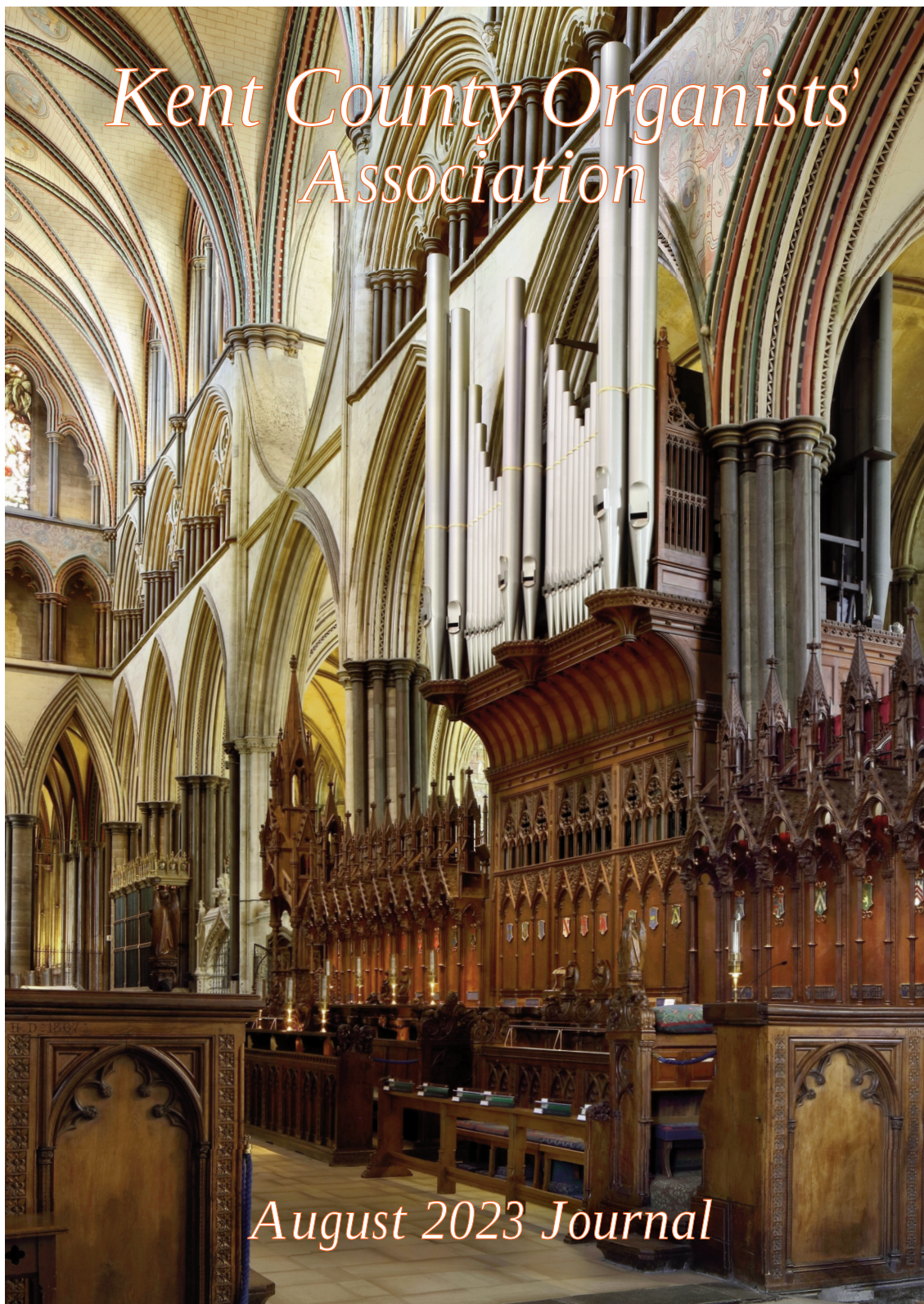




Kent County Organists' Association

August 2023 Journal

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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.

Our President writes

By Stephen Banfield

IT IS A SLIGHTLY daunting privilege to become your President: your 59th, according to the Treasurer's database, if we count a person's second or third term of office separately. (One president served four times.) This is for two reasons. The first is that some KCOA presidents have been particularly distinguished in the wider musical world. Robert J Ashfield and Gerald H Knight were or had been organists respectively of Rochester and Canterbury cathedrals. Most of my predecessors, incidentally, have been men, though several are listed only with two or three initials so one cannot tell. However, the Association had at least two female presidents, Linda Rowe and Muriel Gore, in its first quarter-century (it was founded in 1946). There was also a husband and wife team, Canon and Mrs D B Eperson, in the 1970s.

The other reason for trepidation is that I am not sure I shall be able to match the dedication, determination, and patience of your 58th President, Jim Bryant. Nicholas King paid Jim a handsome tribute of praise at this summer's AGM in Wye, and it was thoroughly deserved, for Jim guided us through the pandemic, brought us into the digital age with Zoom meetings and now a new website, emphasised our need to attract the young (and started doing so), and set an upstanding example in organising meetings and trips in and beyond the region while expecting all the members of the Committee to

do likewise, which is right.

I think Committee members will happily organise things, and visits to Romney Marsh, more east Kent villages, Birmingham, Bristol, and Tonbridge have already been offered for next year. At a recent committee it was agreed that in future at least one meeting a year would be devoted to a participatory workshop or talk on some aspect of technique, repertoire, or other matter of interest to organists; this may not be so easy to agree on or attract people to, though there is no reason why it should not be combined with a church visit and, even more important, a church tea. I am pleased to report that the latter is alive and well, to judge from the splendid spread provided at the AGM.

In the immediate future we have the remainder of this year's programme to look forward to: the President's Lunch in Maidstone on 16 September with Jonathan Rennert as guest speaker; a visit to the new Canterbury Cathedral organ in the evening of 10 October; evensong with Ben Saul at Faversham parish church on 25 November; and the Christmas Lunch at the Cathedral Lodge in Canterbury on 9 December. Eating, drinking, and singing will clearly loom large over the next few months!

The healthy AGM attendance, on a visit day that included two or three new members despite a train strike, suggests that a decline in numbers is contingent rather than absolute. Your Committee is soon going to be discussing this, and undoubtedly you, the membership, will be tasked with helping us to replenish and rejuvenate our cohorts. Watch this space!

A Recital Afternoon in memory of Brian Moore

*All Saints' Church,
Maidstone
14th January 2023*

BRIAN MOORE had been the last surviving founder member of the Association, so it was especially appropriate that the first event of our 75th anniversary year took the form of a recital afternoon at All Saints' Church, Maidstone, where he was centrally involved for so much of his life, and where the *Kent County Organists' Association* had been formed in 1948. We were particularly glad to welcome Marion Whitehead, Brian's sister, representing his family.

We visit the church regularly for the Organ Competition, but it is a long time since it was the venue for any other event of the Association.

After an introduction by Jim Bryant, Patti Whaley opened the afternoon with Bach's *Fantasia in G BWV572*, opting for bright fluework in the opening section, followed by a solid *pleno* registration in the main section, where those interested by the "impossible" bottom B in the pedal line noted that she played it at the existing pitch, rather than deploying a momentary 32ft or taking the phrase up an octave to preserve the lie of the line. The *pleno* registration was augmented for the fulgurating final section.

Nicholas King followed with the so-called Albinoni *Adagio* – actually constructed for strings by Remo Giazotto, a 20th century musicologist, using fragmentary material by Albinoni. This gave an opportunity to display the subtle qui-

eter ranks of the instrument before rising to the final climax and subsiding, within relatively few bars, to the reflective colour of the opening.

Lionel Marchant, the present titulaire at All Saints', then gave a brief resumé of Brian's career at All Saints', leading into a group of pieces played on the chamber organ at the west end which Brian had donated to the church; an instrument which, although adapted over the years before arriving at All Saints', has a distinctive character, clean, clear and crisp in the acoustic.

Barbara Childs offered a precise account of Arne's *Con spirito*, followed by Pachelbel's *Ciacona in F minor*, tidily-presented by John Ross; a piece which deserves to be played more widely. Matthew Young concluded this section of the afternoon with Croft's *Voluntary in C*, Franck's *Noël Angevin* and Walther's *Lobt Gott, ihr Christen, allzugleich*.

Reflecting Brian's quintessential character as an English gentleman, Nicholas King returned to the main organ with Parry's *Elegy*, written for the funeral of the Earl of Rockingham in 1913. This gave the opportunity to demonstrate the clarinet stop on the Choir organ.

Andrew Cesana concluded the afternoon with the *Berceuse* and *Carillon de Longpont* by Vierne, playing from memory.

Closing the proceedings, Jim Bryant thanked the performers, remarking that we should perhaps have more such occasions when proficient members of the Association perform for the benefit of their colleagues. The assembled company of almost forty, including several from the congregation of All Saints' and others from Brian's local career, then retired to the generous tea for which Elizabeth Marchant and her helpers are justly renowned.

Review of recent Meetings

Westwell & Hothfield

DESPITE THREATS of snow and bad weather, which thankfully stayed in the north, our meeting in March to these little-known villages, just west of Ashford, proved a delightful afternoon in early spring. Our committee had been keen to choose a Parish where our late member Rev. Canon John Wright had been Rector, and to that end a candle and copy of his funeral service from Canterbury Cathedral were placed on the high altar in St Mary the Virgin Westwell, below the splendid vaulting of this historic church. Warden, Mrs Susan Wood, welcomed us with a brief introduction to the church, assuring us that we were the first to be able to take advantage of the newly installed toilet facilities completed the previous day!

The instrument in St. Mary's, situated in the south side behind the chancel screen was unusual being a 2-manual instrument of mixed origins, built originally as a 2-manual, mechanical instrument by *F H Browne* (unknown date) and



Westwell, *F H Browne* Photo C Clemence

then worked on by the Maidstone builder *Walmsley* in 1908 with further work by *Harvey & Co*. This Instrument's bright, clean sound was demonstrated by our member Janet Hughes (newly in her post at Wye!) who demonstrated the various registers and choruses individually before playing a *Prelude in G BWV 541* by JS Bach, followed by choral prelude on *Melcombe* by Parry and ending with *Carillion Sortie* by Mulet.

The architectural features of this wonderful building, particularly that of the chancel and sanctuary with its tall stone trefoil arch, 13c 'Jesse' window (one of only two, outside a Cathedral) and the ancient choir stalls, set out in monastic fashion, are well worth a visit, so if you were not able to join us at this meeting and happen to be driving in this area between Easter and Harvest, when the church is open for the welcome of visi-



On the organ at Hothfield Photo C Clemence



Hothfield, G M Holdich Photo C Clemence

tors, please make a little diversion and enjoy this historic place of prayer.

Our second church we visited was St. Margaret's Hothfield, a mile or two outside the centre of the village, a church which up to 1954 was totally dominated by Hothfield Place, a vast manor house built towards the north-east corner of the churchyard. Churchwarden and local historian, Karen Brock, assisted by the present organist, Malcolm Wood, enthusiastically provided us with a potted history of the area, and thanks to an array of slides, postcards and historical material, we learnt of the war time use of the common land, commandeered by the army where prisoner of war camps were built and later Nissen huts used to house evacuees. The Manor House built around 1780 by Samuel Wyatt was for a time one of the most affluent in the country, boasting its own gas works and fire station! Lady Hothfield being organist & choir leader until 1914 enjoyed the company of several celebrated musicians at the time, one being Sir Arthur Sullivan

who composed the tune to the words of Mrs Anne Proctor's *The Lost Chord* while at the Manor. Records show that the instrument now in St. Margaret's Church, a two manual & pedal GM Holdich, mentioned in the builder's Jubilee listing of 1887 (but obviously older than this date) was built for Baroness Hothfield. This Instrument (not yet surveyed on the POR) may well have been reconstructed when moved from the Manor House, which may account for the strange disposition of the great soundboard pipework and the issues experienced when trying to tune the Fifteenth rank!

This instrument is also unusual in having on the pedal a Bourdon 8ft, pedal Violon 16ft and pedal octave coupler.

It was a pleasure during our meeting to welcome two of the youngest and most recently joined members of our Association: Louis Collins, tuner from *Mander Organs* and Elisha Harriss, chorister at Ashford Town Centre Church, who is receiving organ lessons from Bryan Gipps. We are also grateful to the 'Friends' of Hothfield Parish Church for providing the wonderful tea and warm reception during this interesting afternoon.



Hothfield Holdich console Photo C Clemence

A visit to London

TWO IMPORTANT Kensington churches; two large four-manual organs; five 32-foot registers between them. But in every respect a great contrast between the two instruments and their surroundings as enjoyed by the eleven members who made the trip to London on 15 April.

We first visited Holy Trinity Sloane Street, whose earlier organists included Edwin Lemare, Walter Alcock, H L Balfour, and, as assistant to Alcock, John Ireland. Our host was their Honorary Assistant Organist, Michael Brough, who knows the instrument better than anyone and indeed constructed a part of it (the bottom octave of the 32-foot reed) on his kitchen table. He explained in detail the various transformations the instrument has undergone, including bomb damage, since first built, already as a four-manual, by *J J Walker* in 1891. He also told us about the building, whose architect *J D Sedding* was an organist. It has been described as Lord Cadogan's private chapel, but its famous Arts-and-Crafts decorative details remain unfinished. They could not be fully observed because of a 'pre-loved' clothes sale taking place in the nave at the same time as our visit; our host had not been told about this. The organ has enormous power, a famously beautiful Great Diapason, a 32-foot flue whose pipes stand upright starting below ground level, two independent sets of shutters on the Swell, one facing west, the other south, and a great deal else besides. The instrument was sampled as time allowed. One of our youngest members, Charles Francis, gave a superb performance of



Holy Trinity Sloane Street Photo J Bryant

two movements of Mendelssohn's *Sonata no 1 in F minor*; Michael himself played Petr Eben's '*Moto ostinato*' with great expertise; and Ireland's *Capriccio* was tried out: although probably not written while Ireland was at Holy Trinity, it is dedicated to Balfour.

We then made our way by Tube to High Street Kensington where we were pleased to be greeted by sunshine for our walk west to the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Victories with its cosmopolitan congregation including a sizeable French element. Having been warmly welcomed by the Director of Music Timothy Macklin, we were immediately ushered up to the west end organ gallery where we were treated to an amazing view of the nave with its lofty ceiling and the first glimpse of a wonderful console by the Slovenian firm *Skrabl*, inspired by the work of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll.

Tim began by reminding us of the manual layout - it being different from the English equivalent. He then continued to demonstrate the rich colours of the instrument so typical of the French tradition beginning with the beautiful 'Fonds' and their attendant warmth before moving on to demonstrate the



Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Victories, Kensington Photo J Bryant

reeds and upperwork topped off by the wonderfully striking *en chamade* Trumpets playable on the Bombarde manual. Our members continued to take full advantage of the palate of sounds with improvisations and music by Boëllmann, Vierre - notably the famous 'Carillon de Westminster' - and interestingly from John Ross the 'Fanfare for a King' from a new series in celebration of the Coronation.

We later heard that although the organ is modeled on the French style it has many British design features and in particular the 'pedal divide' function. Its pipes are a mixture of those from the previous Bishop instrument plus new pipework and the organ is versatile enough to be used for a wide range of repertoire including the accompaniment of choral music although not perhaps that heard in the English cathedral tradition.

We all agreed the acoustic in such a lofty space greatly enhanced the sound and this was better appreciated by the player as the console is now facing east in the French manner, with the instrument

behind the player. Hearing the reverberation coming straight from in front is something every singer and orchestral player is used to but few English organists experience. This position also means that the player can view what is going on at the altar directly through the Perspex reading desk, with no craning of the neck and no need for mirrors.



Lady of Victories, Skrabl organ Photo J Bryant

Bridge, Patrixbourne & Bekesbourne

ON A SUITABLY sunny day in May, some twenty members of our Association found their way to the village of Bridge, near Canterbury. In the area around Bridge, the river Nailbourne bubbles up beneath St Ethelburga's Well in Lyminge, and flows through the picturesque villages of Bridge, Patrixbourne and Bekesbourne, before eventually joining with the Stour. All three churches visited are part of the 5-church Bridge Group of Churches and are no more than two or three minutes' drive from each other.

All these churches have interesting architectural and stained glass features, and small but interesting organs, well worth hearing. It was good to be able eventually to hold this meeting, which was initially planned in 2019 and then postponed three times due to Covid, proposed building work and other factors.

Half a dozen of us met first at the Red Lion in Bridge, where a satisfying and tasty lunch formed a pleasant preamble to our meeting. We moved on to St Peter's, Bridge, all of a minute's walk away, where the rest of the members joined us. This is a 12th - 13th century church, extensively restored by Giles Gilbert Scott. Laurence Dunderdale, a churchwarden, gave a short introduction to the main features of the church. The extensive Victorian restoration fortunately left untouched the 12th century west doorway, with its fine moulding and carved capitals. The nave, chancel and



St Peter's, Bridge F H Browne Photo C Jilks

some other parts of the interior also date from the 12th century, and the north arcade has four arches supported by unusual coupled circular piers, crowned with floral capitals of Early English design. The font is a rare example of an octagonal font beautifully carved out of Cornish red serpentine, a marble now almost unobtainable.

A new stained glass window, 'Tom's Window', installed in 2019 in memory of a child who died in a cot death at the age of just 100 days, cast a beautiful array of colours across the west end and included many local details topped by a hopeful rainbow.

Our members were, after a brief demonstration by Kevin Grafton, free to play the organ, which is a small two manual *F H Browne* of c.1920, revoiced in 1973 by Martin Renshaw. The specification of *Great, 8 8 4; Swell, 8 4 2; Pedal, 16* gives little clue as to the delightful sounds produced, assisted for brightness by a Swell octave to Great coupler.

Our next stop was St Mary's,



Patricxbourne 1877 Holdich Photo C. Jilks

Patricxbourne, where the churchwarden Andrea Nicholson (who was a vital contact in the long-drawn-out organising of this meeting) talked about the church. This is another 12th century church with superb Norman carvings. The south doorway has a richly carved 12th century portal, with Christ in Majesty in the tympanum, with a variety of animals, birds, foliage and people, and with sundials carved on the jambs.

Inside, the main attraction is the beautiful 17th century Swiss enamelled stained glass. This was given to the church by Marchioness Conyngham in 1837, and includes images of alpine landscapes, with people in Swiss costume, as well as *grisaille* depictions of both sacred and secular scenes, ranging from the Crucifixion to Pyramus and Thisbe from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Once again, after a quick demonstration, members were free to play the organ, a small single manual *Holdich* of 1877. The specification is: *Great*, 8 8 8 8 8

4 22/3 2 8; *Pedal*, 16. Two of the 8 ft stops are independent bass stops providing a bass for the Open Diapason and the Clarabella, and there is a useful Twelfth and a characterful Hautboy. It also has a Diaocton, common on *Holdich* organs, an octave coupler which provides an extra octave of pipes for each of the 8 and 4 foot stops, so that it is effective right to the top of the keyboard.

Our final stop on this varied afternoon was at neighbouring Bekesbourne, with some members taking advantage of the sunny weather to walk the short distance. St Peter's sits on a hill in the centre of the village, but surrounded by privately owned fields – an idyllic setting, with fruit trees in blossom. The church has some Norman features, but is essentially an 1880 restoration of a 12th century church.

Kevin (relying heavily on the excellent church guide book!) talked about the main features. Once again there is a finely



St Mary's, Patricxbourne Photo C. Jilks



St Mary's, Patrixbourne, Holdich console

Photo C Jilks

carved Norman doorway, and two Norman windows survive; the church was enlarged in the 13th century, but was left largely untouched until the substantial restoration of 1880, which turned the interior into what our Victorian ancestors believed a country church should look like.

After another brief demonstration, our members enjoyed playing the small two manual *Bevington* instrument of 1882. Some mountaineering skills were necessary to get up to the organ bench, but the effort was duly rewarded. The specification is: *Swell, 8 8 8 8 4 11; Great, 8 8 8 4 4; Pedal, 16*; usual couplers. The presence of a Mixture was slightly unexpected, and added to the warm tone of the rest of the organ, which is classified Grade 11* by the BIOS.

To round off the afternoon, members enjoyed a splendid tea provided by churchwarden Nicola Fry in her garden, a few yards from the church. This was the Old Palace Garden, previously part of the Archbishop's Palace at Bekesbourne (destroyed in the Civil War), and was spacious, beautifully laid out, and a suitable

setting for the end of an unhurried day exploring the delights of small village churches.



1882 Bevington, Bekesbourne Photo C Jilks

A visit to Cambridge

Cambridge College Chapels

MOST OXFORD and Cambridge colleges are Anglican foundations with a splendid chapel containing a splendid organ often acquired with the help of an alumnus or alumna donation. It should be no surprise, therefore, that the four college chapels visited on 24 June 2023 each boasted a mechanical-action instrument designed and built within the past half-century or so on what would broadly be considered historical principles, three of them by high-status Continental builders. Clare College's organ of 1971 by *Rudolf von Beckerath* of Hamburg started this trend where Cambridge was concerned, though it was preceded by the 1965 *Frobenius* at The Queen's College, Oxford. Jesus College possesses, in addition to its *Orgelbau Kuhn* instrument of 2007, what must be one of the earliest historically oriented organs in the country, the 'Sutton' organ of 1849, a Gothic gem with door panels by Pugin. Despite these features in common, the touch of each of the main instruments, and sometimes of each manual, was quite individual, and all four sounded utterly different from one another.

A further theme for the day was that it had been initiated as a visit to what are, to our knowledge, the four Cambridge colleges at which a KCOA member had been organ scholar. Nicholas King was at Trinity, Stephen Banfield at Clare, Janet Hughes at Girton, and Malcolm Riley at Christ's, though Trinity unfortunately could not



Girton College

Photo J Bryant

host us on the date planned and Malcolm had a prior musical engagement. Of the four, only Stephen was or would have been returning to the instrument he played as a student.

Not only do Cambridge colleges harbour fine instruments, they offered on this occasion superb musical expertise. Our hosts were Dr Martin Ennis at Girton, Professor David Rowland at Christ's, the newly appointed Ben Sheen at Jesus, and the outgoing organ scholar, Sam Jones, at Clare. Access to this level of scholarship, performance, and friendliness was a privilege indeed.

We began at Girton, founded in 1869 as the first women's college in Cambridge, indeed in Britain, and built three miles out on the Huntingdon Road for security reasons. The chapel retains the layout of those of the older



Jesus College

Photo J Bryant

men's colleges, namely that of a cathedral chancel, but the organ sits firmly on the floor at the west end, not in a gallery. This is a four-manual instrument, built in 2002 by *La Manufacture d'Orgues St-Martin SA* from francophone Switzerland and containing many novel features, including several 'half-draw' Mixtures which can double as a Larigot or Twelfth or suchlike if the drawstop is pulled out only as far as a certain notch. Martin was able to tell us much about the installation process and about the company, including the builders' instructions, after they had finished and returned home, for removing a front panel, behind which he discovered two bottles of the finest Swiss wine. Martin himself only demonstrated stop and manual combinations, but in accordance with the organ's French style we then heard a César Franck piece from Matthew Young and a fine *plein jeu* effect in some Couperin played

by Andrew Cesana. Jim Bryant performed a '*Tierce en taille*' by Pierre du Mage.

At Christ's, where a reunion of former organ scholars happened to be taking place later on the same day, David began by sketching the history of the college and its chapel, parts of whose present organ, primarily the Great chorus and the fine case, date back to 1705, though there were earlier instruments. By tradition assigned to '*Father*' Smith, there is no real evidence for who built it. It is positioned in a north alcove above the choir stalls towards the east end of the chapel, and the semicircular projection behind the organ bench is supported by magnificent wood carving based on musical motifs, including several recorders and scores containing what are clearly real pieces of music, though nobody has ever managed to identify them (or indeed the carver). In 1983 *Bishop & Son of Ipswich* rebuilt the instrument on principles closer to those



Christ's College Photo J Bryant

of its 1705 original than those of the intervening *Hill* and then *Norman and Beard* expansions, though with a modern specification very similar to that of Clare's von *Beckerath*. With its throaty English choruses, however, it could not sound more different from the *Beckerath*, as we were to discover. David played the first section of Bach's 'Great' B minor Prelude to demonstrate the main chorus, followed by an introductory movement from a Stanley voluntary enabling us to enjoy the beauty of its Stopped and Open Diapasons combined. Members then ascended the perilous staircase to experience the instrument for themselves. The rather uncompromising historicism of the console perhaps shows its age, but the sounds are lovely.

After a short but welcome lunch break

we moved to Jesus College where we were warmly welcomed by the Director of Music Ben Sheen and treated to an interesting demonstration of both organs.

The Huddleston Organ was the first instrument to be built in the UK by *Kuhn*, another Swiss firm, and Ben began by explaining its principal role in terms of worship in the chapel and the colouring of psalm accompaniments and service settings. However it is also eminently suited to both recitals and teaching with an eclectic range of sounds to suit music from all periods with a very effective *pleno* for Baroque music as demonstrated in Ben's performance (from memory) of the Bach *G Major Prelude BWV 541*. Despite containing only two manuals, the console's coupling allows for the kind of variety



Jesus College Photo J Bryant



Clare College Photo J Bryant

normally only possible on a three manual instrument.

With respect to its role in teaching Ben mentioned a very challenging training ground for the organ scholars, explaining that it can be quite unforgiving! In particular the sound is bright but completely different away from the console which is situated in the north Choir gallery facing west; the pipework faces south. However, it projects well into the main chapel and to some extent into the antechapel, although Ben pointed out the desirability of one more stop for large occasions.

The 'Sutton' organ pipes also face south, again with an attached west-facing console, but are nearer the altar. This remarkable organ was the principal instrument for the Chapel until a new one was installed by Noel Mander in

1971. It has recently been restored to its original state by William Drake and is particularly effective in the performance of early English music as demonstrated by both Ben and Stephen Banfield.

We ended the day with a visit to Clare College where we were welcomed by the Organ Scholar Sam Jones whose skillful playing was an absolute delight both in terms of Bach's '*An Wasserflüssen Babylon*' (the canonic setting) and a delightful impressionistic piece by Judith Weir entitled '*Ettrick Banks*' based on the intervals of the traditional Scottish air with the same title. Jim played the *Prelude Fugue and Chaconne in C Major* WV 137 by Buxtehude and Stephen the Bach *B minor Prelude*, whose recording by him on the brand-new instrument in 1972 was made available.

Sam explained that whilst the organ was particularly suited to the North German Baroque repertoire, it performed well in a wide range of other genres and spoke well into the chapel. Undoubtedly this was a feature in awarding the contract to *Beckerath*. The tracker instrument has 20 stops with electronic drawstop and piston action. Its bright and clear sound means it is necessary to consider its power when accompanying a choir. For more detailed information see Stephen Banfield's *Musical Times* article, March 1971.

Two of the party compared Bach on the different instruments: Janet Hughes allocated the first and third movements of the *C major Trio Sonata* between Jesus and Clare, and Stephen Banfield spread most of the '*Sei gegrüßet*' variations between Girton, Christ's, and Jesus, wishing that he had stopped short of the more difficult ones after lunch.

Boughton Aluph, Wye & AGM

Boughton Aluph & Wye

OUR MEETING on July 29 was to visit two historic and particularly interesting churches set in deepest Kent a few miles north of Ashford. These were All Saints' Church, Boughton Aluph and St Gregory & St Martin, Wye. Both are closely associated with the *Stour Music Festival* held in June each year, and one of its most famous singers, Alfred Deller, who founded the Festival in 1962, and is buried in the church yard at All Saints', Boughton Aluph.

Arriving at All Saints' we found an ancient yet spacious light interior, with a generous acoustic. Greeted by Church Warden Rita Hawes, she described a little of the history of the church, which dates from the 13th century and is a Grade 1 listed building. Although most windows were of clear leaded glass there are sections of stained glass, some medieval. Also there remains just one medieval wall painting by the organ, which survived Cromwellian destruction by being covered by a monument.

The organ is an instrument recently installed by *Mander/Browne* from a Methodist church at Headcorn, Kent. This is by *Peter Conacher & Co. Huddersfield*. It has tracker manual action with pneumatic pedals. It dates from around 1900, its late Victorian tonalities offering warm, diapasons, flutes and a singing oboe; its tonal delights include a Great 4ft harmonic flute which had a particular charm. The organ's specification is: *Swell Organ, 888 4 2 8; Great Organ, 888 4 4; Pedal Organ, 16, with usual couplers.*



Peter Conacher, Boughton Aluph Photo C. Jilks

Our President, Jim Bryant, demonstrated the organ for us playing a set of variations by Michel Festing, arranged by G T Thalben Ball, using the flutes in particular. Other members then played and we heard music by Henry Smart and even a little of Eric Coates and his *Knightsbridge March*.

Moving on through enchanting, if narrow, country lanes, we found our way to Wye and the Parish Church of St Gregory & St Martin's. There had been a Saxon church on this site dedicated to St Gregory, although in c1200, the manor was granted to Battle Abbey, and a second dedication to St Martin added. The then Norman church gradually evolved over the years until, in 1572 a lightning strike damaged the steeple, and for more than 100 years the tower remained perilously insecure until, in 1686, it fell, destroying the chancel and east end of the church, which was subsequently rebuilt during the reign of Queen Anne, so the church now has a medieval nave

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Boughton Aluph & Wye

OUR MEETING on July 29 was to visit two historic and particularly interesting churches set in deepest Kent a few miles north of Ashford. These were All Saints' Church, Boughton Aluph and St Gregory & St Martin, Wye. Both are closely associated with the *Stour Music Festival* held in June each year, and one of its most famous singers, Alfred Deller, who founded the Festival in 1962, and is buried in the church yard at All Saints', Boughton Aluph.

Arriving at All Saints' we found an ancient yet spacious light interior, with a generous acoustic. Greeted by Church Warden Rita Hawes, she described a little of the history of the church, which dates from the 13th century and is a Grade 1 listed building. Although most windows were of clear leaded glass there are sections of stained glass, some medieval. Also there remains just one medieval wall painting by the organ, which survived Cromwellian destruction by being covered by a monument.

The organ is an instrument recently installed by *Mander/Browne* from a Methodist church at Headcorn, Kent. This is by *Peter Conacher & Co. Huddersfield*. It has tracker manual action with pneumatic pedals. It dates from around 1900, its late Victorian tonalities offering warm, diapasons, flutes and a singing oboe; its tonal delights include a Great 4ft harmonic flute which had a particular charm. The organ's specification is: *Swell Organ, 888 4 2 8; Great Organ, 888 4 4; Pedal Organ, 16, with usual couplers.*



Peter Conacher, Boughton Aluph Photo C. Jilks

Our President, Jim Bryant, demonstrated the organ for us playing a set of variations by Michel Festing, arranged by G T Thalben Ball, using the flutes in particular. Other members then played and we heard music by Henry Smart and even a little of Eric Coates and his *Knightsbridge March*.

Moving on through enchanting, if narrow, country lanes, we found our way to Wye and the Parish Church of St Gregory & St Martin's. There had been a Saxon church on this site dedicated to St Gregory, although in c1200, the manor was granted to Battle Abbey, and a second dedication to St Martin added. The then Norman church gradually evolved over the years until, in 1572 a lightning strike damaged the steeple, and for more than 100 years the tower remained perilously insecure until, in 1686, it fell, destroying the chancel and east end of the church, which was subsequently rebuilt during the reign of Queen Anne, so the church now has a medieval nave

and a Stuart chancel.

The 1903 *Walker & Sons* organ we had come to enjoy had only recently been installed by *Mander/Browne*, transplanting it from a church in Folkestone. It looked splendid as did the Positive organ on the opposite side of the chancel; hopefully the plastic sheeting draped over it will not be a permanent feature. The organ's specification is: *Swell Organ*, 16 8 8 8 8 4 111 8; *Great Organ*, 8 8 4 4 22/3 2 8; *Positive organ*, 8 4 4 22/3 2 11; *Pedal Organ*, 16 16 8 8 4 4 16, with usual couplers. The organ was demonstrated for us by our member Janet Hughes starting with the exciting Bach/Vivaldi *Concerto in A minor*, followed by music of Herbert Howells and Maurice Duruflé. Janet's playing and the clear organ articulation immediately caught the ear and we enjoyed some quite splendid music. The organ performed well in the Bach, enhanced by the antiphonal effects between the Positive and main organs. However, there was some discussion in regard the voicing of the Great Diapason chorus. This had been set to accommodate the large



Walker organ, Wye Photo C Jilks

church at Folkestone where it had previously been, but at Wye this is verging on stridency, although, it must be said, that the Swell and Positive sections are undoubtedly well voiced for the church. At least the instrument appeared to be in good tune, unlike the organ at Boughton Aluph.

Members were allowed to play before the Association's AGM, which was chaired by our President Jim Bryant, one of his last duties before stepping down and handing on to our new President Stephen Banfield. The Secretary, Treasurer and committee were re-elected unopposed. We were pleased to welcome Malcolm Riley to the committee serving his first year. Also, it was proposed that our Journal editor, Colin Jilks, be made President Emeritus in recognition of his long service, of over forty years, to the Association and in producing our Association Journal for some twenty-eight years; he graciously accepted this honour with thanks to the gathered members.



Medieval painting Photo C Jilks

'The king of instruments'

*Come, hear and play the
organ,
Promoted by the Royal
College of Organists*

*St Leonard's Church Hythe,
Saturday 4 February 2023*

By Jim Bryant

THIS WAS a very successful event and a useful opportunity to collaborate with the RCO in pursuit of promoting the organ to a wider audience aimed particularly but not exclusively at young players. Although few were in attendance there were a number of adults present who appeared to enjoy the occasion.

The afternoon began with a welcome by the RCO's local representative Stephen Pinnock who began by launching into the Dam Busters March which immediately captured everyone's attention.

The children then gathered round the organ for an introduction by the St Leonard's Director of Music Dr Berkeley Hill, after which, popular tunes were played by Janet Hughes on the piano, to which they clapped in time before being invited to play one note in turn on the organ, including at one point the pedal board! Berkeley then proceeded to demonstrate the various pipes and everyone learned something about the way the organ functions, including some basic physics using instruments commonly found in the classroom. This necessarily short session concluded with further playing for those wishing to do so and a chance for questions on any aspect of organ technique. Unsurprisingly, perhaps



Harrison organ, Hythe Photo C.Jills

the main area of interest was centred around pedalling.

During the course of the event we were given an opportunity to promote both the RCO and KCOA and as a result the KCOA gained two new members: one adult and a student member, both of whom have attended subsequent visits.

As a governor at two local primary schools Berkeley has been able to organise subsequent sessions for individual classes both in Hythe and Saltwood and this has prompted a visit by the RCO Regional Representative Simon Williams and its chief executive Sir Andrew Parmley both of whom will be in Hythe in October for a further event with local children.

Although, perhaps understandably, as it was not one of our normal visits, it was unfortunate that so few of our members supported the initial event, as observers at the very least, and I do hope this will improve in the future. It is, after all, up to all of us to nurture and encourage the next generation of prospective players and my hope is to see the initiative extended to other areas of Kent.

Front Cover

Salisbury Cathedral Organ

By Paul Hale

WHEREAS Salisbury Cathedral is known to organists for its almost untouched *Father Willis* organ, not so many perhaps know that it had a 4-manual instrument also in the early eighteenth century. This was the grandest and most splendid instrument ever made by Renatus Harris, 'Father' Smith's great rival. Completed in 1710, it boasted 46 speaking stops in an tall and elegant double case standing on the screen which then separated the Nave from the Quire. Such screens existed in most cathedrals until the mid-nineteenth century, when the splendour of 'vista' displaced the attraction of the 'mystery beyond' which Quire screens invoke. Hurrah to Chichester Cathedral who put their mediæval stone screen back in the 1960s. Harris's organ was something of a cheat in one respect, for, having invented 'communication' by which ranks of pipes could be 'borrowed' (even on a slider soundboard), he made most of the Great stops draw independently on two manuals – the Great and a 'borrowed' Great. KCOA readers wishing to know more about this remarkable organ (and indeed its successors) are recommended to acquire a copy of the booklet *The Organs and Organists of Salisbury Cathedral* by Betty Matthews, which has gone through several editions since I bought my first copy more than fifty years ago.

An instrument by Samuel Green replaced the Harris organ (why?) in 1792.



Salisbury Cathedral, Willis Photo C Jills

The Green organ (rebuilt by HNB) is now to be found in Salisbury's St Thomas's church and has recently been restored. Once the Green organ had been removed, along with the Quire screen, it was replaced by the current *Willis* instrument, made in 1876, a remarkably busy year for *Willis*, for the Durham Cathedral organ was also in the works. Note that these are both divided organs, with sections north and south of the Quire. *Willis* was the first organ builder to prove (in 1872 at St Paul's Cathedral, when they ripped out the sumptuous Wren screen, with its Grinling Gibbons carvings) that such an arrangement was practical and that tubular-pneumatic action was

advanced enough to make it work. Thus it was that *Willis* landed these two contracts – among the most important he ever secured.

On the south side is the Great, Swell and some of the Pedal; on the north side is the remainder of the Pedal (except for the 32ft stops, which stand against the east wall of the north transept), the Choir and the Solo. The console was originally buried under the organ on the north side (as at Durham and St Paul's). The organ had 4 manuals and 55 speaking stops, on no fewer than thirteen different wind pressures, from 2ins to 181/2ins. There were even thumb pistons – newly invented by *Willis* – of brass; four to each manual. What a boon they must have been to the cathedral organists!

In 1934 the organ was conservatively rebuilt and electrified by *Henry Willis III*, who installed a new console on the south side, one bay west of the case. Sir Walter Alcock wanted no tilting tablets, so the couplers were/are on drawstops – not standard for *Willis III*'s clever 'all electric' consoles where couplers on tilting tablets normally range across the top manual. A very few tonal changes and additions were made but Alcock would not allow the *Fr. Willis* reeds out of the building, as he was sure that *Willis* would try to 'improve' his grandfather's work! By then the organ had grown to its current 65 speaking stops. *Willis* worked on it in 1969, *N.P. Mander* did some work in 1971, and then in 1978 *Harrison & Harrison* replaced the electrical systems and releathered many reservoirs.

In 2016 the organ was due for another *H&H* cleaning and quite a bit of releathering, a console upgrade, and so on. I was asked to advise, which I was pleased to do, and I made one tonal suggestion. *Willis III* had extended the *Fr. Willis* Pedal Violone to 8ft pitch (useful



South aisle organ case rear Photo C. Jilks

and to 4ft pitch, where it was less useful as a chorus stop, being too soft and no sort of bridge between the strong 8ft Octave (metal) and the full-toned 4-rank Mixture. I suggested deleting the 4ft extension and inserting instead a new 4ft Fifteenth, to matching *Fr. Willis* scales, at the same time providing a new slider soundboard for the Pedal Bourdon, Flute, Fifteenth and Mixture. There was space where the original console stood, at the base of the north case. This took place, along with the restoration work, and the organ now sounds as fine as it has ever done.

As for the case – well, it doesn't really have one, does it? For *Father Willis*, client money was always best spent on PIPES!

Letters to the Editor

Affectionate memories

DEAR SIR, the account by Rev Canon John Wright of his life that appeared in the February 2023 Journal clearly came direct from the horse's mouth and took things up to 2004. But by its very nature it could not cover the last two decades or reflect the warm affection in which John was held by so many people.

John was a legend in his own lifetime and a great enthusiast in so many areas, as priest, musician and sportsman, just to start the list of his many interests. We organists in Kent were fortunate in having him as a friend and colleague for so long. I first knew him when he was vicar at Westwell and Boughton Aluph and had many very long telephone conversations on all manner of church music issues - his phone bill back in the 1970s must have been epic. When he became vicar at Cheriton in 1984 he joined Folkestone Choral Society and the Shepway Singers (I conducted both at the time) as a bass, rarely if ever missing a rehearsal. When in about 2001 he finally 'retired' from parish work he became a regular member of the Evensong choir of boys and men at St Leonard's. He was singing with us up to a couple of weeks before he died, finally telephoning that he was not feeling too good and might not make the service.

I used to joke with him that he could never say 'no' to a request for help, a very priestly approach to life which must have presented an impossible timetable. His

Sundays were exhausting, even after officially 'retiring'. In the last two decades he often took the 8am Eucharist at St Leonard's, played the organ for morning service at St Peter's (Folkestone) or St Paul's (Sandgate) or some other church on Romney Marsh, sang Evensong at St Leonard's (sometimes preaching) and concluded with a Shepway Singers' rehearsal that finished at 9.15pm. Beyond these Sunday activities he found time to play for school assemblies, act as pianist for singing teachers, and give organ recitals, which were always well attended because so many people found him an endearing character. And he must have racked up a record for the number of Stainer's Crucifixions he had accompanied.

John was well-informed of the health and goings-on in the lives of his fellow clergy, but spoke always without any malice. Permanently ready to chat, he did not take offence if other pressing matters meant conversations had to be curtailed. The loss of car keys seemed to afflict him regularly. Table tennis and cricket were passions up to the end.

Some indication of the warmth of feeling for John came from the number of people who attended his funeral and separate memorial service. The funeral, held in the cathedral on January 6th 2023, ran out of service sheets despite 400 being printed. A similar thing happened at his memorial service at St Leonard's, Hythe on 4th February, when the church was packed.

John will be fondly remembered and much missed.

Berkeley Hill

Hythe, Kent

Director of Music, St Leonard's Church, Hythe.

Book review

A History of J.W. Walker & Sons Ltd., Organbuilders *Nicholas M Plumley*

By *Gavin Barrett*

BIOS.

ISBN: 978-0-9955419-2-4

416 Pages, 151 Illustrations

£30 + p&p from BIOS

First Published 2023

NICHOLAS PLUMLEY has, for well over a decade, been researching the history of *J.W. Walker & Sons*, from the origins of the firm in the late 1820s to the present day. The fruits of his labours, published, as always, to the highest standard by BIOS, is this treasure-house of 369 pages chronicling a unique firm whose work has permeated every corner of the UK and almost every corner of the world at large.

The book is essentially chronological, illustrating the organic development both of the firm and the instruments it created. As with many sagas of family-owned and run businesses, there are good times and those that went less well. Walkers is no exception. Plumley divides his historical narrative into coherent sections, largely aligned to the periods of leadership by individual members of the dynasty.

Exploring both the familial context and the often more than tough business realities, a rich picture is created of the firm's professional pride, its several bursts of innovation and sustaining commercial

drive. The first fifty or so years saw remarkable progress with organs of considerable distinction being created, especially in the City of London (St. Giles, Cripplegate and St Mary-le-Bow for example). Inevitably, some of this early success is down to luck and judicious injection of capital from outside of the Walker family, but the fact remains that by the end of the 19th Century, *Walkers* had become a large and prosperous firm with real impact in the UK and abroad.

The period after The Great War had its vicissitudes for sure, but also a great deal of innovation, some of which was in partnership with firms coming from very different backgrounds. One such was the Electrophone Company of the USA, owned by Arthur H. Midgley. An experimental prototype, The Midgely-Walker Pipeless Organ of 1937 vintage, saw the light of day once more at Brunel University in 1985. This type of innovation resulted in the main from understandable commercial fear of The Hammond Organ Company, who were mass producing their devices on terms unimaginable to craft-based traditional organ builders. Only the outbreak of the Second World War prevented further such initiatives and collaborations.

The chapter dealing with the fortunes of the firm during and immediately after the 1939-45 conflict are fascinating insofar as the exigencies of war made organ-building nigh impossible and might have had a terminal impact on the firm. But through enterprise, Churchill's appointment of Beaverbrook to oversee aircraft manufacture for the RAF and *Walker's* good contacts, the Ruislip factory became a major centre of aircraft construction and restoration, growing in the process, to near ten-fold its former headcount.

Post-war, materials remained in short supply and Treasury taxation policies had an inhibiting effect on church investment in new instruments. This gradually changed, but for several years the going was, inevitably, tough.

The Organ Reform Movement, arguably stimulated first in the UK by ideas from the USA, though rapidly picking-up on the Continental momentum towards Baroque revivalism, touched all British builders in the 1960s and sometimes earlier, with mutations appearing ever more conspicuously and *Werkprinzip* structures becoming the mode of choice. *Walkers* were in the vanguard, albeit not of a radical bent such as that shown by Maurice Forsyth-Grant and others. Peter Walker resolved in 1963 never to use electric action in his new organs or rebuilds, itself a radical decision and, in time, shown to be unsustainable.

Nicholas Plumley delves into the detail as well as providing the broad sweep of external developments and shifts in cultural norms. This allows the reader to explore at many levels, whether international trends, competitor ups and downs, technological leaps and bounds, and, of course, the deep vein of craftsmanship and tradition that imbues the industry almost everywhere. Illustrations abound throughout the text, many of them in colour, bringing design concepts, people, and the project contexts vividly to life. Many readers will enjoy seeing the work of notable case designers, especially those by David Graebe, whose sensitivity as a designer will provide an enduring legacy.

Let me end on a personal note. I counted some seventy organs created down the decades by the generations of *Walkers* and subsequently under the inspired leadership of Robert 'Bob' Pennells – to whose memory the book is dedicated – that I have personally experienced whether as a student, player, audience-

member, wedding and funeral attendee, recording producer or tourist-in-need-of-stimulus. Aged nine or ten, I was allowed to play the Walker at Sketty Church in Swansea. My public school (King's College, Taunton) installed a fine *Walker*. I met my wife-to-be at a wedding at St Columba's Church, Collingtree, Northamptonshire, which features a good deal in the story of the early years of the Walker dynasty!

I now play the charming and substantial instrument *Walkers* created for King Charles-the-Martyr in Tunbridge Wells. Few readers surely will not have experienced a *Walker* organ – the good, the not-so-good and the plain curious. For that reason alone, they will find this wonderful conspectus of the firm's journey from the late 1820's to the present day utterly fascinating. For those addicted to studying specifications, there is a veritable cornucopia upon which to feast the eyes and mind.

Nicholas Plumley has created a truly important historical document in this comprehensive and highly readable book. Unlike so many histories of musical firms, I found this one to be a compelling read from cover-to-cover. How many books can you say that of.

KCOA November meeting 25th November

St. Mary of Charity Faversham, Church
Street, ME13 8GZ

Joint choral evensong with choir of
church & and members of KCOA.

Music to include *Stanford in C & Evening Hymn* by Balfour-Gardner. Other music and final details to follow, but will include some choral training and organ demonstration by Ben Saul, musical director.

Bloomsbury Organ Day 2023

By Stephen Banfield

‘WHY DO you play all these arrangements when there is so much real organ music that is being neglected?’ a senior composer asked me not long ago when I showed him a recital programme of mine, which included my own arrangements of Sullivan’s *Iolanthe* Overture and the introductory Sextet from Richard Strauss’s opera *Capriccio*. He had a point, and there is no denying the massive turn towards transcription witnessed over the past decades at the virtuosic end of the market. Nathan Laube’s inaugural recital on the rebuilt Canterbury Cathedral instrument included the Liszt Piano Sonata, and David Briggs now plays entire Mahler symphonies. This may seem odd at a time when almost anything can be heard free of charge in its original version via the Internet, but trend it certainly is.

Cinema organists lived largely by arrangements too, while patenting highly specialised techniques for performing the popular and dance-band repertoire of their day. They developed as a separate breed, but their tradition is now carried forward by versatile musicians of phenomenal technique such as those who provided the core recitals of this year’s Bloomsbury Organ Day on the basis of *les goûts-réunis*, to quote François Couperin: no more divisions of taste between church and theatre, organ and band, classical and popular. The day’s title was *Trocadero and Town Halls: music for theatre, town hall, and symphonic organs*, though curiously this appeared nowhere on the well-produced printed programme.

Held as usual in Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and promoted by Music in Bloomsbury and Organists Online, it

was the first Organ Day in three years, COVID having seen off the 2021 event and last year’s having had to be cancelled for reasons I cannot now recall. The turn-out on 28 January was encouraging (I would guess over 200) and the atmosphere and facilities as enticing as the actual presentations, to the extent that I missed rather a lot of the latter while exploring the former, including Neil Collier’s Priory Records CD stand in the foyer and those of Martin Renshaw and our own David Shuker down in the basement. David, who had brought his flat-pack organ with him, ran a first-rate specialised bookstall, much to my pocket’s detriment, while Martin deserved and received fulsome gratitude for the splendid TV documentary *The Organ Stops*, shown on Christmas Eve, of which he was undoubtedly the star, along with several instruments.

The RCO Academy Organ School fielded three young performers, Yejoon Park, Sophia Membery, and Adam Chillingworth ARCO, two or all three of them still at school and all of a standard to reassure us of the future of the profession. The RCO presentation included reference to the College’s ‘Organs in schools’ scheme, which is supported by Viscount and looking for further sponsorship. Daniel Greenway, organ scholar at Keble College, Oxford, gave the first of the afternoon’s single-artist recitals, mostly of ‘straight’ organ music. He is a fine performer who should go far. Philip Norman of Organists Online then gave a talk on ‘Transcriptions and organ design’ which alas I did not hear, having spotted a friend and decided that a late lunch beckoned. I also missed Richard Brasier’s talk on his new edition of César Franck. The climax of the day was the two celebrity recitals, by Simon Gledhill (‘theatre organist’) and Richard Hills (‘concert organist’). Both left the average

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Olivier Messiaen, a personal view

By Malcolm Hall

MY FIRST 'confession' is this. If I were in one of our major cities and, passing a cathedral, noticed a poster advertising 'An all-Messiaen organ recital', I wouldn't be tempted (however much I enjoy organ music) to go in. From a purely listener's point of view, I generally find his compositions too static and demanding on the ear. I appreciate that he was a man of great faith and that he expressed this in his music, trying to describe in his compositions, concepts which lie beyond our imagination. He was, I am sure, affected very much by his war time experience, acting as a medical auxiliary, partly due to his poor eye sight and also his pacifism beliefs. Having been captured by advancing German troops and transported to the atrocious conditions of Stalag VIIi-A in Silesia, his 'Quartet for the End of Time' was performed in front of the somewhat puzzled captive audience of fellow prisoners. I also know that were I able to travel back to witness his playing at 'La Sainte Trinity' and hear for myself that wonderful acoustic and the sheer power of a large French instrument, I would probably have a very different opinion. I expect too, like JSB, his best music was probably never written down and only heard by those lucky enough to be present at that time.

So, what of my second confession? Well, I admit that I enjoy looking into our huge array of High Street charity shops and glancing through the shelves of CDs. If you're lucky and get beyond the 'Classic FM' music for pets and (God forbid) Andre Rieu, playing every waltz and polka ever written, you may encounter, like I did recently, something of a surprise – The 'Turangalila Symphonic' by

Olivier Messiaen; a work that I knew existed but never experienced. For £0.50 pence I took the plunge! I would like to think that I'm broad minded in my musical tastes and try to discover works outside the normal concert repertoire.

Well I'm sorry to say that I had to stop the CD before the end of the piece! Every aspect of the music grated on the fibres of my body and the tolerance of my mind. Perhaps I needed to experience that cold, desolate, prisoner of war camp and the sense of freedom won by the defect of the evil Nazi regime? Who knows? But if anyone would like to borrow the CD – they are more than welcome!

I would love to hear other KCOA members' comments, particularly those who enjoy and play the music of Messiaen within their own church, and I am also sure that our Journal Editor would appreciate a few letters to publish within our next journal.

Bloomsbury Organ Day Cont...

organist's technique standing, though I much preferred the solid musicality of Gledhill (an amateur in the strict sense of the word, for he has a full-time career in finance) to the impossibly slick abilities of Hills, however enjoyable the latter's arrangements of Quilter's *Children's Overture* and a medley from Sullivan's *Mikado*. Who knew that there was so much to Ponchielli's 'Dance of the hours', with which Gledhill's recital ended?

The organ, on both sides of the rear gallery and sounding more rounded and resonant than one might expect in a church of typical nonconformist design, behaved itself well, though to my ears the Pedal speaks very slightly late. The tea, where organ-crawlers' *goûts* have long been *réunis*, was excellent and plentiful.

Gavin Barrett

A Short Profile

GAVIN BARRETT was born in 1946 in London, but soon after removed to South Wales. His Father was an ophthalmic surgeon specialising in industrial eye injury treatment at Swansea Hospital and practising as a consultant Ophthalmologist in Neath. His Mother was, for many years, Secretary for Wales for The Prayer Book Society. Gavin's early Church music experiences were as a chorister at the High St Gabriel's Church in Swansea, with a large choir and FRCO organist. He was at prep-school on the edge of Exmoor and subsequently educated at King's College, Taunton, where he was again a chorister and subsequently organ student under Tim Harrison (who also taught, in later years, William Whitehead). A brief taste of the LSE in the anarchic days of 1968 was followed by musical life in London, working with composer and organist Sebastian Forbes and singing periodically in the choir at Southwark Cathedral.

Readers of the KCOA Journal with long memories may recall that Gavin was Editor of *Organists' Review* throughout the 1980s, appointed by Dame Gillian Weir, taking over from Basil Ramsey and transforming the magazine from an average of 32pp (black and white Octavo format) to that which we see to today – well over 100pp and full colour throughout. He invited our member, Paul Hale to be reviews editor of *OR*, where he set a high standard, throwing light on newly issued music for organ and choir.

Besides the *OR* job Basil also handed the post of organist of St. Giles Cripplegate to Gavin, where around 1970 he worked with Michael Gillingham and Noel Mander, benefitting from the sub-

stantial War Reparation funding to restore the West Gallery organ, using the casework from St. Luke's, Old Street, a church later to become the LSO's rehearsal centre.

Novello & Co. gave Gavin his first role in music. Initially, a humble order picker in the labyrinthine corridors of the handsome building at 100 Wardour Street before being translated, a little unwillingly, to Borough Green in Kent for about a year, before moving back to the Company's new offices in Soho Square, working directly under Basil Ramsey and the great Bach scholar, Walter Emery. Gavin was given the role of building a new music promotions department, with a particular aim to bring new British music, and a good deal of the back catalogue too, to Continental European musicians who had seldom been visited by anyone from the firm since the 2nd World War!

The task involved travelling far and wide from Stockholm to Milan, making contacts with conductors and music retailers. A story in itself he says, but it did allow some organ visits. Staying for a few days with Albert de Klerk and his family in Haarlem, allowed unfettered access to the Christian Muller miracle at St Bavo and for two long visits to play at the Laurenskerk at Alkmaar.

Several visits to Prague before, during and after the Dubcek Prague Spring, reconnected Gavin with Jiri Ropek, organist of St. James' Church – subsequently the locus of the first overseas *Songs of Praise* by the BBC at Christmas after the collapse of Communism in Czechoslovakia. Gavin was able to play most of the organs in Prague and the epic instrument at Olomouc.

Another strand of the embryonic *Novello* Promotion Department was the recording of contemporary works from solo through to full orchestra. A deal with Pye Records, under its legendary recording engineer, the late Bob Auger,



Gavin Barrett

Photo G Barrett

meant that works by McCabe, Leighton, Hoddinott, Cruft and a whole catalogue more were recorded. As the sometime conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, Constantine Silvestri said to Gavin "I'm too busy to study scores of new pieces, but give me a recording to work from and I'll give it a go." He was, apparently, as good as his word.

This venture got Gavin involved in the recording business. One Christmas holiday he went to Paris to record Pierre Cochereau at Notre-Dame in works by Vierne and Widor. The recordings subsequently appeared on Phillips and are still there. PC's assistant at the time was Francois Carbou who operates a fine label of French organ recordings to this day [<https://www.solstice-music.com/en/about>]. The recording with PC involved taking the equipment up to the Tribune level into the South tower (no windows and snow on the ground). Cochereau arrived around 11pm each night and presented Gavin and the sound engineer with a bottle of scotch as insulation against the biting cold.

After *Novello*, Gavin moved to Decca as classical repertoire producer of the highly successful Phase 4 label which celebrated the early days of stereo and employed the first 24-track recording equipment. He produced recordings by Maazel, Leinsdorf, Leopold Stokowski (Leonard Stokes, sometime organ scholar of The Queen's College, Oxford and Organist of St James' Piccadilly before he 're-invented' himself for Hollywood consumption!) and many more. A side-line was to produce recordings for the neighbouring Decca label, Eclipse – which included the first LP of Edward Higginbottom on the new Mander at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Jiri Ropek at All Soul's, Langham Place and St Giles, Cripplegate.

Reader's Digest Music Division recruited Gavin to head its repertoire development and subsequently to produce those multi LP and Cassette sets still widely found in charity shops. Its business model was more science than art,

employing profiling techniques and 'big data' decades before it became the stuff of modern nightmares. This gave Gavin a taste for Marketing and, after a few short years working for the US giant corporation, Westinghouse, learning the consultancy business, he joined PA Consulting, becoming a Partner in

One assignment was to help Time Warner Inc. build Warner Music. This was an amalgam of a number of formerly independent labels such as Nonesuch, Elektra, Teldec, Erato and Warner. However, this was really Gavin's last commercial connection with the music industry.

He had become a Liveryman of The Worshipful Company of Musicians, where he was subsequently Master (2001-2 in the 502nd year of The Company). His sponsors had been Sir John Dykes Bower (St. Paul's Cathedral), Douglas Hopkins (Canterbury) and Noel Mander. He had picked up some journalistic skills after becoming Membership Secretary of The London Press Club and being allowed to write on Arts and Financial matters in *The Guardian*, *The Independent* and *The Sunday Times* as a freelance. He later became a Fellow of The Institute of Public Relations, a Senior Advisor at The Brookings Institution in Washington, DC., and Chairman of a Savile Row tailoring Group.

His various connections with the organ came in the form of appointments at Limpsfield Surrey – easily found right on the Greenwich Meridian - Hartfield (also conductor of its large choral society), St Paul's Chichester and now King Charles the Martyr in Tunbridge Wells. He received organ tuition from Sarah Baldock, Tim Ravalde, William Whitehead and Sebastian Forbes.

He is a trustee of The Orgelbuchlein Project being led with great energy by William Whitehead. Gavin was also a Governor of The Yehudi Menuhin School, The Music Therapy Charity and The Musicians' Loan Fund amongst others. Gavin was also a Trustee of *The RCO* for some eight years.