!

Review of recent Meetings

Online Talks & Meetings

THE CORONAVIRUS pandemic shut down our live meetings from March 2020 onwards, but after the initial lull, during which it was difficult to envisage that the enforced curtailment of our activities would continue for longer than a few months, your Committee started to arrange the use of online facilities, for talks given by members, and for the opportunity to talk to each other. The Committee has also been using the Zoom platform to enable Committee meetings.

The first online meeting, in October 2020, was simply an opportunity for members to talk to each other via Zoom, about the effects on worship of Coronavirus and how we were all dealing with it. In December, David Shuker gave the first of our online talks about moving an historic organ to Scotland; his interesting article follows these Zoom meetings reports.

Whitlock's 'The Meaning of Life'

By Stephen Banfield

IN JANUARY 2021, Stephen Banfield, who joined our Association late in 2019, kindly spoke about Whitlock's Organ Sonata, in a talk entitled Percy Whitlock's *'The Meaning of Life'*. Stephen was organ scholar at Clare College, Cambridge, and has been a Professor of Music at Birmingham and then Bristol University. He has written on subjects as diverse as English song, Broadway musi-

cals, Finzi and music in the West Country.

Stephen explained that he had come to know the Sonata in the 1970s and had continued to be 'haunted' by it all his life, despite having given up playing for some time. When he returned to playing in 2019, it was amongst his priorities for learning again, and indeed he ably demonstrated extracts from the piece on his Viscount home organ.

The Sonata is a substantial work, at 45 minutes or so. Stephen gave us a clear picture of its structure, illustrated by musical extracts. His lifelong experience of orchestral music helped to inform his detailed exposition of this music, from the characteristic opening fanfares, reappearing later in the piece, to the echoes of Rachmaninov, Elgar, even Quilter. After the sonata-form first movement, there follow a Canzona, Scherzetto, and Choral. The latter is the heart of the Sonata, and involves a complex interaction of chorale, a theme Stephen calls 'the still small voice' and a snatch of the *Dies irae* plainsong. This leads to a second scherzo, embodying the final battle, its crux and resolution, and the aftermath. This was Whitlock's *Meaning of Life*: 'Faith, love, hope, call it what you will, has triumphed.'

We are grateful to Stephen for his lucid guide to what must be one of Whitlock's masterworks.

'From Pianist to Organist'

By Morwenna Campbell-Smith

THE ONLINE talk in February 2021, by our member Morwenna, began by explaining her transition from pianist to organist and highlighted the need for

assistance in acquiring additional skills, after initially and rather reluctantly being asked to play at St Stephen's Church in Barnet on Boxing Day. In an effort to improve her skills, Morwenna then explained her trepidation at the prospect of attending the RCO's well-known summer school, but consequently found it of enormous benefit - the emphasis being on providing skill based learning for all in a friendly and supportive environment, regardless of their experience.

Subsequently, Morwenna became engaged in deputising in North London where she continued to learn further skills 'on the job' in a variety of different settings and styles of worship. After this, following a subsequent marriage, she settled in Frittenden, Kent where she developed further skills and continues to play. As a result of her experiences she began 'Blogging' in an attempt to assist others to discover the role and responsibilities of an organist. We were then reminded of a continuing need to highlight the gender imbalance in the organ world, and consequently Morwenna set up a website to promote this and offer further help to those who were transitioning from pianist to organist across the genders. This led to the formation of a website known as *'The Lady Organist'* - a link to which can be found on our own website. With its resources and advertising material it highlights the organ in a variety of contexts, not just within a church setting, and provides useful links to learning material.

We were then given an insight into the RCO's resources on their online platform, iRCO. Morwenna was asked to assist with its development and now edits this. Consequently, it has led to the provision of a wealth of opportunities for learning during lockdown and it has become very successful and well supported. It is now possible to access individual

sections of the platform without becoming a full member of the RCO.

Finally we were reminded of the relatively recent formation of the *'Society for Women Organists'*, which is nevertheless open to all regardless of gender.

The concluding 'question and answer' session confirmed the support given by the RCO during the 'Lockdowns'. It has become much more inclusive, and we were encouraged to take full advantage of the opportunities offered for personal development at all levels of ability.

Hauptwerk 'The Virtual Organ Platform'

*By Douglas Henn-Macrae
& Jim Bryant*

IN MARCH 2021, a talk was given by our President Elect, Jim Bryant beginning by reminding members of the technical issues which, if addressed, enhance sound production on the Zoom Platform. He then welcomed our colleagues and friends from the Southwark and Bromley and Croydon associations. It was particularly pleasing to see around twenty participants joining us in total.

Jim's colleague Douglas Henn-Macrae, who incidentally supplied his home instrument, related how he first became involved with Hauptwerk after initially playing an electronic organ during the early 2000s in Maidstone. Realising its limitations in terms of stops and sound quality, Douglas explained that at the time only a small number of pipes were recorded from pipe organs, as opposed to the entire range, and the remainder of the sounds were computer-generated using that somewhat limited palette. With Hauptwerk, the entire pipework is

individually recorded three times, and frequently from different positions within the building, to capture the acoustic. This inevitably produces far more realistic sounds, which stay faithful to the original pipes across the range; a further enhancement being recordings of blowers and swell actions etc. A modest amount of computer memory is required in most situations but larger instruments and surround sound require much more.

In terms of hardware, Douglas explained it was possible to achieve this in two ways, either by using an existing console with Midi connections, or through purchasing a bespoke set of keyboards and a pedalboard. Often the latter are much more portable and provide greater flexibility.

During the course of the presentation Jim and Douglas demonstrated a variety of instruments including an organ from Velesovo in Slovenia, modeled on a typical Thuringian instrument with which Bach would have been familiar. In addition they featured the St. Michel Organ from a former Benedictine monastery in Northern France, one of a small number of organs surviving from the French Classical Period. The Hereford Cathedral *Willis* is perfect for a wide range of repertoire and well suited to Howells' *'Master Tallis' Testament'*, which Jim performed. All of these instruments produced sounds which were authentic and pleasing.

We were reminded how Hauptwerk, with its endless possibilities for using a wide range of virtual organs, can be a wonderful platform for study and teaching; offering as it does an opportunity for students to play and listen to a wide variety of organs, many of which are historic. This in turn encourages good practice in performance and guides the student towards decisions regarding suitable registration. A number of cathedral organ-

ists use the Hauptwerk platform for home practice, including David Newsholme in Canterbury who was able to perform pieces much appreciated during the first lockdown, and whose recordings may still be available on YouTube.

The presentation concluded with questions from members centred around costings for a reasonable Hauptwerk setup and the quality of sounds across the range, in particular that of the full organ. Addressing the latter, we were assured that, whilst this is frequently an issue with standard electronic instruments, often with impressive specifications, it is not the case with Hauptwerk. In terms of cost, this varies depending on individual requirements, but compares favourably with good quality electronic instruments.

In conclusion, members requiring a reminder of the issues involved and the basics of the platform can email Jim on james_bryant1@sky.com, and he will gladly forward the documentation made available to us before the presentation.

'A Musical Legacy'

By Malcolm Riley

MALCOLM RILEY, a member since early this year, gave a talk in May entitled *'A Musical Legacy'*. Malcolm was organ scholar at Christ's College, Cambridge, and a long-term Director of Music at Cranbrook School. He was Secretary of the Percy Whitlock Trust for many years, and has written two books on the man and his music. In his talk, we returned to Whitlock, but from a different angle: his legacy, in the form of his pupils.

Having given us a brief biography of Whitlock's early life, with some examples of his early compositions, Malcolm



*Rochester Cathedral where Percy Whitlock was a chorister
& Assistant Organist 1921 -1930*

Photo C Jilks

moved on to tell of his pupils at Rochester and at Bournemouth, concentrating on three talented pupils: George Blackmore, Leon Young and Ivor Slaney. The first and last happen to be in their centenary year.

George Blackmore became Organ Scholar to the King's School, Rochester, took his ARCO and then played at various churches and cinemas – mainly the latter. Whitlock had of course pursued a similar course in his own organ-playing career. We heard a light orchestral piece by Blackmore, which was a charming example of that genre.

Leon Young was taught by Whitlock in the 1930s, but then spent the war in the Royal Marines, where his exploits were, in Malcolm's words, 'like something from a Boys' Annual'. He served on HMS *Hermione* in numerous sea battles, until it was sunk, and ended up in America and Canada. On his return to England, he appeared in some ENSA shows and moved on to become a light orchestral arranger.

He scored many arrangements for

singers of the 1950s and later, and became known for his work with the jazz clarinettist Acker Bilk, starting with *'Stranger on the Shore'*. He developed a distinctive style of orchestration, demonstrated for us by the wonders of the best computer-generated orchestral sound we have heard; we also heard his arrangement of Richard Rodney Bennett's main theme from *'Murder on the Orient Express'*.

A Bournemouth pupil, Ivor Slaney studied at the RCM, sharing digs with William Blezard (pianist and composer). He worked mostly as an oboist, sometimes recording with his pianist wife, Mary Ludlow. His compositions once again were in the light music field, branching out into film music (for Hammer Horror!), and signature tunes for the BBC.

Within their particular fields, all these pupils of Whitlock were successful, and reflected his expert teaching. Malcolm's fascinating talk was illuminated by several rare recordings and reconstructions of pieces by all three.

Vaughan Williams & the organ

By John Francis

OUR JUNE talk was given by John Francis, who joined our Association only a few months ago. John is Vice-Chairman and Treasurer of the *Ralph Vaughan Williams Society*, and is much involved with producing the excellent Journal of that society, and with its recording arm, Albion Records. The subject of his talk was 'Vaughan Williams and the organ'.

John gave an outline of RVW's early life, and his organ training, leading to an FRCO in 1898. Despite an early reverence for Bach, he did not altogether take to life as an organist, as evidenced by his declaration that 'it's a beastly job being an organist'. Although RVW did include an organ part in his examination piece for the DMus in 1899, the piece now known as *The Cambridge Mass*, his earliest organ compositions of any importance date from just after the First World War, by which time he was in his late 40s. Of the *Three Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes*, by far the best known is *Rhosymedre*, but the others – *Bryn Calfaria* and *Hyfrydol* – also merit our attention. John played for us a recording of the *Prelude on Hyfrydol*.

Interestingly, the roots of these pieces date back to 1906 or so, when RVW was working on the English Hymnal, as the tunes were amongst the folk tunes he introduced into that book, which had such a huge effect on English hymnody.

From the same post-war period comes the *Prelude and Fugue in C minor*, which

John described as 'gritty and dissonant', though with more than a touch of modality, and which was probably somewhat ahead of its time, suffering thereby in popularity. This is nevertheless probably his masterpiece for the organ. We heard David Briggs playing the *Fugue*. The instruction to use 16' tone on the manuals throughout does not help the clarity of the writing, though Briggs manages to make it pretty convincing.

RVW wrote effectively for the organ in some of his major orchestral works – notably *Job*, a *Masque for Dancing* and the *Sinfonia Antartica* – but his later writing for the solo instrument is limited to three wedding pieces for specific occasions, and *Two Preludes* founded on *Welsh Folk Songs*, a deeply felt *Romanza* followed by a cheerful *Toccata*.

More worthy of note, perhaps, is the choral piece *A Vision of Aeroplanes*, which has a stunningly virtuosic organ part and is well worth hearing. John finished his talk, profusely illustrated by fascinating and informative slides, with a recording of the *Romanza* mentioned above, on *The White Rock*.

As a brief encore, after some discussion with members on various aspects of RVW, John played us a new recording of an organ transcription of *'The Call'* from *Five Mystical Songs*.

We were left with the feeling that, although RVW had perhaps never quite come to terms with the organ as a solo instrument, his long composing career nevertheless showed the organ's influence in many ways.

The recordings of RVW's organ music used in John's talk were played by David Briggs, and appear on a double CD set entitled *Bursts of Acclamation*, issued by Albion and available from <https://rvwsociety.com/albionrecords/>. This includes all the solo pieces mentioned, plus several transcriptions, all brilliantly performed.

A Scottish organ repatriated

A Zoom presentation December 2020

By David Shuker

IN EARLY October 2019 I was driving to a BIOS meeting in Oxford when I got a message from a Scottish acquaintance with a rather urgent request. Could I go and bid for an organ in an upcoming country house sale and if successful could I then take out the organ and do whatever restoration work was necessary with a view to repatriating the organ to Scotland? The sale was the following week, so I responded to the challenge and set off to Dorset a few days later. The entire contents of Athelhampton House were being sold off – absolutely everything, even the light fittings. The house had its 15 minutes of cinematic fame when it was the backdrop to the 1972 film, *Sleuth*, starring Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine – even the famous red MG roadster that appeared in the opening scenes was up for sale. However, Lot 233 was described as a ‘monumental oak and parcel gilt organ’ followed by a somewhat florid and largely unhelpful description. I was the successful bidder and came back two days later to take the organ away. It was sited on a minstrels’ gallery in the Great Hall and by the end of the afternoon the organ was gone, as was the portrait under the gallery and everything else.

Once back in the workshop a close look at the pipework and other details could begin. There was no maker’s plate although the history of the organ was

quite well known and it was attributed to the Edinburgh organ builder James Bruce who was active in the first half of the nineteenth century. The other likely contender is John Renton, who also worked in Edinburgh. The styles of the two organ builders are very similar and the owner of the organ (who prefers to remain anonymous) inclines to James Bruce. The history of organ building in Scotland is quite different from the rest of the UK. There were virtually no organs in Church of Scotland churches prior to 1865 but quite a few were built for private houses and chapels and in churches of denominations such as Roman Catholics and Episcopalians. The organ in Athelhampton House was originally built for Craufurdland Castle in Ayrshire before 1850 and then moved to the chapel of Myres house in Fife in 1890 and then to the drawing room in 1921. It was offered for sale by Christie’s in 1960 but did not attract a buyer and it was eventually acquired by Lady Susi Jeans for her collection of historic instruments at Cleveland Lodge in Dorking. In 1966 it was purchased by Robert Cooke MP and installed in Athelhampton House by J W Walker and Sons.

Unlike many church organs that have been modified and improved over the years, the Bruce chamber organ has survived virtually unscathed. The only change has been the addition of tuning slides to the metal pipes – there is no electric blower and none of the ranks have been replaced. All the pipework is contained within a swell box which has louvres on the roof and a sash window type shutter mechanism on the front behind the non-speaking dummy pipework.

The wooden pipework is all of a piece



The Bruce organ Photo D Shuker
at Athelhampton House

and very nicely made – the cut ups of the mouths have not been altered. The inked pitchmarks on the wooden pipes are quite characteristic and can be matched with known pipemakers working in Edinburgh.

The feet of a number of metal pipes had succumbed to ‘tin pest’ and one or two had fused to the rack boards. New feet were made by Kevin Rutterford at Finchingfield to match. The leather on the feeder and reservoir appears to be original as there was no evidence of re-leathering apart from a few patches. Needless to say, after the best part of 170 years the leather had completely dried out and many of the joints and hinges were almost broken. Consequently all the leather was stripped off the feeder and reservoir, and the old glue removed with hot water. Once the wood was dry, joints and hinges were made with new leather, tape and hot glue. Interestingly, new cot-

ton tape which matched exactly the original in style and dimension was obtained from a haberdashery supplier rather than the heavier tape used in contemporary organ building.

Similarly, the hinges for the feeder were made from upholstery strapping of virtually the same type as original. Samples of all original materials were retained as a matter of record. Even the brittle cord for the reservoir safety valve was matched with new gut cord obtained from clock making suppliers – again the most likely original source.

A few signatures have been found on pipes and various bits and pieces – they appear to be original to the date of building and may help to identify otherwise anonymous journeymen in the world of early nineteenth century Scottish organ building.

As I mentioned earlier one of the important aspects of historic organs relates to heritage – the work of long forgotten craftspeople – mostly men in organ building it has to be said. Whether or not the work is signed – and some of it would have been signed for piecework accounting – some of the skills of wood-, metal-, and leatherworking associated with organ building are apparent when you take an organ apart for restoration – and the very best work as exemplified by the James Bruce chamber organ is impressive to behold.

At the time of my talk the final location of the organ had not been decided and, in any event, the Covid-19 pandemic added further delays. However, early in 2021 a home for the organ was identified and plans were made to move the organ back to Scotland.

St Margaret’s Episcopal Church in Braemar, a village in the heart of the Cairngorms in Aberdeenshire, is known locally as the ‘English Church’. It was built originally to provide a place of worship for



James Bruce organ at Braemar

Photo D Shuker

English tourists who were attracted to the area of 'Royal Deeside', so called because of its close proximity to Balmoral. By the 1890s the congregation had outgrown the original wooden building and a new stone church was commissioned from the Aberdeen-born architect John Ninian Comper. The resulting building, completed in 1904, is regarded as Comper's finest Scottish work. In the decades following Braemar's Victorian heyday, the small congregation of local people struggled to maintain the building and it closed for worship in 1997. In 2011 a local group was formed to save the building and find a new use for it. In 2015 St Margaret's Trust was formed and, working with the Historic Churches Scotland, is developing the building as a centre for Performance, Arts and Heritage in the heart of the Cairngorms National Park. The interior is light and spacious with a delicately carved rood screen and some fine stained glass windows. The acoustic is particularly lively as there are currently no pews or carpeting.

On Saturday 5th June 2021 the organ was loaded onto a van at my workshop in Birling and began its 500-mile journey northwards. At 9.00 am on the morning of Monday 7th June the organ was being unloaded into St Margaret's Church, Braemar – in the small community that is Braemar (pop. 808). Passers-by, all known to members of the Trust, were recruited to carry in pipes, casework and other bits. The fragile Gothic decoration of the casefront panels had been carefully wrapped in blankets and all was safely spread out on the floor as the installation began. The whole process was filmed by a recently retired BBC cameraman and reporter, so occasional breaks were taken for short interviews and close-up shots of key moments. By 10.30 pm that evening all but the case front was in place and a

first tuning was complete. By midday the next day the tuning was complete and the case-front was all in place. It will, of course, need to be revisited when the organ has thoroughly acclimatised to its new environment – not least the altitude, as Braemar is the highest parish in the land at 1,112 feet above sea level. The local press showed up at the end of the afternoon and by the next day your contributor was on the front page of the Aberdeen Press & Journal with a headline 'You take the high note' with a full-page article inside under the headline 'Expert performs organ transplant in Braemar' (I hope that the BMA doesn't take me to task for professional misconduct!).

It has often been pointed out that the best stop on any organ is the acoustic of the building and this could not be more true of the James Bruce organ in St Margaret's Braemar. It was built as a delicately voiced domestic instrument (the reservoir is weighted with an assortment of scraps of architectural cast-iron which probably came from its first home) but does a commendable job in filling the large volume of the church with its responsive, if short, reverberation.

AGM Zoom Meeting

OUR AGM this year, on 24th July, was held on Zoom owing to the continuing Covid pandemic. However, Officers were elected and circulated reports approved. As our new President, Jim Bryant, takes office we look forward to meeting again in person with meetings planned for October and November, following the President's Dinner on 18th September at Canterbury.

An organist sent to Coventry

by Nicholas King

FIFTY YEARS AGO in the spring of 1971 I had my head down, working towards my Finals as organ scholar at Trinity College, Cambridge, when a letter arrived from Coventry Cathedral inviting me to cover duties there whilst the Organist and his assistant took their annual leave in the week after Easter (Low Sunday in those days) and for four weeks in the summer (from late June, reflecting the then local tradition of “wakes weeks” holiday periods).

Such an opportunity was not to be ignored. Enquiries revealed that I had been nominated for this privilege by David Willcocks, then Director of Music at King’s College, Cambridge.

It was to be the most fulfilling period of my career thus far.

The new Cathedral of St. Michael, Coventry had been dedicated on 25th May 1962 following the loss of the original to German bombing in the notorious air raids of 14th/15th November 1940. Designed by Basil Spence, it sits at right angles to the preserved ruins of the old building, so its ecclesiastical east-west axis is in fact geographically north-south. The natural slope of the site towards Fairfax Meadow means that accommodation such as offices, vestries, maintenance rooms and the Song School (which included an upright piano kitted out with a pedalboard) sit underneath the main building, accessed internally by steps to the left of the altar and, less publicly, a discreet door in the Baptistry. The main building itself is clear and open, with light directed towards the altar through the glazed west (south) end and the angled side windows, which cast rich colours on the interior.

The Cathedral had commissioned the composition and first performance on



Coventry Cathedral

Photo courtesy of Coventry Cathedral

30th May 1962 of Benjamin Britten's *War Requiem*. Its fine new four-manual organ by *Harrison & Harrison of Durham* was highly-regarded as an eclectic all-purpose instrument, at a time when many establishments were moving towards purist "authentic" instruments, a limiting fad which did not endure; the pipes were disposed in tiers on either side of the Graham Sutherland *Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph* tapestry which was hung beyond the altar, allowing vivid antiphonal effects, whilst the console was recessed into the floor on the Decani side of the choir-stalls, providing close contact with choir directors as well as the pipework. Although not regarded within the first tier of musical heritage, nor possessing a choir school (choristers were drawn from local schools), Coventry certainly had its distinctive features.

I went along for further briefing and mutual exploration. The regular cathedral choir would also be on leave, so it was a matter of playing for visiting choirs who came in to cover the weekend services (Evensong on Saturdays, Eucharist and Evensong on Sundays). There were also various other congregational services, and a lunchtime recital to be given each Wednesday. I would live in the assistant organist's flat at the top of an adjacent Georgian block, with meals provided in the Cathedral refectory. Beyond the stated duties, I would be at liberty to use the organ each evening, a facility which I was to pursue to the maximum extent in developing my repertoire on such a splendid instrument, often well into the small hours. There would be no payment other than direct expenses, the experience being of itself deemed sufficient reward.

It was much less common then than today for outside choirs to visit cathe-

drals, and the selection at Coventry for the relevant five weeks was rigorous. Most visiting choirs played safe in their choices of repertoire, recognising the pitfalls of attempting anything too ambitious in an unfamiliar and indeed unusually resonant acoustic in which they had minimal time to acclimatise themselves. I remember an especially capable outfit from the John Lyon School at Harrow, all-male but directed by an extremely competent lady, which acquitted itself at a high level within the necessary constraints. It was a delicious irony many years later that their trebles had included one who was to become the star tenor in my choir at St. John, Boxmoor.

The Cathedral was alert to the forward theological thinking of that time, which I was also experiencing at Cambridge with John "Honest to God" Robinson, the former Bishop of Woolwich, who had become our College Dean when Harry Williams had moved on to become Warden of the Community of the Resurrection at Mirfield. Whilst Robinson was somewhat baulked in his attempts to introduce modern practices to the ultra-conservative climate at Trinity College, Coventry proved to be a place where the best – such as it was – of modern liturgy was wedded with some success to traditional practice. This had a profound effect on me as I explored and developed my thinking about the wider aspects of my work as a musician in the service of the church; or, perhaps more correctly, as a churchman with additional musical arrows in his quiver.

The control of liturgy and music at the Cathedral was firmly in the hands of Canon Joseph Poole as Precentor – very firmly. He was a man of immense generosity and charity, but definitely not to

be crossed in any way. I already knew of him by reputation as a former Precentor at Canterbury, though well before the time of my schooling there; his son attended the same school as myself. Coincidentally, it turned out that David Lepine, then Organist at Coventry, was also an alumnus of the school.

Poole ruled with an iron fist in a glove which was not always velvet. The choreography of liturgical formation was punctilious, and rehearsed in scrupulous detail. Processional routes were strictly ordained by rows of 1961 penny coins embedded into the marble floors, which had to be followed precisely. Congregational service books were set out meticulously, with their spoken elements clearly arranged as one line to a breath rather than the usual unhelpful continuous narrative.

I rapidly became used to the culture of giving a positive lead (of colour rather than necessarily of volume) to congregations; who responded in like manner to an extent I have rarely experienced since. Hymns were prescribed with precise metrical breaks between verses so that everyone moved together, rather than nebulous uncertainty. I reflected that even at this date so hallowed a place as St. Paul's Cathedral still had generous "gathering notes" for every verse of every hymn, obstructing any sense of continuity. Congregational responses were "give them a clear note, lift it, and they will come in together with you". All in all, I learned a great deal which was to stand me in good stead subsequently.

The weekly lunchtime recitals gave valuable opportunity to work on many major works of the repertoire, as well as exploring some more contemporary, in which I was developing some modest reputation at Cambridge.

These five weeks would in themselves have been sufficient as a formative experience. By good fortune, my Finals produced a result which secured a grant to return to Cambridge for a fourth year pursuing a further degree. It seemed that I had not entirely disgraced myself at Coventry, as I was promptly invited back for the same duties in 1972. Little had changed, and some of the visiting choirs were the same, though I noted that a couple which had been over-ambitious in 1971 did not return.

On the back of this work I was then invited to fulfil similar duties at Canterbury Cathedral for three weeks later in 1972, whilst the Coventry connection enabled me to nominate that organ when invited to record two recitals including somewhat challenging contemporary repertoire for Radio 3 in 1973 and 1975.

The rest is, as they say, history. It is occasionally tempting to wonder what might have happened had I gone down the path of cathedral music, but things turned out differently. The design of the Coventry organ influenced my later thinking profoundly, and the new *Nicholson* organ at Boxmoor visited by the Association in 2012, though on a rather smaller scale, features many elements of that thinking in its versatility and voicing.

Amongst my possessions is a small Coventry cross of nails, to a design fashioned from medieval nails left behind on the floor when the wooden roof beams of the original building were burnt to destruction in the wartime bombing. This I had with me when re-visiting the cathedral on honeymoon a few years later, and I subsequently embedded it in a modest plinth of red Cambrian stone from the Malvern hills, where my wife and I also spent a day. I usually take that memorable cross with me when delivering Home Communion.

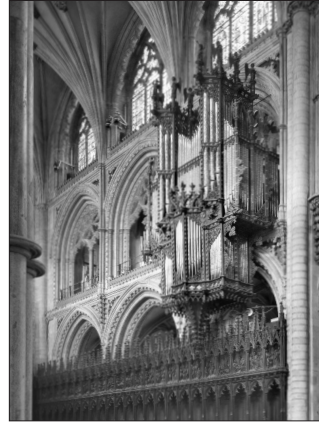
Front Cover

Ely Cathedral Organ

By Paul Hale

I 850-51 WAS A PIVOTAL moment in the history of Ely Cathedral, for the choir stalls were moved to their present position (from a more easterly place in Presbytery, where the old organ stood) and a new organ by *William Hill* was installed in three bays of the north triforium. *Hill* clad one bay with extraordinary casework – exactly as we see today. However, the design of this “swallow’s nest” case owed nothing to the organ-builders: it was the conception of *Gilbert Scott*, the architect who was restoring the cathedral, installing new stalls and the elaborate wrought-iron screen which still graces the entrance to the Quire.

The 1850s-1880s were decades when ‘vista’ was fashionable: the need for a view of the east end from the nave became centrally important. Ancient stone screens, dividing the Nave from the Quire, were swept away in many cathedrals and at Ely, Lichfield, Worcester, Hereford and Salisbury, remarkable decorated wrought-iron screens were substituted. In other cathedrals open stone screens appeared (e.g. Durham and Bristol), other old stone screens were pierced with arches to create a view (e.g. Exeter and Manchester) and some were left with no screen at all (e.g. Peterborough and [until 1961] Chichester). Sadly, in all but two of these cathedrals the historic organ disappeared from its traditional position on the screen. The eye-catching Hereford



Gilbert Scott organ case Ely Photo by C. Jilks

screen, designed by *Scott*, made by *Skidmore & Co* and first displayed at the 1862 International Exhibition, can be seen today dominating the entrance hall of the *Victoria & Albert Museum*. Fortunately, *Scott*'s screens at Ely, Lichfield and Worcester remain in place.

The spectacular 1851 organ case at Ely was inspired by the famous 1489 case – 20 metres high – at Strasbourg cathedral, and the staircase to the loft is a copy of that at Amiens, made in 1422. The lower section – in ‘Rückpositiv’ position – was left empty by *Hill* and again by *Harrison & Harrison* in their epoch-creating 1908 rebuild. It was filled with pipes only in 1975, when a Positive organ was added by *H&H* during their electrification. At the same time, tonal changes were made according to ideas by Arthur Wills and Cecil Clutton. The most recent work took place in 2001 when new blowers were installed and the more extreme neo-baroque and quasi-French characteristics of the 1975 work were improved. The 4-manual, 80-stop organ with its unique and beautiful case remains one of the UK's finest and most distinctive instruments.



Ely Cathedral Quire with Gibert Scott screen & Lantern Tower Photo by C.Jilks

Obituary

Graham Clifford

26 March 1932 – 12 January 2021

By Malcolm Hall

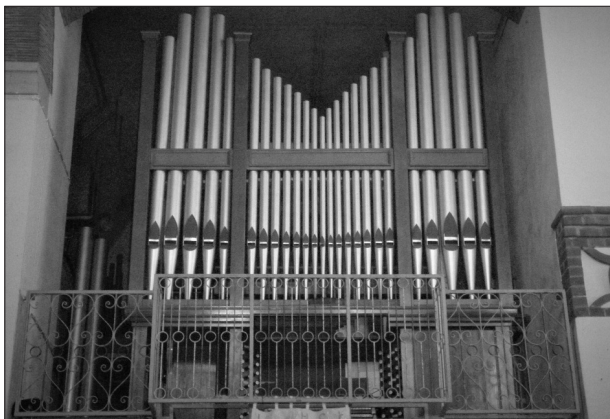
OUR FRIEND and KCOA member Graham Clifford was born on 26th March 1932. He was the only child of Elizabeth and William Clifford. His father, a dock worker and amateur violinist, was keen for the young Graham to have piano lessons, partly, it may be said, so that he would have an accompanist as his son became more proficient. Graham grew up in the quiet village of Newington near Sittingbourne, Kent and soon developed a keen interest in railways, and it was after primary school, Graham gained a place at Rochester Technical School where, travelling by train, he became particularly friendly with Freddie Banks, a driver at Gillingham depot. Freddie allowed the young Graham to enjoy (strictly against regulations!) footplate rides on the engine.

About the age of fifteen, the local clergyman heard about this young musical lad and persuaded Graham to join the Newington church choir. He found himself at one practice looking at very unfamiliar music and asked a nearby chorister "Which line do I sing?" "You're a tenor", came the reply – "so it's the third line down in the music". Graham found the music and environment quite different from the piano music which he was learning, but soon offered to take up the organ as a second instrument.

On leaving school, Graham was keen to take up employment on the railways, but

his father took another stance altogether, "No son of mine is going to work on the railways", leaving Graham to study and eventually get work at the Medway College of Further and Higher Education. Graham's work involved physics and chemistry, subjects he told friends that he never really enjoyed. Graham, however, was able to pursue his railway and steam interests in model engineering; he joined Maidstone model engineering club and built several working scale engines which he was able to run at Maidstone's 'Mote Park' outdoor track. Graham split all his free time between railways and church music; he became organist at Newington overseeing the completion of some tonal work, he also pursued some casual holiday work with Ken Bishop, a tuner from 'Osmonds Organ Company', learning much about action faults, tuning and design.

Graham never learned to drive a car, so spent many hours traveling by train both to work, and in pursuit of his hobbies. He joined the 'Kent & East Sussex Railway' where he qualified as a locomotive fireman. In the year 1966, Graham was told of a church in Herne Bay (over 20 miles from his home) where an organist was needed, and for some reason felt a sense of 'calling' to find out more about the post. He was eventually persuaded by the Rector of St. Bartholomew's to take on the choir and play the then rather inadequate organ (a six stop *Henry Jones*, now in Challock Church) on condition that an instrument more suited for the size of building be provided – a proposal that he was talked into doing primarily himself with help from members of the choir, and which was to take over forty years of his spare time. The over-large instrument, for the building, in Hollingbourne Church, crammed into a chamber on the



The rebuilt organ at Herne Bay Photo by M Hall

south side of the Chancel, and in desperate need of major work, was moved to Herne Bay with the help of Ashford organ builder Tom Robbins – rumour has it that he drove an open-backed lorry, in which reverse gear was ‘lower’ than first, backing up Hollingbourne Hill with the large wooden pedal opens sticking out the back! Graham gradually reassembled the instrument, with a new electric action, including many parts he manufactured himself.

In 1975, at the age of forty-three, Graham started a new job as an organ builder with a newly started company in Canterbury, enabling him to acquire more parts for the instrument, which was gradually increasing in size. His time though, with this organ builder was only to last a few years, partly due to circumstances and his mother’s increasing dementia; his father having already died within a few years of moving to Herne Bay. Graham acted as a full time carer for his mother, until she had to go into hospital care – a sad and low point in his life.

During the 1980’s the choir in St. Bartholomew’s increased in size, and for a time the Church developed a particularly strong musical tradition, where a

variety of music making and concerts were enjoyed: a performance by Dr. Allan Wicks and the ‘Canterbury Orchestra’ playing the *Poulenc Concerto* being a high point. Graham continued to work on the instrument even after giving up the post as Organist and Choirmaster and was encouraged by his successor Peter Cameron to add a 16ft Trombone unit to both the pedal and manual divisions. Work continued until about 2016 when the Church paid for some professional re-leathering to be done. In 2016, Graham sadly collapsed in the organ chamber while trying to add oil into one of the electrical blower motors and was found, many hours later, by the Vicar’s husband who had fortunately come into the Church late one evening to collect something. After a stay in hospital, and a fitted pacemaker, Graham spent three happy years in a care home near Whitstable, and then a further move into the former railway workers’ convalescence home in Herne Bay, where, during the Covid lockdown, his health sadly declined. Graham passed away on 12 January 2021, his ashes interred in St. Bartholomew’s garden of rest, at the church where he dedicated so much of his life and talents.

The English Music Festival

By Kevin Grafton

THE BBC PROMS are proclaimed as 'the greatest classical music festival in the world'. By and large, they do a good job. This cannot be denied, especially in the plague year of 2020, when the Proms planners, prevented from functioning in their normal way, were able to broadcast an excellent series of old recordings, supplemented by two weeks' live performances without audience.

However, the Proms do suffer from the Glock legacy. When William Glock took over as Controller of the Proms in 1960, he was on a mission to promote British and foreign avant-garde music, and it was clearly his view that little of consequence had been composed in Great Britain between 1900 and 1960. He took over control of the Proms programmes on a personal basis, where his predecessors had used a committee, so it was his personal taste that prevailed.

The Manchester School (Harrison Birtwistle, Peter Maxwell Davies, Alexander Goehr) were in; modernist foreign composers (Berio, Dallapiccola, Boulez, Henze, Ligeti, Stockhausen) were in; established contemporary British composers (Britten, Tippett) were in. However, he ignored English music composed during the 'English Musical Renaissance', around the turn of the 20th century.

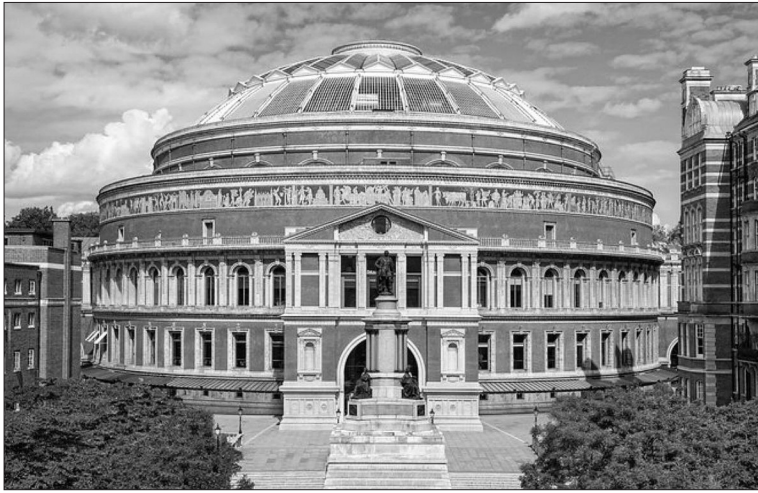
England gained a reputation overseas as 'das Land ohne Musik' (the country without music), thanks to the efforts of a few 19th century German critics, and too often,

English critics believed this and were only interested in European contemporary music; Glock's attitude fuelled this.

Here is a list, to illustrate the magnitude of the problem: William Alwyn, Richard Arnell, Granville Bantock, Lennox Berkeley, Lord Berners, Rutland Boughton, York Bowen, Havergal Brian, George Butterworth, Eric Coates, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Madeleine Dring, George Dyson, Howard Ferguson, Gerald Finzi, Percy Fletcher, Cecil Armstrong Gibbs, Ivor Gurney, Herbert Howells, William Hurlstone, John Ireland, Kenneth Leighton, Robin Milford, E.J. Moeran, Montague Phillips, Roger Quilter, Alan Rawsthorne, Cyril Rootham, Edmund Rubbra, Ethel Smyth, Arthur Somervell, Charles Villiers Stanford, Henry Walford Davies, Peter Warlock.

All these composed in the early to mid-20th century, and produced some very worthwhile work – but in most cases, none of their works has been performed at the Proms in the past ten years (2010 – 2019, ignoring 2020, which is of necessity an unrepresentative year).

The exceptions proving the rule include George Butterworth, whose beautiful tone-poem *The Banks of Green Willow* turned up in 2010 and 2016, and some songs in 2014; Havergal Brian, whose *Gothic Symphony* turned up in 2011 (the only one of his 32 symphonies to be performed in these ten years); Samuel Coleridge-Taylor appears with one brief piece in 2012. Herbert Howells' masterpiece *Hymnus Paradisi* was performed in 2012. John Ireland's *These things shall be* was also performed in 2012, and his Piano Concerto in 2019. Lennox Berkeley and Granville Bantock had several pieces performed in 2013, William Alwyn a sym-



The Royal Albert Hall, home of the BBC Proms Photo Public Domain

phony in 2014, and Peter Warlock *The Curlew* in 2013. Gurney's *War Elegy* had its first Proms performance in the significant anniversary year of 2014, Moeran's Violin Concerto was performed in 2014, and Finzi had one piece in 2016; an eight minute opera extract by Ethel Smyth was done in 2018, and Stanford's *Songs of the Sea* in 2018. The occasional song by three or four of these composers apart, that is it – not a huge list of exceptions.

Another list: Arnold, Bax, Bliss, Bridge, Britten, Delius, Elgar, Holst, Parry, Tippett, Vaughan Williams, Walton. All these are well known major figures in English 20th century music, and have deservedly featured in the Proms. Surely, however, some of their better known work could give way at times to the best work of some lesser known English composers?

I am a great admirer of Britten's music, but is it right to perform 57 pieces by him in this ten year span, when others are so neglected? 22 of these were admittedly in his centenary year of 2013; yet how many pieces from Howells' huge output were performed at the Proms in *his* centenary

year of 1992? Not one.

One organisation has taken tremendous steps to counteract the Glock legacy. The English Music Festival was founded in 2006 by Em Marshall-Luck, and features the music of British composers of all eras, but with a special emphasis on the recovery of neglected repertoire from the early to mid-20th century, the 'English Musical Renaissance'. The main Festival normally takes place over the late May Bank Holiday weekend each year in and around the picturesque village of Dorchester-upon-Thames, using Dorchester Abbey, All Saints' Church, Sutton Courtenay and Radley College, Oxford (all within a short drive). In more recent years there has also been a smaller autumn Festival in Yorkshire, and now even a Festival in Johannesburg. In 2020 the entire May Festival was moved online, using a mixture of live performances and recordings taken from the associated EM Records label. I watched and was enthralled by every minute of it – a total of twelve concerts and four talks, over four days.

The May Festival was supplemented by

a short Festival in Horsham in October 2020, and this will now be the venue for the May 2021 Festival, though I believe and hope that the long-term aim is to return to Dorchester.

Music by all the composers in my first list, earlier in this article, has been performed at the EMF in the past few years. Music by better known British composers does appear, but the focus of the Festival planning is definitely on the neglected many rather than the famous few. I have been a regular attender of the Festival since its inception, and have heard some marvellous performances of works totally unknown to me, but undeserving of their neglect at the hands of other festival and concert planners. From the last two years' Festivals alone, I can call to mind in particular the melodious Symphony by Robin Milford, George Dyson's cantata *Hierusalem*, a concert of songs for tenor and piano by Howells, Warlock, Ireland, Finzi and Ian Venables, the lively overture *Portsmouth Point* (no, not Walton's) by Lord Berners, part songs by Dyson, Holst, Bliss, Finzi etc., a fantastic one-woman presentation of Ethel Smyth's life and music – a wealth of orchestral, choral, vocal and chamber music, backed up by a daily talk on a relevant musical topic. Performers have included Hilary Davan Wetton, Owain Arwel Hughes, Roderick Williams, the City of London Choir, the Godwine Choir, Rupert Marshall-Luck, Julian Lloyd Webber, the BBC Concert Orchestra, the Holst Orchestra and many others.

The countryside surroundings of the EMF add allure. When visiting the Royal Albert Hall for a Prom, you can buy over-priced refreshments and perhaps eat them in the 'fresh' air of South Kensington. At the EMF, you can buy pub food in a local hostelry or eat your

packed lunch in the idyllic surroundings of Dorchester Abbey or the peaceful churchyard in Sutton Courtenay. (I cannot yet speak for the surroundings in Horsham). I mentioned above the EM Records label. This has now produced some 65 CD recordings of the type of repertoire performed at the EMF. In many cases the recordings have been made as a result of concert performances of the works involved, and these include a lot of first recordings. A random sample includes the complete piano works of E. J. Moeran, a cantata and Ballads by John Gardner, the complete works of Parry for violin and piano, choral music by Holst, Dyson, Howells etc., four new works inspired by Richard III, violin concertos by Robin Milford and Stanford, and so on – a treasure trove of largely forgotten music, given new life.

I warmly commend the EMF to you; details are on their website at englishmusicfestival.org.uk.

This article was first published in 2020 in Tempo 16 - the magazine of Mensa's Classical Music Special Interest Group.

New Members

Marleen Crnković - *Sevenoaks*

John Francis - *Tenterden*

Louis Collins - *Dover*

Rainham, St Margaret's Church

"A Cautionary Tale - A Fairy Story" published in our February 2021 Journal caused some offence to the clergy and congregation of St Margaret's Church, and we must apologise for this publication appearing without fully confirming the veracity of all claims made therein, some which may be subject to legal proceedings, of which we were not aware.

A new *Trompette en Chamade*

By Colin Jilks

TO PARAPHRASE Jane Austen, “It is a truth universally acknowledged that an organist in possession of a fine organ, and a generous legacy, must be in the want of a new organ stop”. For one of our Association members what had once remained a distant aspiration, has now become a reality.

For Gary Tollerfield, organist of St. Mary’s church, Platt, the new stop for his organ was to be a *Trompette en Chamade*, having admired St. Paul’s Cathedral’s dazzling West End Trumpets for many years.

The initial idea for St. Mary’s Church was to mark the millennium with a project such as a stained-glass window and one had already been proposed. Sadly, few could have anticipated the sudden death of Julian Collings’ father, who was St. Mary’s Treasurer. For Julian and his father, Platt’s fine organ was central to their thoughts and church members realised that, as well as a window, a truly fitting memorial would be an addition to the organ. Platt church has always sported a fine West gallery ideally suited to an organ addition and, after much thought and discussion, plans were placed before the church council for a new *Trompette en Chamade*. Monies were promised and fund raising events were organised for this major undertaking.

Naturally, the design of this fine new stop had to be just right, suitably



West gallery *Trompette en Chamade*, St Mary Platt

Photo by C.Jilks



Organ Consultant Paul Hale at the console following a recent overhaul Photo by C. Jilks

scaled for the building and, especially, tonally balanced for the organ. Many “*en Chamades*” can be uncomfortably sharp-edged in tone, which would be anathema in an organ containing early 19th century pipework; a sympathetic, but no less exciting, tonal design was required.

Measurements were taken of the Platt organ’s Great 8ft Trumpet, particularly the shallots and reeds. It is the design of the shallots, which would fundamentally determine the new stop’s tonal structure. The “shallot” is the brass tube, flattened and open on one side, that the pipe’s brass reed vibrates against, effectively closing and opening the aperture in the shallot 440

times per second for a pipe speaking middle “A” at 8ft pitch. “Fiery” *en-Chamades* have the shallot opening as large as possible; in fact the aperture is open under the reed right up to the reed block. But not for our Platt Trompette, the half-open “English” design was used to match and tonally blend the stop with the main organ, complementing its present reeds.

The scale of the pipe resonators is also vitally important, although the pipes speaking horizontally does not directly effect the pipe speech, but it does enable the sound to project into the church building unhindered. The burnished pipe metal of 80% tin, 20% lead lends strength as well as visual

splendour and, perhaps, a little brightening of the sound.

The position chosen for the new stop was to be the West gallery, which is ideally suited, having a balustrade on which to mount the Trompette's wind chests. The pipes project, seeming to defy gravity, out into the church, but the pipes are in fact hung from a supporting frame, which in turn is suspended on six invisible wires securely fixed to the church roof timbers. St. Mary Platt is a very lofty building and it was a courageous organ builder who climbed the scaffold and ladders to reach the roof.

As the new stop's wind chest has electric action, and with the addition of twelve top-note flue pipes, the *Trompette* is playable at both 8ft and 4ft pitch. The organ was originally a two-manual and pedal instrument, but the luxury and extra flexibility of a Solo manual from which the new stops, including the Great Trumpet, could be played was an addition which provided an extra *frisson* to this exciting project.

The installation of the new keyboard required the complete remodeling of the console, extending the stop jambs and remaking the music desk. The scheme also included new solid state actions and complete rewiring of the console.

This has been an adventurous project, which has greatly enhanced an already fine organ. Its organist, Gary Tollerfield, a man of youthful enthusiasms, now displays a *Joie de vivre* that is equally shared by his listeners. Regrettably, I was unable to attend the opening recital by Julian Collings last December and it was not until April of

this year when Paul Hale, from Southwell Minster, arrived to put the instrument through its paces, that I fully experienced the new stop away from the console.

His recital was on Saturday 6 April, the day following The Queen Mother's stately and momentous funeral procession from Queen's Chapel, St. James' Palace to Westminster Hall where she lay-in-state, mourned by the nation. Thoughtfully, Paul had changed his programme to fit the occasion, concluding his recital with William Walton's *Crown Imperial*, composed for George VI's Coronation service in 1937.

Paul Hale's sensitive, yet unashamedly bold, playing displayed the full tonal richness of the organ. With the pomp and pageantry of The Queen Mother's lying-in-state fresh in our minds, together with the sheer majesty of Walton's music, shimmering with *Trompette en Chamade* flourishes, there was a tangible air of national pride rippling through the audience.

Other recitals have followed with Roger Sayer in June and, fittingly, Julian Collings in July, for our Association's AGM. Each organist has revealed different and varied facets of this fine English organ now graced by a *Trompette en Chamade* whose English credentials, in spite of its French name, can never have been in doubt.

A Memorial service for Gary Tollerfield was held at St Mary Platt in September 2013 following his death in August that year.

(This article was first published in the KCOA Journal in 2003)

Gerard Brooks

A short Profile

FOLLOWING the resignation of Winston Churchill in April 1955, Anthony Eden succeeded him as Prime Minister, calling an immediate general election. A popular figure, he increased the Conservative majority from seventeen to sixty. Alas, his success was to be short lived, the 1956 Suez Crisis bringing a premature tragic end to his premiership: Anthony Eden resigned on 9 January 1957.

However, Suez was not the only notable event of 1956, as Gerard Brooks was born on 3rd September in Abingdon, Oxfordshire. In 1961, when Gerard was just five years of age, his father got a job at the Eurochemic plant in Mol, Belgium, and the family spent the next three years living there. Thrown in at the deep end, Gerard was sent to the local international school where English was *not* one of the languages spoken! He thus had to pick up French as best he could, and he remembers hearing a recording of himself chatting with a school friend at the age of six in perfect, well-accented French, albeit with a limited vocabulary. Sadly, on his return to England he stopped speaking French, but the seeds had been well-sown and when he took it up again at secondary school, much of it returned and he remains a fluent French speaker today, helped by the two years he spent in France as a graduate student.

He had been given piano lessons in Belgium at the local conservatoire and started the organ when he was about twelve. His interest was sparked by his father's love for the instrument: his father had never had the chance of music

lessons at school so it became a great source of joy to him that his eldest son took up the instrument. Gerard initially went to see James Dalton at The Queen's College, Oxford for a consultation lesson but was deemed too young to start learning at the time. Soon, however, he began lessons with the late John Webster, then organist of University College, Oxford and the University Church. Webster taught him a secure and correct pedal technique over the two years that Gerard studied with him, but his early death at the age of fifty-five brought an end to what was a very fruitful teacher-pupil relationship. After a year with Walter Hillsman, Gerard was awarded an organ scholarship at Lincoln College, Oxford, where he spent three years reading for a degree in music. He was now visiting Susi Jeans at Cleveland Lodge in Dorking for private lessons. At the end of his university course Gerard decided that he would like to study in France – a desire that sprang from his fascination with the French organ sound. He was able to put this into effect when he became the first organist to win the Stephen Arlen Memorial Award, given to a musician to study abroad. He initially planned to spend three months in France but with the help of various other scholarships and by working as an accompanist he was able to stay on in France for two years, enrolling at the conservatoire of Strasbourg and working with Daniel Roth.

On his return to England, he went to Homerton College, Cambridge to do a PGCE and then began working as a music teacher, briefly in Oxford and London and then at Wantage, combining this with the post of Organist at St. Helen's Parish Church, Abingdon. During his time as a class music teacher he began writing school musicals, which



Gerard Brooks

Photo by C. Jilks

was to bear fruit later with the publication by *Boosey & Hawkes* of *Nativity News*. In 1987, he moved to London to be Associate Director of Music at All Souls, Langham Place, where he was to spend twenty years working alongside Noël Tredinnick. As well as having responsibility for the choir there, he toured with the All Souls Orchestra, playing in all the major British concert halls and Moscow Conservatoire. During this time, he continued teaching part time at Islington Green School and also began playing in West End shows as a deputy keyboard player: the brother of a school friend was, at the time, the assistant conductor of *Phantom of the Opera* and he invited Gerard in to see the show with a view to deputising as a keyboard player. Gerard notes that the skills needed for this were well-served by his training as an organist: the ability to follow a conductor and singers was just as important, and changing 'patches' or sounds on complicated electronic keyboards was not so very far removed from changing stops by pressing pistons! He played first in *Phantom of the Opera*, and then in *Starlight Express*, *Aspects of Love* and finally *Mamma Mia!* Although a very different world from that of the classical organ, the professional discipline required was just as rigorous!

Gerard's career as an organ teacher began with his involvement with the *St. Giles International Organ School*, working with Anne Marsden Thomas. He is now a teacher with the *Royal College of Organists Academy* and a professor at the *Royal Academy of Music*. However, he has maintained his associations with schools, teaching at Latymer Upper School in Hammersmith and more recently at Sevenoaks School.

In 2008, Gerard was appointed Director of Music at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster where he directs the choir and plays the famous *Hill/Harrison* organ. He also acts as Organ Curator of the his-

toric *Bridge/Drake* organ at Christ Church, Spitalfields. At both churches, he organises a prestigious recital series.

As a recitalist, Gerard has played in many venues: he instituted and played every year for twenty five years in the series at Oxford Town Hall alongside his series at All Souls' Langham Place. He has played in many European venues including the cathedrals of Notre Dame, Paris, Cologne, Trondheim and Westminster Abbey. In 2007 he was invited to play on the monumental Skinner organ at Yale University.

His recording career began back in 1986 with an LP (remember those?) of transcriptions by Edwin Lemare on the *Father Willis* organ at Oxford Town Hall. Over the years since then he has recorded a great deal of French repertoire on historic French organs in Rouen, Perpignan, Laon, and Paris, encompassing the music of Gigout, Saint-Saëns and many other composers. In 2014, he began an association with Fugue State Films which resulted in the acclaimed DVD set *The Genius of Cavallé-Coll*, and *Widor: Master of the Organ Symphony*.

Gerard is the current President of the *Royal College of Organists*. Normally a two-year term, due to the pandemic this has been extended to three. This is an honorary appointment, involving attendance at Trustee meetings and making a speech and presenting diplomas at the College's annual conferment ceremony.

Gerard is married to Charlotte, recently retired as a clinical oncologist at Maidstone hospital, and they have two children: Hamish, a motorsport engineer and Verity, currently pursuing a piano performance course in Adelaide Australia.

Our KCOA is indeed fortunate to have Gerard as a member and many remember our visit to London, hearing him play, demonstrating the fine qualities of the *Bridge/Drake* organ at Christ Church, Spitalfields.

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