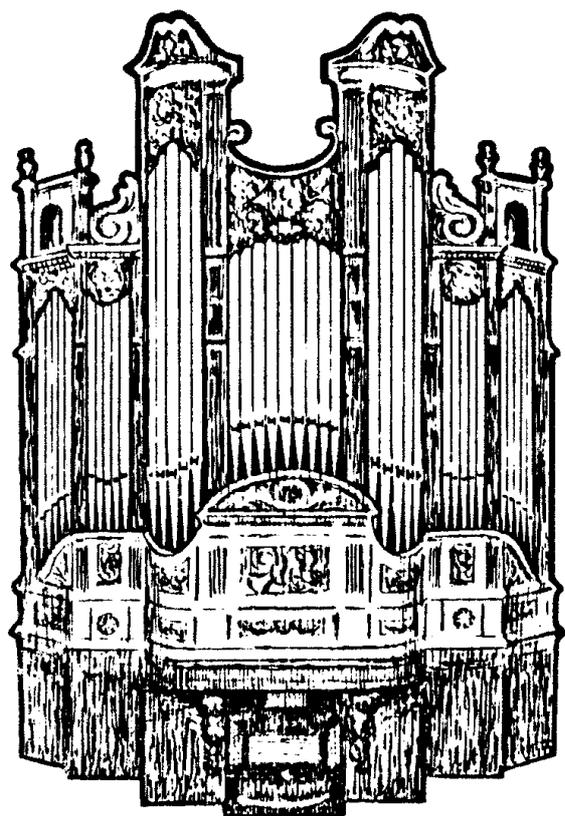


# The Berkshire Organist

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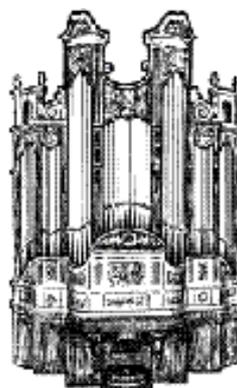
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# THE BERKSHIRE ORGANISTS ASSOCIATION

Registered Charity No 298088

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



Our aims as an Association are:

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

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

(a) Organising events for members.

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

Since 1965 we have arranged regular celebrity recitals on the historic Father Willis organ in the Reading Concert Hall though these were of course suspended when the Hall was closed prior to restoration. They have been resumed since the restoration of the Concert Hall last year.

Deleted:

(b) Communication with members.

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

(c) Exercising an influence in the outside world.

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

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# FROM THE PRESIDENT

Graham Ireland

I was deeply honoured at the last Annual General Meeting of the Berkshire Organists' Association on May 13th, to be elected President for a second term of office. A glance through the list of past presidents puts Percy Scrivener ahead of any subsequent holder of the office, having held it three times, between 1921 and 1946. In this issue we list the Association's secretaries in addition to the presidents in *The Berkshire Organist* not only to record the fact that Archibald Lusty served as secretary for 46 years, but also to record the sterling behind the scenes work carried out by successive secretaries to ensure the smooth running of our Association.

Before you think the unthinkable that I might seek a third term in the future, may I say categorically that I have no wish to, firstly because it is difficult to maintain momentum engendered during a presidential term of office on successive occasions, and secondly other more deserving aspirants for the post would be prevented from taking it up when their contribution to the Association would be most propitious. We have been served over the years by a distinguished line of presidents who have made their mark on the Association's life in varied ways, and their contribution has provided the life-blood from which the continued growth of the Association is guaranteed.

A number of our older members stood down at the recent AGM to make way for some of the younger members to be involved in the Association's decision making. We are pleased that these older members still support our activities in their differing ways, for their loyalty serves as a clear example of what membership of the Association does entail, and their constructive contribution to discussions is based on the wisdom of true experience.

In September we were all saddened by the sudden death of Evelyn Fisher. Evelyn had been President in 1979 and 1980, and Benevolent Fund Steward for as many years as I have been living in Reading. Tributes to her life appear elsewhere in this issue. She was always supported at the Association's activities by her husband Len, who continues to keep in touch with us.

Our new members on the committee have certainly lived up to our expectations, and this first year of my second term has been marked by feelings of efficiency, coupled with a keen desire to promote the aims of the Association in a user friendly, but professional way. I am quite convinced that we can build on our new found talents to make the second year just as successful and purposeful as the first one. This article is not a precis of my presidential report. It is a just a general foreword to the 54th edition of *The Berkshire Organist*, which will contain my report in greater detail.

My second term of office coincides with the meeting of another milestone in my life. The unthinkable has happened and I am retiring from teaching in August of this year after 38 years in the profession. When I arrived all those years ago at Brandeston Hall which was the junior school for Framlingham College, I never dreamt that I would ever be contemplating retirement. That time has now arrived. If you wish to remind yourself of the details of my teaching career please turn to page one of

Number 49 of *The Berkshire Organist*. What is most important for us all is that the absence of Saturday morning school, or any day for that matter from September onwards, will allow me to participate in all of the activities of our Association. May I in conclusion commend all of our activities to you, and ask you to be mindful of the necessity to maintain the profile of the Association in Berkshire in any way you can.

## RECITAL AND AGM 2001

On a very sunny, warm and pleasant day we met at St Luke's Church, Maidenhead for the very necessary AGM. These events in other organisations can be boring in the extreme, but this Association does things differently.

Prior to lunch we had the pleasure of a Centenary Organ Recital by the resident organist, Wendy Watson. The church is a large typical Victorian building, quite high and light with clerestory windows, and interesting stained glass in the lower windows. Perhaps surprisingly there is very little resonance. The organ is situated on the south side of the choir and although there is an open arch into the south aisle the sound in the nave is somewhat restricted as is the case in so many other churches. Full organ in the choirstalls is quite overpowering, though at the console which is below the front of the Great, full swell is still somewhat muted.

Wendy's recital was in celebration of almost exactly 100 years of use, as the opening recital was given on 13 June 1901 by Mr. R. Garrett-Cox, FRCO. In 1904 he

		Specification			
Great				Swell	
Double Diapason TC	Wood & Metal	16	Bourdon	Wood	16
Open Diapason I	Wood & Metal	8	Open Diapason	Metal	8
Open Diapason II	Wood & Metal	8	Stopped Diapason	Wood	8
Hohl Flute	Wood	8	Salicional	Metal	8
Principal	Metal	4	Voix Celeste TC	Metal	8
Harmonic Flute	Metal	4	Principal	Metal	4
Fifteenth	Metal	2	Piccolo	Metal	2
Mixture (19-22-26)	Metal	III	Mixture (19-22)	Metal	II
Trompette	Metal	8	Horn	Metal	8
			Oboe	Metal	8
			Clarion	Metal	4
			Tremulant		
Choir				Pedal	
Dulciana	Metal	8	Open Diapason	Wood	16
Viola di Gamba	Metal	8	Bourdon	Wood	16
Lieblich Gedeckt	Wood & Metal	8	Bass Flute (from Bourdon)	Wood	8
Suabe Flute	Wood	4			
-Clarinet (B flat to a#)	Metal	8			
Couplers					
Swell to Choir	Compass 54/30				
Swell to Great	3 Combination Pedals to Swell				
Swell to Pedal	3 to Great acting on Pedal Organ				
Great to Pedal	Poppet Pedal for Great to Pedal				
Choir to Pedal	Balanced Swell and Choir Pedals				
	Tubular Pneumatic Action				

became organist and choirmaster, a post he held until 1952. Prior to the installation of the present instrument, an organ by Flight and Robson, was opened on 29th June, 1867. It was rebuilt by Henry Jones & Son about 1895 and in 1901 was moved to the nearby church of St. Peter.

The only alterations which have been made to the organ are as follows<sup>1</sup> :

1. The Swell organ and bellows, originally on the north side, were moved to the south side of the church in December 1922 at a cost of £183 to make way for the War Memorial Chapel.
2. In 1968, as a result of Mr. Garrett-Cox's legacy,
  - (a) the Great reed, a Posaune, was revoiced to become a Trompette;
  - (b) the straight pedal board was replaced by a new concave-radiating one;
  - (c) the trigger Swell pedal was changed to a balanced one.
- 1915      Cleaning and overhaul by William Hill and Son.
- 1949      Cleaning and overhaul by J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd.
- 1961      Repairs to the Great organ soundboard following rainwater damage by J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd.
- 1968      Cleaning and overhaul by J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd.
- 1990      Cleaning and overhaul by J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd.
- 1991      Cleaning, overhaul, and re-leathering of the Swell reservoir by J.W. Walker and Sons Ltd following an arson attack.

Mr Mike Broom from Middlesex has looked after the organ since 1977 on behalf of J W Walker and Sons Ltd. The organ's last overhaul was in 1990, followed by another one in 1991 after an arson attack when it was within five minutes of going up in flames.<sup>2</sup>

**Centenary Organ Recital Programme**

Toccata in F Major	J.S.Bach
Nimrod	Elgar
Impromptu (Pieces de Fantaisie)	Vierne
Allegro Moderato e Serioso (Sonata No. 1)	Mendelssohn
Cradle Song	Halling
By Request:	
Melody in F	Rubinstein
War March of the Priests	Mendelssohn
Tuba Tune	Lang

---

<sup>1</sup> These notes were prepared by Wendy Watson, in memory of her grandfather, Percy P. Watson, a leading figure in Sunderland musical circles and organist and choirmaster for over 60 years. In 1901 he became organist and choirmaster at St. Thomas's Church, Sunderland. Its 3-manual organ, built in 1869 by Henry Willis, was about the same size as this organ.

<sup>2</sup> Reported in the 1990 and 1991 Issues of this Journal.

Wendy has added the following item to information about the organ :

“At the end of January it was announced that the BBC had chosen St Luke's Church for their *Songs of Praise* from Maidenhead. The timetable was pretty tight with a meeting of BBC representatives and members of the church in the middle of February, two choir rehearsals on 8 and 18 March, followed by the dress rehearsal on 21st March, and the recording on 22nd March. The programme went out on 6th May.

The BBC shone a blue spotlight on the pipes of the Great organ. The accompaniment was provided by a small professional orchestra and a professional organist/pianist, with myself being allowed to play the organ for the second item *Lord of Beauty, Thine the Splendour*. William McVicker, the Director of Music at the church of St. Barnabas, Dulwich, and organ curator at the Royal Festival Hall, London, was the professional organist/pianist, and at 6.00pm on 21<sup>st</sup> March he gave me the organ arrangements of “my” hymn. I stayed in the organ “loft” for the whole time and greatly enjoyed the experience. William, Paul (conductor) and Pamela (producer) were easy to work with, and, speaking to others afterwards, everyone enjoyed themselves.”

Chris Sharpe

#### THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This was preceded by lunch in the parish room (immediately behind the organ and the area damaged in that arson attack). It was provided by members of the church and we are very grateful to all those who gave their time for this. Apart from the lunch, it also provided a convivial time for members before the formalities started.

#### THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I can hardly believe as I compile my Presidential Report to you on a computer, that the first half of my presidential term is over, and that we are now one week into the second half. The weeks have certainly flown by, and memories of that happy AGM day in May last year in Christchurch Reading, still linger in my mind. At that meeting we accepted the retirement from active committee work of Leslie Davis, Gordon Hands, Roy Nash and Gordon Spriggs, acknowledging the immense debt of gratitude we owed to them for their many years service to the Association, and their continued concern for the Association's well being, to facilitate the taking on board of new ideas from our younger members by standing down from the committee to make way for this young blood. We have certainly benefited from their selfless decision.

It was a great pleasure for us all to recognise Derek Guy's twenty seven years as Programme Secretary, and to bestow on him the accolade of Honorary Member. Jen his wife, having supported Derek throughout these years, and provided refreshments at the Programme Sub Committee's meetings, was presented with a basket of flowers.

During the year we suffered the loss of Owen Brittain, one of our newest members, who came with us to Paris, and kept us abreast of the immediate weather situation. In September we were saddened by the sudden death of Evelyn Fisher, whose husband Len still maintains a link with the Association. Donovan Jones joined the nineties age

group in April this year. He has been a loyal supporter of the Friday organ recital series held in St Mary's for many years, which is organized so successfully by Gordon Hands.

The new committee met for the first time in September, keen to start the new year off with a bang. Ideas, enthusiasm and boundless energy were the keynotes of the meeting, and have remained so ever since. It has been the concern of every committee member to ensure that the aims and welfare of the Association are uppermost in our minds. I am quite convinced that the *con brio* speed that your Association's year has passed by is due to the same concern from committee and ordinary members alike to make the year the best ever. Accounts of our activities in the Newsletter and in the eagerly awaited Berkshire Organist will testify to our success.

It has been a real pleasure for me to attend the visits to local churches, to try the organs and listen to others playing. There has been an increase in the number of members and families on these visits, which is very gratifying for those who organize them, and for those from the host church who feel that giving up an afternoon for our Association has been worthwhile. Saturday morning school at Reading has, in the past, prevented me from attending our visits, but by some amazing quirk of chance, I have been able to travel to Chelmsford, and join the local crawl to Hurst, Barkham and Arborfield. In short we can report a meritorious, perhaps distinctive, outcome of our resolve to promote the aims and ideals of our Association.

Our aspirations and expectations would never be matched without the tireless efforts of the committee, whose members have given their time so willingly to make the Association a successful and vibrant unit. Jim, our Secretary has been a model of quiet self-effacing efficiency, ably assisted by his wife Margaret. He has certainly been my right hand man. Mark, our Treasurer, has managed our resources with the deceptive cunning of a Gordon Brown. The only difference is that Mark has carried out his task quite overtly, using a user-friendly language quite devoid of current financial jargon. I wonder if he enjoys his job!

The Programme Sub-Committee has met frequently, and under the untiring leadership of Christine has given us such an attractive series of visits both during the past year and in the next. In his quiet way Don has maintained the high profile of the Association in the local media and in the production of our Association flier. I am keen on projecting the image and activities of the Association as widely as possible, in particular through our excellently produced Newsletter. Michael Humphries is to be congratulated on producing such attractive newsworthy editions, which we are all proud to show to our friends. We are looking forward to the next edition of *The Berkshire Organist*, under its able editor Philip. We thank Gwen for taking on the unenviable role of Benevolent Steward so quietly behind the scenes.

May the Association count on your further support during the next year? Your ideas on the running of the Association are always welcome and we will do our best to put them into effect. Let us eradicate for good the old criticism of friends and acquaintances that the Association is dead on its feet. It certainly is not, but we cannot afford to be complacent.

Graham Ireland

Other reports were given by :

The Secretary – Jim Wooldridge :

The Treasurer – Mark Jameson : Accounts were in a healthy state, though a substantial sum was still invested in *The Organ in Reading Town Hall*. Sales of this were continuing at recitals, by post, and in Hickie's, Modern Music and the Museum shops.

The Programme Sub-Committee – Christine Wells.

The Benevolent Fund – Gwen Martin : Following the sad death of a very dedicated member and Past President, Evelyn Fisher, the post of Benevolent Fund Steward, which she had fulfilled for many years, became vacant. She had taken over this role for the remainder of this year but so far the collection has been taken at only one event. In the year 2000 members of the Association contributed the sum of £65.50 to the Fund. She thanked them for their support and hoped that this would continue.

The Town Hall Organ Subcommittee – Philip Bowcock : Members had given two lunchtime recitals and it was hoped that another one would take place shortly. Pending the appointment by the Corporation of a Curator, he was playing the organ for about an hour each week in order to help to keep it in good condition.

Archives : Most of the Association's archives of minute books and other records had been placed in the Berkshire Record Office where they were available for inspection by anyone by appointment. Anyone holding documents of interest to future generations of organists was invited to let Philip Bowcock have them to be added to this collection.

#### ELECTIONS

The following were elected for the coming year :

President	Graham Ireland
President-elect	Jim Wooldridge
Secretary	Jim Wooldridge
Treasurer	Mark Jameson
Programme Secretary	Christine Wells
Benevolent Fund Steward	Gwen Martin
Publicity Officer	Don Hickson
Committee Members (for three years)	Michael Humphries
	David Pether
Auditor	G William Potter

#### AND AFTERWARDS

Following the Meeting we were invited by David Colthup to visit the church of St John the Baptist at Cookham Dene to see its instrument. This is a small village church in marked contrast to St Luke's, but the organ is quite untypical of those in most similar churches. Originally it was a modest two-manual with 11 speaking stops, but has been extended to provide what might be regarded as a four-department with two keyboards. A short description would not do adequate justice to the total scheme,

suffice it to say that the two additional departments are the Nave Organ which sits mainly in front of the original case, and the Reeds which are at the back of the case. Both of these departments are playable from either manual, and there is obviously some extension work.

There is also a movable keyboard for use during choir practice which has 4 thumb pistons: – No 1 gives Stopped Flute 8; No 2 gives Open Diapason 8; No 3 adds Principal 4; and No 4 Fifteenth 2.

The overall impression is of a remarkably fine organ in a small church, and this is confirmed by the opinions of numerous recitalists, including Christopher Robinson (then St George's, Windsor), David Hill (Winchester), Wayne Marshall (International), Jonathan Rees-Williams (St George's, Windsor), Martin Baker (Westminster Abbey), Paul Hale (Southwell), Ann Elise Smoot (International) and Dr Roy Massey (Hereford).

<b>Specification of St John the Baptist, Cookham Dean</b>			
<b>Great</b>		<b>Swell</b>	
Open Diapason	8	Violin Diapason	8
Wald Flute	8	Lieblich Gedact	8
Dulciana	8	Salicet	4
Principal	4	Super Octave	2
Fifteenth	2	Reeds on Swell	
Reeds on Great		Flute *	4
		Nazard *	$2\frac{2}{3}$
		Tierce *	$1\frac{3}{5}$
		* From Nave	
<b>Reeds</b>		<b>Nave</b>	
Trombone	16	Open Diapason	8
Posaune	8	Principal	4
Clarion	4	Flute	4
		Twelfth	$2\frac{2}{3}$
		Nazard	2
		Fifteenth	2
		Tierce	$1\frac{3}{5}$
		Nineteenth	$1\frac{7}{8}$
		Twenty second	1
<b>Pedal</b>		<b>Couplers</b>	
Bourdon	16	Swell Sub Octave	
Bass Flute	8	Swell to Great	
Octave Flute	4	Swell Octave to Great	
Fifteenth	4	Swell to Pedal	
Trombone	16	Great to Pedal	
Posaune	8	Nave to Pedal	
Clarion	4	Nave to Swell	
		Nave to Great	
Wind pressure $2\frac{7}{8}$ inches		Compass : 58/30	
Tracker and electric action		Original organ built 1932 by	
Balanced Swell pedal		Percy Daniel	
20 thumb pistons above Swell		Rebuilt by Shepherd & Son 1996	

# DAME GILLIAN WEIR'S RECITAL IN THE ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL

Graham Ireland

The weather for the 26th evening of January 2001 was just appalling as people made their way to the Royal Festival Hall to hear the long awaited organ recital by Dame Gillian Weir. Driving rain and a biting wind to say nothing of the puddles everywhere made walking particularly unpleasant from car to concert hall, after the atrocious conditions experienced on the motorway.

Once in the aged hall, the warmth and buzz of excitement soon dispelled the feelings of cold as we met up with other organists over a glass of wine and a bite to eat. It was soon time to go into the concert hall. Here we were met by dazzling bright lights and an organ staring at us with renewed purpose and energy from its pipes. By the time the pre-concert celebrations for Dame Gillian's birthday were over, and Dame Gillian had cut her cake, the hall was packed to capacity for this widely publicised 60th birthday recital. I am the least fashion conscious person around, but was quite stunned by Dame Gillian's dress of sparkling turquoise with its train and bow. It certainly aroused much favourable comment in the interval and after the recital, receiving a special mention in one recital review. The significance of the sweeping train became apparent after Dame Gillian had positioned herself on the organ stool. It hung down and sparkled during the pieces, appearing to come from the bow, giving the impression of a comet in the night sky.

Dame Gillian plunged into the first piece, Bach's *Toccatà and Fugue in F Major* BWV 540. From the first note the momentum of the piece unfolded, encapsulating the bravura pedal and ritornello passages, characterised in the homophonic sections as well, with an incisive articulation, crisp and urgent. For me the fugue is less accessible and needs close study to appreciate its construction. In the dry acoustic of the hall the contrapuntal complexity of it was clearly delineated by meticulous phrasing of the individual lines, providing a meaningful contrast to the dance-like Toccatà.

Another Baroque piece followed, Schnitzel's *Sonata in C*. In this we were treated to some of the organ's individual stops in the several movements, an imaginative choice for this unique recital. Healey Willan left Britain for Canada in 1913, writing his *Introduction Passacaglia and Fugue in E flat minor* in 1916 for a new Casavant organ in St Paul's Anglican Church Toronto. Much is made of the influence of Reger on Willan's piece, but it does stand on its own as a masterpiece with its 18 variations, and a tripartite fugue derived from the Passacaglia theme. It was chosen by Dame Gillian as a tribute to her late husband, who had designed the organ in the First Church of Christ, Scientist, in Boston. During this monumental work we experienced the full gamut of timbres available on this rejuvenated organ.

After the interval Dame Gillian played Franck's *Choral No 2 in B minor*. Of the *Trois Chorals* this one is more suited to the Festival Hall organ, for its general character, that of a set of variations, relies less on a Romantic organ for its effect than

the other two. Dame Gillian's registration amply illustrated the clean sounds of this rather 'cold' work, and one felt that some warmer less strident stops would have allowed us to identify ourselves with the sounds we normally associate with Franck, (whether our perception of this is correct or not).

To conclude her recital Dame Gillian gave us a never-to-be-forgotten performance of Julius Reubke's *Sonata on the 94th Psalm*. Words from my humble pen are totally inadequate to describe the dazzling virtuosity of colour, technique, and overall grasp of this lengthy and demanding piece. Every vestige of Dame Gillian's formidable technique and interpretive power was brought together in this astonishing performance, leaving us quite breathless at its conclusion. After the work's rapturous reception, the encore by Jongen left us in doubt that Dame Gillian had lived up to our expectations, and more. The organ had responded successfully to her demands, ensuring that the privilege of taking part in this memorable 60th birthday recital would be etched indelibly in our memories.

## THE PRESIDENT'S EVENING

Jim Wooldridge

On Saturday, 11 November, our President, Graham Ireland, kindly arranged a very special evening for members and their guests, which was in a different format from those we had enjoyed in previous years.

The day started with torrential rain, but our spirits were undaunted as we gathered at the Reading School Chapel at 7.00 pm for a short recital by Dame Gillian Weir. This consisted of works by Bach, Schnitzer, Mulet, Francais, and finished with the ever-popular *Toccata* by Dubois, played at a rate I could never hope to emulate! All exciting stuff, made all the more enjoyable by the little stories Dame Gillian told us about each piece before she played it.

We are extremely grateful to her for taking time out of her busy schedule to play for us – did I hear her say that she was dashing off to Leipzig shortly?

<b>Programme</b>	
Chorale Preludes from the Clavier-Übung Wir glauben all' an einen Gott ("Giant" fugue) Dies sind die heiligen zehn Gebot	J S Bach (1685-1714)
Sonata in C major Allegro – Minuetto and Trio – Intermezzo – Presto	Franz Xaver Schnizer (1740-1785)
Toccata	Théodore Dubois (1837-1924)
Rosace (Rose Windows) from <i>Esquisses Byzantines</i>	Henri Mulet (1878-1967)
Soeur Blance	Jean Francaix
Soeur Constance	(1912-1997)
M`ere Marie de Saint Augustin From <i>Suite Carmélite</i>	

Following this, we all (including Dame Gillian) moved down to the Music School for what we thought was going to be a snack, but which turned out to be a veritable sit-down banquet. We collected our choice of food from a table groaning under the weight of a huge selection of meats and fish, and sat down at tables attractively decorated with flowers. No wonder that several went up for a second helping! This was followed by a sumptuous cheesecake, which, with coffee, completed the meal.

How Graham managed to achieve all this is no doubt a secret between him and the very efficient caterers, and our past president, Christine Wells, spoke for all of us when she said that we had had a very delightful evening, both musically and gastronomically.

It was a pity that the recital by Roger Judd at St Giles clashed with the President's "bash", which prevented several members from attending, and I wouldn't be surprised if they were just the teeniest bit disappointed that they couldn't be with us at Reading School.

## IS YOUR FUNERAL CHRISTIAN?

Peter Marr

Recently I have been involved in a Report and Seminar entitled *Funeral Styles and Practices*, a detailed observation of two thousand Christian funerals. The Seminar was over-subscribed and clearly welcomed by clergy, readers and others of many differing traditions. It addressed two issues: what "happens" at funerals, particularly at crematoria; and what has determined the choice of music that we now find at these functions. The full Report by the researcher dealing with the first of these is now available<sup>3</sup>. Berkshire Organist Association member, Rachel Walker<sup>4</sup>, presented the second paper, "My Way, or the Church's way?", drawn from her article in *Laudate*<sup>5</sup>, in which she drew on two themes: the balancing of socio-cultural and theological demands by the bereaved; and the assertion that crematoria were "sub-Christian" places, thus justifying the wide range of music (taped, on CD or played by an organist) now heard at cremations. This assertion was found unacceptable by some of an evangelical persuasion, as they were of the view that it was the people present on any occasion who made the event, not the place itself. Another view may be taken that it is a Church building that sees people through all the phases of their life, not just their Cremation. And in any case, the church and its symbols, through use as well as design, proclaim the Resurrection.

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<sup>3</sup> *Funeral Styles and Practices* by Antony Sisley, published by EB Projects, 21 Richfield Court, Hayne Road, Beckenham BR3 4HY, price £3.00 including postage. The section relating to the Committal is published in an edited form, in the journal *Priests & People* (February, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> To whom I am indebted for helpful comments on this article.

<sup>5</sup> "Choosing music for funerals" in *Laudate*, 27 (1995), pp 4-12.

The title of Rachel Walker's paper, "My Way, or the Church's way" reflects the present influence of popular culture on funeral music. Indeed, the introduction into church services, including funerals, of music of a non-Christian tradition is an experience well-known to most organists. This article is an attempt to encourage organists to use their influence to persuade others about the appropriateness, or otherwise, of funeral music, whether at Crematoria or in church, and to justify their position concerning this. It takes a different direction from Rachel Walker's paper, developing her theme of the sub-Christian character of Crematoria, and identifying the need for those who have Christian music responsibilities to be clearer, more definite, and more encouraging, in their leadership of this musical responsibility.

The earliest Christian funerals, as far as can be ascertained, were decidedly occasions of joy. They were events when white was worn. The advent of a less-embattled Christian life, and therefore more nominal observances, brought a change. By the eighth century, black was becoming the predominant funeral colour. By the early Middle Ages, the understanding of death had developed into a form that is probably best understood by reading the text of the *Dies Irae*<sup>6</sup>. The themes had become preoccupied with deliverance from hell, realisation of sin, absolution, pleas for forgiveness. The body, at least as late as the 1549 Prayer Book, was addressed by the Minister<sup>7</sup>. Masses and Prayers for the departed formed an important and constituent part of the post-death rituals. The bereaved were told in no uncertain terms of the numinosity and power of God's presence as well as of the hope of Redemption<sup>8</sup>.

The great Catholic tradition of Requiem music, whether Requiem Mass settings or the broader formal requiem music such as Brahms' German Requiem, generally maintained that ethos. The questions, perhaps a slightly unexpected one, now to be asked in a society where the Christian faith is more ignored than embattled, and the numinous cast aside, is this: what is the meaning of black as the funeral colour and its relationship to the music so often heard at Crematoria (and in many churches) today?

It may be helpful to step aside for a moment and look at a parallel art form, one that is visual rather than aural. Recently I visited an important icon exhibition at the Courtauld Institute in London. They were mainly large icons, panels, doors, and so on, from of course the Orthodox tradition. After an hour or so I left and passed by the end of a Gallery of 18th-century English oil paintings. Beautiful though they were, the aesthetic contrast, or should I say, the spiritual contrast, brought an emotional shock: they were so vulgar and earthly. A week or so later, at the British Library, at the exhibition to mark the 1700th anniversary of the founding of the church in

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<sup>6</sup> See *English Hymnal* 351, *New English Hymnal* 524. Of course, the melody accompanies the "Walk of shame" in the TV programme, *The weakest link*.

<sup>7</sup> The Burial service (1549), at the committal which is at the beginning of the service.

<sup>8</sup> I am reminded of the all-too-true saying that some Christians are sad because they live in fear of hell, others are happy because they live in hope of heaven!

Armenia, I listened to a recording there of some Armenian church music. How it took one out of this world into what can only be described as a sound environment of heaven. These are two examples of a theme I am attempting to describe that directly has a bearing on why “My Way”, songs from the shows, tracks of best-selling albums, and so on, are totally inappropriate at funerals, however suitable they might be to bring back memories of “Uncle Joe's” (or whoever) favourites at a Reception after the service. There are cases of popular music frequently used at cremation services in which the text is not merely non-Christian but anti-Christian,.

There is a perfectly good reason why, in terms of the psychology of colour, many mourners would want to wear black at a funeral, not least because of the circumstances of loss. The humanist or secular funeral will often be personalised, but without a wider context in which to put either the life of the deceased or the service, it is of no comfort to the mourners.

I am not suggesting that Christians do not need to grieve. Far from it<sup>9</sup>. But the committal of the body must be set against the commendation and rising of the soul. The music of a Christian funeral, not least a Cremation, must centre on the Christian hope for the deceased. It must take us up and out of this life. The type of inward psychological reflection that, by its nature, “popular” and pop music possesses simply does not do this. It plays restrictively on the secular sensibilities. It gives the message that our destiny is in our own hands and not God's. The focus is back onto humankind, not forwards and upwards to God. To listen to such music in this context is a self-ish rather than a self-denying experience, set squarely on earth.

We might ask: what in our culture will enable us to avoid this? What sort of music can be encouraged? The moving music by John Tavener at Princess Diana's funeral bridged this gap; so does, of course plainsong, so does much music that has been written in the pre-Vatican II ethos of a sense of the sacred. And so also does much mid-18th century concerted music, even the Allegro movements. Whether the oft-played *Chanson de Matin* or *Nimrod* by Elgar, or Walford Davies' *Solemn Melody* does so, I very much doubt. Although, it may of course be argued, that to have an experience of the familiar within a context that generally is not familiar (i.e. a funeral or cremation) may be a priority.

Organists have a great duty to influence people (on or off the organ bench) to see the absurdity of running funeral music as if it were either a tear-jerking ego trip for the bereaved or a memorial service. The embattled churches hardly existing in English Protestantism are not afraid to lift us up from this earth as in funerals we share something about both death and heaven. Has the all-too-respectable and highly competitive funeral business (which sadly has to include organists) been grounded because of the bad weather of secularism?

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<sup>9</sup> C.f. Michael Perham's pertinent comment: "The Easter message does indeed need to be proclaimed powerfully, but Christian mourners need to grieve as much as any others". See *Towards Liturgy 2000* (1989), p 55.

# THE ORGANS OF TWO CHESHIRE CHRISTCHURCHES

Philip Bowcock

When on a visit to Cheshire last December I had an opportunity to visit these churches, with both of which I had some previous connection.

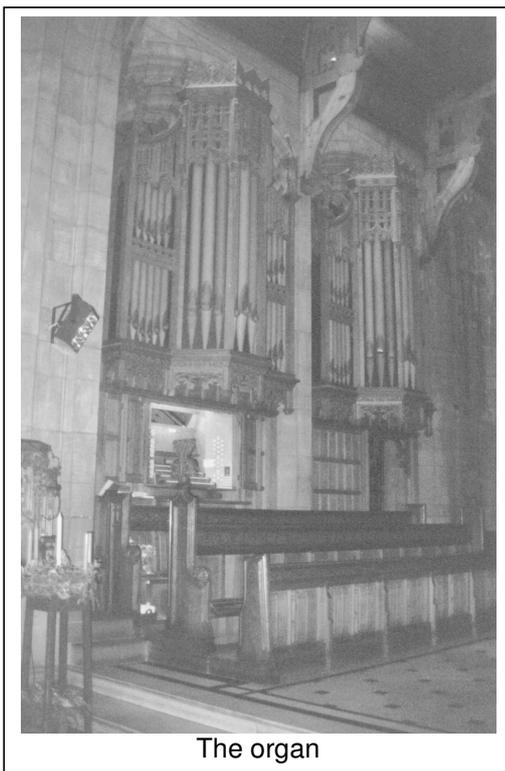
## CHRISTCHURCH, PORT SUNLIGHT

Port Sunlight Village is a remarkable concept created by the founder of Sunlight Soap, William Hesketh Lever in 1888. The son of a Bolton wholesale grocer, he built the then new Port Sunlight soap factory to cater for the demand for his then famous soap. He was concerned however that he should share the wealth which he was creating with his employees, and therefore set about building the village alongside his factory. His policy was set out in his speech at the banquet of the opening ceremony in March of that year :

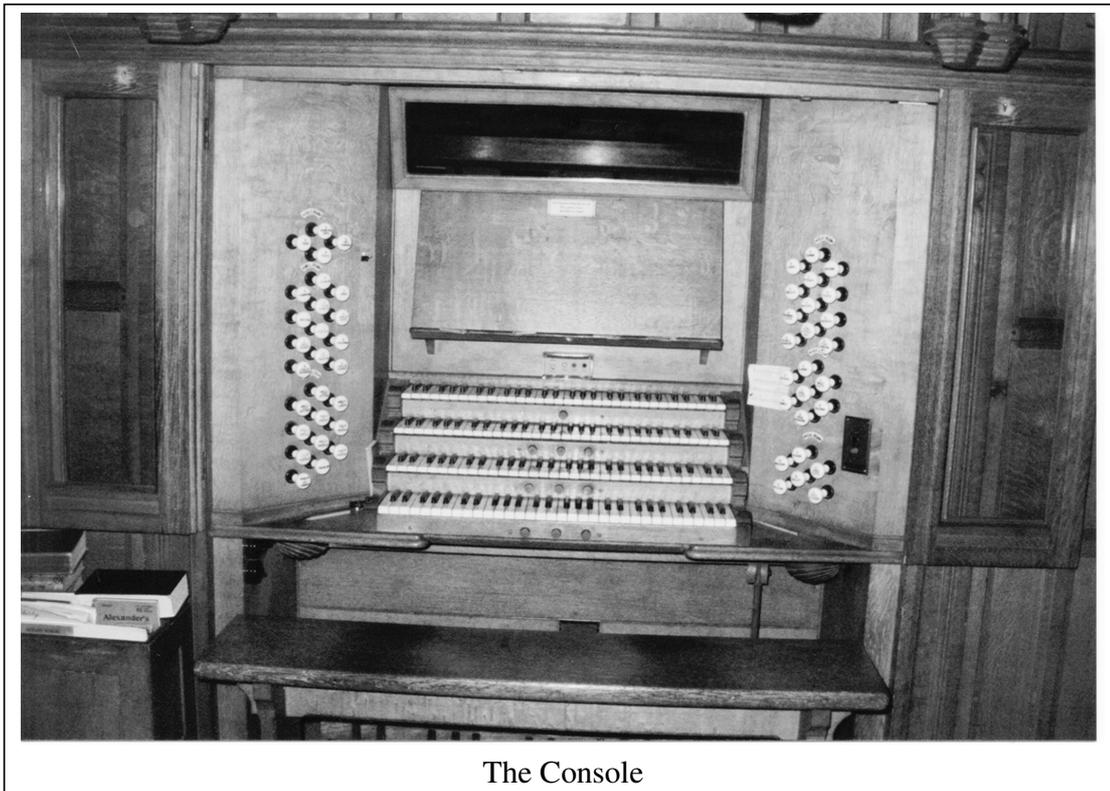
“It is my hope and my brother’s hope, some day, to build houses in which our work-people will be able to live and be comfortable – semi-detached houses, with gardens back and front, in which they will be able to know more about the science of life than they can in a back slum, and in which they will learn that there is more enjoyment in life than in the mere going to and returning from work and looking forward to Saturday night to draw their wages.”

He was created the first Lord Leverhulme in 1922.

The village which he created had some 900 houses, each block of terrace or semi-detached being of a different design. It included also a technical institute, the Lady Lever Art Gallery (now one of the largest in the North West), a cottage hospital (which continued until the National Health Service), a bowling green and an open-air swimming pool. Wide roads (before the days of cars), footpaths and grassed borders with flower beds were set out. Lever encouraged all forms of sport, art, literature, science and music and any organisation which promoted these. The Village is now a conservation area managed by The Port Sunlight Village Trust which remains responsible for the environment and landscaping, and in recent years the Village has received many awards.



The organ



The Console

At the centre of the village he built Christchurch, which was established in his own Congregational tradition, (now URC) as a place of worship for those who lived and worked in the village. He wanted this to be for everyone, long before church unity was taken seriously. It was opened in 1904, and I have a personal connection with it as my grandfather was Acting Minister around 1930 during an interregnum, both my maternal grandparents are buried there, and my parents were married there. The building is in the English Gothic style, built of red sandstone from the nearby Helsby Hill with mainly oak woodwork except for the ceiling, which is of Canadian pine. There is a large chancel with elaborately carved choir stalls and a fine reredos, and in general the church has the character of a small cathedral with a feeling of spaciousness and seating for 1,000. There are numerous stained glass windows and it is the only United Reformed Church with a peal of eight bells, which are regularly rung.

The magnificent organ was built by Henry Willis II to the specification of Dr Bridges, one-time Organist of Chester Cathedral. The style of the case is in keeping with the grandeur of the building. The Swell box is situated in the North Transept facing down the Nave, and the Solo, Choir and Great divisions face the Chancel. The blowing chamber and wind reservoirs are below the Organ and Choir Vestry. All action is pneumatic, and pistons are adjustable from setter boards. It is regularly used for concerts and recitals.

The Village, the Church, the Heritage Centre and the Art Gallery are all well worth a visit when one is in the area.





## CHRISTCHURCH, CHESTER

This is situated in a down-town area of Chester, far from visiting tourists, and in an area where, when I first started work. I sometimes had to collect rents of around five shillings a week from the terrace cottages which were then in a very poor condition. (I suspect that many aspects of the area have not changed greatly since that time.) The church building is surprisingly large for the area and, as with Port Sunlight, there are interesting features in the stained glass, the carvings and the chancel.

The present organ, built in 1909, is by Brindley and Foster in a romantic concert-organ style. The action is pneumatic with sliderless soundboards.. As with so many organs, it is situated in an alcove and thus does not sound fully down the nave. Its particular feature is the 'Charles Brindley System' turned on by drawing a Governor stop (extreme left of the stops over the Swell keyboard). This enables the organist to select any of 15 pre-set combinations which suspend the current stop selection and provide a solo or set combination with appropriate accompaniment and pedal. These are controlled by the drawstop knobs above the Swell keyboard. On cancelling the transformer the current stop selection is restored. There is also a "Brindgradus" stop control which is in effect a crescendo pedal operating on either full organ or on Great or Swell, determined by drawing other small drawknobs (bottom of the right-hand jamb).

The organ was fully restored in 1991, and is one of very few with its Transformer action still in good working order.

## BACH ANNIVERSARY

Christopher Cipkin

The 250th anniversary of the death of Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was marked by three events in this area.

AT WOKINGHAM :

David Ruddock

On 29 July 2000 David Pether, Organist of St Paul's Wokingham, gave a recital at St Paul's to mark the 250th anniversary of the death of J.S. Bach the previous day. A substantial audience enjoyed a well-balanced programme which not only demonstrated the enormous diversity of Bach's organ music, but thoroughly explored the tonal variety of this instrument.

The programme began and ended with two of the finest and most challenging of Bach's large-scale organ works; the first of these was the Toccata and Fugue in F major. In the Toccata, a powerful rhythmic drive and tension was generated as the long pedal notes underpinned the busy canonic writing above, and some slight hesitations in the florid pedal solos which followed did not diminish the strong sense of pulse. The tension was released in the long striding sequences that follow, but I felt that the organ textures rather lacked clarity at this point. The Fugue was taken steadily, but an illusion of quickening pace was created as the contrapuntal textures

gradually filled out and became more complex. Some quiet passages towards the end sounded as though they were emerging from the innermost recesses of the organ, but by this stage David was well into his stride and he brought the piece safely to its majestic conclusion.

By way of a contrast, David played four chorale preludes from Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, beginning with the beautiful and gentle Passiontide hymn *O Mensch beweine*, with its unexpected modulation just before the end, and ending with the stirring Eastertide and Ascension piece *Heut' triumphiert Gottes Sohn*, which I particularly enjoyed.

The programme note spoke eloquently of the supreme test of the organist's ability provided by the Trio Sonatas, but whilst the organist sailed serenely through the Largo from the Fifth Sonata, we were not given the opportunity to hear him tackling the tricky technical demands of the outer movement – another time perhaps, David? At risk of sounding ungrateful, as a listener I prefer to hear pieces played whole – but as a non-organist, maybe I am pushing my luck.

We returned to a devotional Passiontide mood with Bach's setting of the one of the Chorales used by him in his St Matthew Passion. This was followed by two further Chorale Preludes. The second of these (*Vor deinem Thron tret ich hiermit*) is thought to be Bach's very last composition, dictated a few days before his death. This quiet, apparently simple, but immensely moving piece resolves at the end into a calm G major. After this the lovely Air from the Suite No.3 in G sounded almost irreverent, given it will never shake off its connotations with a certain type of Shakespearian cigar, but I'm sure Bach himself would have enjoyed the joke.

Finally we came to the great Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor. To me the Fantasia is stern, severe and Lutheran, but in contrast the Fugue must surely be one of Bach's jolliest compositions, and with it David brought this thoroughly enjoyable recital to a rousing conclusion.

Inspired by this splendid recital, the audience made a very generous donation towards the restoration of the stained glass windows at St Paul's.

#### AND AROUND PANGBOURNE.

On 1 July 2000, at St. Laurence Church, Tidmarsh, there was a concert given by Bryan Fairfax (violin) and Shaun MacCarthy (harpsichord) on period instruments. The church, in which the duo have performed before, is particularly suitable for chamber music recitals. The programme included the Six Cöthen Sonatas (BWV 1014-1019), each of which was introduced by a reading about Bach's life and times.

On 28 October at St. James the Less, Pangbourne, Christopher Cipkin returned to his former organ bench to give an organ recital of music by Bach and his contemporaries. The aim of the recital was to put Bach in context as the eminent composer of his generation, but as a figure who was also deeply influenced by other composers. Works played included the 'Dorian' Toccata and Fugue (BWV 538) and the Trio Sonata in E flat (BWV 525) as well as works by Buxtehude, Vivaldi, Handel and Couperin.

# ORGAN CRAWLS

I – NEWBURY  
Anne Bolam

On Saturday 17th February, about 18 members met on a sunny, but cold afternoon at St Nicolas' Church. The organ there was built in 1770 by Byefield and Green, and moved from its position in a gallery under the tower in 1869, having been enlarged by Bevington. In 1927 Walker did some restoration, enabling the console to be sited across in the Lady Chapel. The most recent restoration in 1972, by Osmunds, involved the provision of the present mobile console, the re-enclosure of the choir organ, and some alterations to the pedal department.

Members enjoyed playing and listening to those trying out the organ. We then ventured to the Baptist Church which houses a two manual Martin and Coates of Oxford, about 100 years old. It is positioned at the front of the church, and is used by members of the church music group who also make use of a Technics electronic piano and other instruments.

The Methodist Church was our next port of call, where there is a three manual Hunter organ whose console is situated on the right hand side of the gallery. This instrument was rebuilt in 1986 by B Shepherd & Son, who added a Trombone and a Trumpet. It is worth noting that Wilfred Barrell was organist and choirmaster there for over fifty years, and has been succeeded by his daughter Gillian Moore who has been playing there for 10 years.

St John's Church was the fourth church on our itinerary. The organ is situated in the choir gallery at the west end. To reach it we were obliged to climb up a 'lighthouse' type of stairway. When we were settled in the gallery the resident organist showed us the instrument's capabilities.

After a walk around Newbury we were delighted to be welcomed back at St Nicolas for scrumptious home made cakes and a cup of tea. Finally we had the pleasure of joining the St Nicolas choir for Evensong where we sang the canticles to Walmisley in D minor, and the anthem *O Thou the Central Orb* by Charles Wood. Members of the Berkshire Organists' Association would like to thank our hosts from the Newbury and District Organists' Association for a most enjoyable afternoon, and in particular David Reynolds for preparing the programme and organizing the tea and cakes.

II – HURST, BARKHAM AND ARBORFIELD

28 April 2001  
Charles Herriott

HURST, ST. NICOLAS

The first church on our outing was Hurst. The first organ here was a two manual organ built by Henry Groves c1890, replaced in 1908 by a Willis, and completed by Norman and Beard. This was unplayable by 1977, and it was taken out and sold to an unknown Anglican church in Harborne, Birmingham.

### Specification of St Nicolas, Hurst

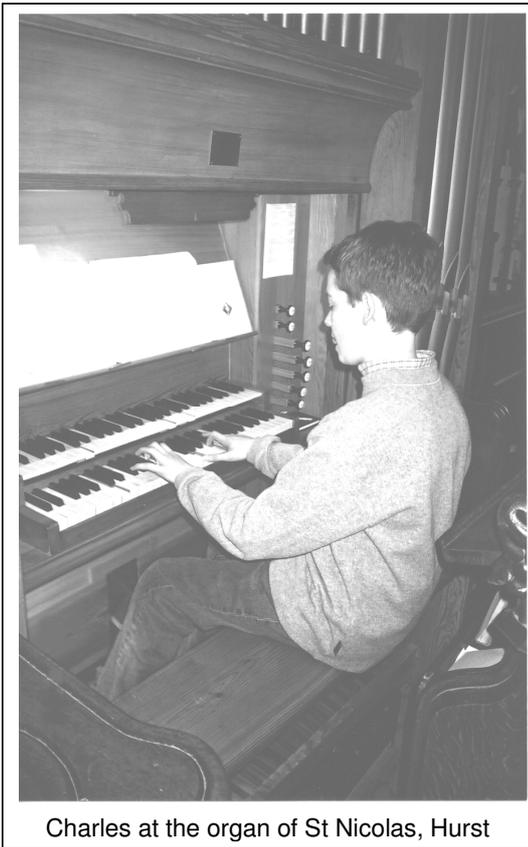
Left side drawstops		Right side drawstops	
Swell		Great	
Oboe	8	Trumpet (1998)	8
(Trompette to 1998, revoiced)		Mixture (1998)	II(?)
Mixture	II	Fifteenth	2
Fifteenth (New 1998)	2	Principal	4
Gemshorn	4	Stopped Diapason	8
Voix Celestes (TC)	8	Open Diapason	8
Salicional	8	Note: The Great Mixture shows "3" on the stop head but BIOS records it as 2 ranks	
Gedackt	8		
(Lieblich Gedackt to 1998)			
		Pedal	
Swell to Great		Bourdon	16
Swell to Pedal			
Great to Pedal			

### Specification of St Bartholomew, Arborfield

Left side draw stops		Right side draw stops	
Sw Mixture	II	Sw Double Diapason	16
Sw Cornopean	8	Sw Horn Diapason	8
Sw Oboe	8	Sw Stopped Diapason	8
Sw Principal	4	Gt Flute	4
Gt Fifteenth	2	Gt Stopped Diapason	8
Gt Principal	4	Gt Dulciana	8
Swell to Great		Gt Open Diapason	8
Tremulant		Gt Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Keys to Pedal†		Pedal	
† much older style stop head than any the others.		Bourdon	16
Toe lever left side brings on right side Great Stopped Diapason and Dulciana		Central balanced Swell pedal	
The keys to pedal suggest that it may have been built as a one manual.		2 toe levers to Great and Pedal	
Comments welcome.			

### Specification of St James, Barkham

Left side drawstops		Right side draw stops	
Swell		Great	
Gemshorn	4	Dulciana TC	8
Lieblich Gedact	8	Stopped Diapason Bass	8
Viol di Gamba TC	8	(goes across compass)	
– bass from Gedact?		Flute	4
Swell to Great		Open Diapason TC	8
Great to Pedal			
		Pedal	
Compass 56/30.		Bourdon	16
Right-side Trigger Swell Pedal		1 octave only	



Charles at the organ of St Nicolas, Hurst

It was replaced in 1977 with a second hand organ c1890 of unknown make, by Henry Willis, [organ builder] and renovated by David Whyte of Southampton in 1998.

Following the 1998 rebuild the organ is at A435 pitch, with tracker action, mechanical action drawstops, compass 58/30, and a balanced swell pedal.

In turn, people came up to have a go and I found it to be quite a powerful organ. The trumpet was particularly good.

#### BARKHAM, ST. JAMES

We then moved on to the next church, at Barkham. The organ at Barkham was built by Thomas Jones of London and dates from around 1860. The organ showed signs of wear, for instance one of the notes on the pedal didn't work, but it sounded good apart from this.

Very little is recorded about this organ. (BIOS: A00350). It possibly dates from the time of the last church rebuild in 1860

#### ARBORFIELD ST. BARTHOLOMEW

Our final church was Arborfield. This organ was built by Walker in 1863, and is unusual that it is located at the back of the church. After a talk and demonstration by the local organist, members stepped up to have a go. The stops were placed on both sides, but neither side being only Great or Swell. The stops with brown ends were for the Swell and the stops with the black ends were the Great, except for the Great 15th which had a brown end. Phew! Complicated! It was a good afternoon – my first on such a visit which I thoroughly enjoyed. Being able to try out different organs builds your confidence and you learn a lot about each individual instrument.

The specification as seen today is the same as when seen in 1985. Inside the organ as currently located under the tower, the swell box is rearmost behind the rest of the pipework. The Twelfth pipework is much newer. The shutters to the Swell open horizontally.

#### III – SLOUGH

Jim Wooldridge

On Saturday, 30 September, a small party of us made our way to Slough, some by train, and the braver ones by car to visit three churches with interesting organs. This had been arranged by our hard-working Programme Sub-Committee, and Christine was with us to ensure that all went well.



Jim Wooldridge plays the organ in  
St Elthelbert's

Diapasons on the Great. How envious can you get! Malcolm delighted us with a programme which consisted of works by Sir Charles Stanford, Frank Bridge, Robin Walker, Percy Whitlock, Alec Rowley and Charles Marie Widor, all beautifully played, and which showed off the many colours of the organ. The action is tubular-pneumatic as is the case of so many instruments of this vintage, and there was a slight but noticeable delay in the speech of the pedal pipes. Following the recital refreshments were served, and then Malcolm gave us a brief history of the church, pointing out in particular the stained glass windows. The large west-end windows were especially attractive. Before we moved on to our second venue several of us took advantage of the opportunity to play the organ.

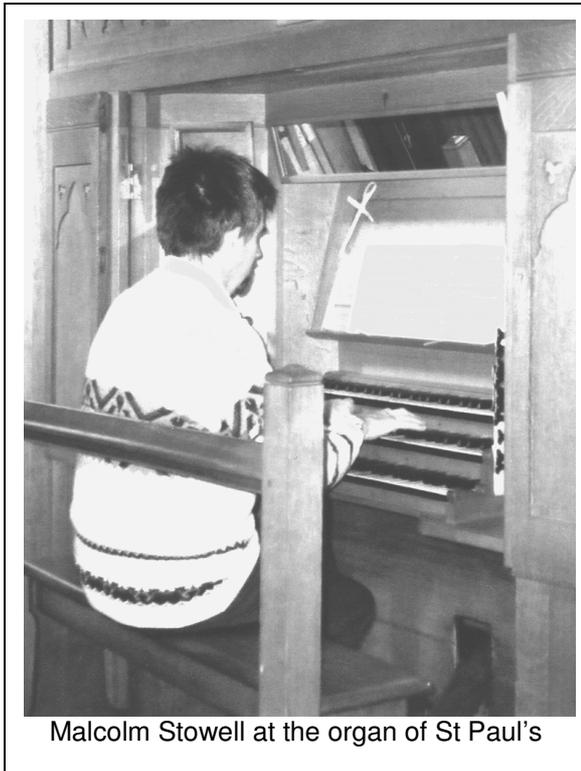
We all walked, crocodile fashion, to St Ethelbert's RC Church, a much smaller building, led by Malcolm, where a two

Out first port of call was to St Mary's, which turned out to be a huge building with an instrument to match. Those of us who thought that Slough was only for going through without stopping were surprised to find such a significant landmark in the town. The organist here is Malcolm Stowell, a familiar face at our St Mary's for he has given several Friday lunchtime recitals here in Reading. My friend Len Head and I, who had travelled by train, arrived early and found Malcolm half-way up a ladder adjusting some lights, but he descended from on high to greet us, and to show us the console before his recital which was the first item on the day's agenda.

The organ, a large three manual Norman and Beard, built in 1912 had a most wonderful reed chorus on the Swell, and it also had three Open



Graham Ireland at the organ of  
St Mary's



Malcolm Stowell at the organ of St Paul's

manual Nicholson awaited us, and again several of us tried our hand. This instrument had a detached console, and the pipes were situated very high up on the North wall. The sound was good, but varied according to which part of the church you were in.

Our final visit was to St Paul's where there was a three manual Walker. It was obvious from the orchestral kitchen section, which confronted us on entering the building that the organ was not being used as much as it might be for services, which was a pity because it gave quite a good account of itself. However, having only recently heard and tried the organ at St Mary's it must be said that it wasn't in the same league as the Norman and Beard instrument.

We were fortunate that the weather was kind to us, and it only rained when

we were safely inside St Mary's. I must express our sincere thanks to Malcolm Stowell, for not only did he entertain us at St Mary's, he also guided us through the streets of Slough to each venue. A few of us were glad to have had the opportunity to have a chat with him over a cup of tea before we left for home.

In all, it was a jolly good day out.

## VISIT TO CHELMSFORD

17 March 2001

This outing was at the invitation of our member Michael Rivers who is Senior Verger at Chelmsford Cathedral. Some of us travelled by train (which turned out to be surprisingly cheap) and others by car, and after lunching at Debenhams or elsewhere we walked to our first venue, Christ Church.

Christ Church, URC, is a modern building, very spacious, with accommodation for many activities besides Sunday worship, and obviously has a substantial congregation. We were met by Michael who introduced us to the Organist, Fred Dyer, from whom we had a short recital and description of the instrument.

The console is all-electric of necessity, as the coloured pipework stands in pipe-rack style high up on the front wall. It was built in its present form by Williamson & Hyatt in 1972, incorporating part of a previous Hill, Norman & Beard organ in the former London Road Congregational Church. Subsequently it was partly rebuilt by Hill, Norman & Beard in 1982.

**Specification of Christ Church**

<b>Great</b>		<b>Swell</b>	
Open Diapason I	8	Diapason	8
Open Diapason II	8	Gedackt	8
Stopped Diapason	8	Salicional	8
Principal	4	Vox Angelica (t.c.)	8
Lieblich Flute	4	Gemshorn	4
Fifteenth	2	Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>
Tierce	1 <sup>3</sup> / <sub>5</sub>	Flageolet	2
Larigot	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Mixture 22.26.29	III
Mixture 19.22	II	Krummhorn	16
Trumpet	8	Krummhorn	8
Krummhorn	8	Trompette	8
Solo Trumpet (prepared)	8	Tremulant	
<b>Positiv</b>		<b>Pedal</b>	
Gemshorn	8	Acoustic Bass	32
Flute	8	Open Wood	16
Gemshorn	4	Diapason	16
Flute	4	Sub Bass	16
Nazard	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Lieblich Bourdon	16
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Principal	8
Gemshorn	2	Bass Flute	8
Flute	2	Super Octave	4
Tierce	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub>	Contra Trombone	32
Larigot	11/3	Trombone	16
Nineteenth	1 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Krummhorn	16
Krummhorn	8	Krummhorn	8
Solo Trumpet (prepared)	8	Krummhorn	4
<b>Couplers</b>			
Swell to Great		Electric blower	
Swell to Pedal		Balanced Swell Pedal	
Swell Octave to Great		6 thumb pistons to Great and Swell	
Swell Suboctave to Great		6 toe pistons to Pedal and Swell.	
Swell Octave		Great and Pedal pistons combined	
Swell Suboctave			
Great to Pedal			
Positive to Pedal			
Positive to Great			
Swell to Positive			

Those of us who wished had an opportunity to play the instrument before moving on to the Cathedral. This building appears at first sight to be only of moderate parish church size, but on entering we found it to be much larger, and we were welcomed by the Master of Music, Peter Nardona and his assistant, Edward Welmar.

There are two organs, in the Nave and Chancel respectively, but the arrangement is much more complicated than that. The Nave organ stands under the tower in a somewhat restricted position as it was dictated that it should not obscure the archway. Consequently the full sound suffers from the same problem as so many other church organs which are tucked away in side aisles. Nevertheless it has an impressive sound. It has four manuals (the Solo having only an Ophicleide!) and the action is mechanical.

The Chancel Organ of three manuals is situated on the south side, close to the choir, and was built by N P Mander in 1996 using the case and pipework from St Andrew the Great, Cambridge. However the stop list is apparently enormous until one realises that most of them are actually duplicates of the Nave Organ. This enables the whole of the Nave Organ to be played from the Chancel except for the Choir department, and when this is done the keys of the Nave Organ move in accordance with those in the Chancel!

Two manuals are as normal Great and Swell, and apart from additions made at the time of installation are basically the original Cambridge organ. The third manual duplicates all the stops of the Nave Organ except for the Choir division.

<b>Specification of the Cathedral Chancel Organ</b>			
<b>Great</b>		<b>Swell</b>	
Bourdon	16	Open Diapason	8
Open Diapason	8	Stopped Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8	Echo Gamba	8
Principal	4	Voix Celeste	8
Wald Flute	4	Principal	4
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Fifteenth	2
Fifteenth	2	Mixture	III
Mixture	III	Contra Fagotto	16
Trumpet	8	Cornopean	8
		Oboe	8
		Tremulant	
<b>Pedal</b>		<b>Couplers</b>	
Subbass	16	Swell to Great	
Bourdon	16	Swell to Pedal	
Flute	8	Great to Pedal	
Trombone	16	Swell Unison and Octave on III	
		Nave on III	
3 manual console with a set of stop knobs duplicating all but the Choir division of the Nave organ		8 thumb pistons Great,	
64-channel capture system		8 Swell 8 general pistons	
		8 composition pedals Pedal,	
		8 Swell/generals	
		1 piston to Nave Ophicleide	
		Antiphonal thumb piston	
		4 reversible thumb pistons	
		3 reversible composition pedals	
		1 general cancel piston	

Following an opportunity for those who wished to “have a go”, we were provided with a very welcome tea while preparations were being made for Evensong. This was also an opportunity for us to learn what a vergers’ job in a cathedral really involves. Apart from taking appropriate part in processions, the vergers are also responsible for controlling the lighting and public address system, both of which involve considerable care. They also have much more mundane jobs such as frequently moving chairs etc. to prepare for the many different activities which take place in a cathedral.

Finally, we attended Evensong to Stanford in B flat sung by the Cathedral choir before making our way home.

**Specification of the Cathedral Nave Organ**

<b>Great</b>		<b>Swell</b>	
Bourdon	16	Stopped Diapason	8
Open Diapason	8	Viola da Gamba	8
Stopped Diapason	8	Vox Angelica TC	8
Gamba	8	Principal	4
Principal	4	Flauto Traverso	4
Flute	4	Fifteenth	2
Twelfth	2 <sup>2</sup> / <sub>3</sub>	Mixture	III
Fifteenth	2	Contra Fagotto	16
Sesquialtera	II	Trumpet	8
Mixture	III	Hautboy	8
Cornet	8	Vox Humana	8
Posaune	8	Clarion	4
Clarion	4	Tremulant	
<b>Choir</b>		<b>Solo</b>	
Stopped Diapason	8	Ophicleide	8
Salicional	8		
Principal	4	<b>Pedal</b>	
Flute	4	Open Diapason	16
Flageolet	2	Bourdon	16
Mixture	III	Principal	8
Cromorne	8	Flute	8
Tremulant		Fifteenth	4
		Bombarde	16
		Trumpet	8
<b>Couplers</b>		Great and Pedal combinations	
Swell to Great		Generals on Swell combinations	
Swell to Choir		Full Organ piston	
Swell to Pedal		8 thumb pistons to Great	
Choir to Great		8 thumb pistons to Swell,	
Choir to Pedal		6 thumb pistons to Choir	
Great to Pedal		8 general thumb pistons	
Solo to Great		8 composition pedals to Pedal,	
Solo to Pedal		8 composition pedals to Swell/general	
Choir Octave to Pedal		1 piston to Ophicleide	
		8 reversible thumb pistons	
		3 reversible composition pedals	
		1 general cancel piston	
		Multi-level capture system with 64 channels	

# **OBITUARIES**

## **EVELYN FISHER**

[The following testimonial to Evelyn was given at her funeral on 3 October 2000 by Jim Wooldridge.]

One of my greatest regrets is that, because my work in London prevented me from taking an active part in the affairs of the Berkshire Organists' Association until I retired almost five years ago, I've only known Evelyn for a comparatively short time.

I am grateful to some of my colleagues in the Association who have told me a little of her early life. I gather that she was educated at Christ's Hospital, and that she took lessons with Reg Brind, who was at one time organist of St Peter's Caversham, and Music Master of Henley Grammar School, which gave her the opportunity to deputise at various churches in Reading, thus gaining valuable experience. I've heard also of her involvement with the children's music festival in Reading, a very important event in years gone by, where she accompanied them on the Town Hall organ, until she was succeeded by Roy Nash.

She acted as Secretary to the Reading Town Hall Recital Committee, which was responsible for the lunch time concerts there before the Willis went silent for so many years, having taken over this responsibility from another Evelyn – Evelyn Goodship, whom some of us will remember as a fine organist of many years ago.

Her devotion and service to this Church over many years, at least 25, is well known and I am sure that Goring will be much the poorer for her passing.

However, all those I have spoken to about Evelyn have stressed one thing about her, and that is the belittling, quite unjustly, of her own talents, for she was, in fact a fine musician.

I have been fortunate enough to hear Evelyn play at several recitals and I was impressed not only by her playing, which was of a very high standard, but also of the thought she put into her choice of programme. At one Friday lunch-time recital at St Mary's she ended her recital with a piece by a French composer whose works, shall we say, are a little contentious as to their quality, but which are fun to play, and just as much fun to listen to. Afterwards I went up to the console to thank her, saying how I had enjoyed her playing, especially of the last piece. Yes, she said, it's what the customers want, but it's rubbish really. No prizes for guessing who the composer was, but I only wish that more recitalists would give greater attention to what the audience wants to hear.

On another occasion, when I asked her if she had enjoyed the recital given by a visiting organist, whose choice of music was rather restrained, she replied that having driven all the way over from Crays Pond she had expected to hear full organ at least once, but she didn't get it this time!

Evelyn also had a very subtle sense of humour. A couple of years ago the Berkshire Organists' Association arranged a ninetieth birthday celebration for Edith Hewett, who had been organist of Park United Reformed Church for many years.

This was held in the church itself, and several of our members played the organ. The last to play was Evelyn, who started to play what seemed like a rather solemn Bach chorale for such an occasion. As the music progressed, however, we gradually realised that the melody coming from the pedal organ was that of "Happy Birthday." Following this, she gave a moving tribute to Edith when she presented her with a bouquet of flowers to mark the occasion.

Her involvement in the Berkshire Organists' Association was never half-hearted. She was President in 1979-1980, and also looked after the benevolent fund. I can tell you it was most unwise to walk past Evelyn when she was rattling the tin without putting something in it! Apart from the last one, held only two weeks ago, I cannot recall her being absent from any Committee meeting while I have been a member of it, even though it was far from a pleasant drive from her home into Reading on wet wintry nights.

Evelyn always said exactly what she felt at the meetings, though always, of course, in a kindly way, and you knew that with her, what you saw is what you got. Her contributions to the discussions were carefully considered and full of wisdom. She will certainly be very much missed, not only by the Berkshire Organists' Association but also by the musical world in general.

In the announcement of Evelyn's passing in our local paper, it said, "She was a very wonderful person."

I'm sure that none of us would disagree with that.

### **ROY NASH**

It was with great sadness that we learned that only two days after our AGM Roy had died in The Royal Berkshire Hospital. He had suffered a heart attack and stroke two weeks previously, but those who had seen him in hospital thought that he was on his way to making a recovery.

Roy's tribute to Leslie Davis on Page 40 of this issue indicates his high regard for others. The following appreciation of his work appeared in the magazine of All Saint's

#### **ROY NASH 1929-2001**

It is with regret that we record the death of Roy Nash, for thirty years organist and choirmaster of this parish, and for ten years head of St.Mary and All Saints School. Roy was, with his sister Stella, probably the longest-standing worshipper at All Saints, having first come to the church in 1938. In recent years, of course, he was not often seen in the congregation here, as he was usually playing the organ somewhere else, but he was still deeply involved in the choir, playing for choir practices.

Roy's father, Norman Nash, was organist and choirmaster here before him, and Norman advised him not to become an organist because there was no money in it. Roy, who was educated at Battle School and Reading School, became a schoolmaster

instead, after training at Culham College, and taught at Grovelands and Caversham Primary before coming to St.Mary's, then in Hosier Street, in 1966. He stayed at St.Mary's for twenty-five years. During that time the school moved to Coley Park, and Roy became deputy head. His last ten years at St.Mary's were spent as headteacher. He continued, after taking early retirement, to maintain connections with St.Mary's, taking children on much-appreciated nature walks along the Kennet, and playing the organ for school services. He greatly regretted that the demands of the current curriculum made it impossible to have the thorough hymn practices that used to be a regular feature of the week.

In spite of his father's advice Roy had started to play the organ as a boy at Reading School, and it gave him constant joy. As choirmaster of All Saints he presided over a golden period and arranged for the choir to sing in many distinguished churches and cathedrals. He also supervised major modernisation works on the Willis organ. He served as President of the Berkshire Organists' Association, and used to play the Willis organ in the Town Hall for the Schools' Music Festival. Many children were encouraged by Roy to take up music. He continued to work for the BOA to the end.

After he gave up being organist and choirmaster here, Roy helped out at several churches and was able to indulge his love of cathedral music, but "filling in" at St. Mark's turned out to last ten years. His gentle encouragement helped to make the most of much more limited musical resources than he had enjoyed at All Saints'.

He served on the PCC here for some time, and was Chairman of the Mission Committee, during which time the creche was created and Tots R Us founded with his encouragement.

Roy loved steam trains, and gained much delight from preserved steam, at the Mid-Hants Railway and in miniature in Prospect Park, where he had many friends. Friday mornings stoking at Ropley were a particular joy for him.

He was a dedicated gardener, and had been "Growmore" for this magazine for the past four years (a feature which he generously extended to St. Mark's as well!). His advice on gardens was always listened to with respect.

He died on 29th May after three weeks' illness. His funeral Mass at All Saints' on 8th June was attended by 270 people, including many fellow-organists, former pupils, friends and colleagues. Many former choristers joined with the present adult section to perform the Welsh male-voice favourite *Morse Christi* as an anthem during communion. The Gospel was read by Fr Jonathan Baker, Vicar of St. Mark's, the intercessions were led by Fr Christopher Walker, former curate of All Saints', and a tribute was given by Kate Winslet, a former pupil.

He never married, but will be missed by many friends, and particularly his sister Stella.

# CELEBRITY RECITALS IN THE CONCERT HALL

DAVID SANGER

2 June 2000

This was the second of the celebrity recitals to be given on the restored Town Hall organ, and it was good to see yet again a near capacity audience. David Sanger, whose teachers have included Susi Jeans, Marie-Claire Alain, and Anton Heiller, has an international reputation as a recitalist, teacher and recording artist.

He began the recital with three pieces by Bach, starting with the ever-popular Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 565). Although we have heard this piece many times before, it is always a pleasure to hear it played with class and that “little bit of extra” which gave the recital a flamboyant start. There then followed the Chorale Prelude *Wenn wir in höchsten Nöten sein*, which Bach is reputed to have written on his death-bed, and the final fugue from *The Art of Fugue*, with its abrupt ending.

With Bach still in mind, David Sanger continued with the *Prelude and Fugue on BACH* by Liszt – a piece so well suited to the Town Hall organ, as was the Franck *Cantabile* which followed. Father Willis was well acquainted with the sounds of Cavaillé-Coll organs, and the soft reed stops are found to be most suitable in French romantic music. We heard the first movement of Elgar’s *Marche Eurpéenne*. This was inspired Cochereau and the Cavaillé-Coll sound – striking Toccata-like piece which is certainly worthy of a place in the recital repertoire. Sonata III by the 19<sup>th</sup> century German composer August Ritter then followed. This is not a well-known work in this country, but is of great interest, and containing some very virtuoso sections. We heard Jongen’s *Menuet-Scherzo* before the *Final* (Symphony I) Vierne which brought the recital to a triumphant close.

It was good to hear such scholarship combined with exciting and flamboyant playing. The two do not always go together!!

WAYNE MARSHALL

8 November 2000

Don Hickson

The Celebrity Recital at the Town Hall was the first visit to Reading by the brilliant recitalist Wayne Marshall, but his recent appearances at venues in the area wetted the appetite to see how he would handle the Reading Willis.

The first half of his programme was all French Romantic music beginning with a very speedy performance of the Guilmant *Grand Choeur* in D. Relative calm was then restored with the Franck *Pastorale* after which an unscheduled break occurred while the Harrison technician dealt with a pedal B that was reluctant to do its fair share of work! During this break Wayne Marshall demonstrated a secondary ability to keep his audience's attention by going into his programme in depth. The first half ended with a complete performance of the Widor *Sixth Symphonie* where all the colours of the organ were evident.

This demonstration of the capabilities of the organ was further evident in the second half with a display of the art of improvisation on themes by J.S.Bach largely selected by the audience. From this Wayne Marshall proceeded to construct a half hour 'Symphonie' in the French style producing a coherent whole and revealing Bach in a completely new light – Bach by Shostakovitch comes to mind.

It was very reassuring to see an almost full Town Hall for this event - during the break after the Franck it was elicited that about 40 people present were attending their first organ recital. How many will return to see Thomas Trotter in the New Year?

Michael Thomas

On a rather blustery evening in November a sizeable audience was at the Concert Hall in Reading. On getting my ticket I was told that Evelyn Glennie, the percussionist, had just purchased a ticket. Did anyone see her?

The concert consisted of a largely French inspired programme, starting with Alexandre Guilmant's fine *Grand Choeur*. Even from the first few chords it was noted that the tempo was on the fast side.

We then listened to César Franck's delightful *Pastorale*. This was possibly the best piece of the evening, and it is interesting to note that this piece's first performance in 1864 was the very year that the grand Father Willis we were listening to was installed.

After a break of approximately 10 minutes while a non-working pedal note was made to work (during which time Mr Marshall introduced and gave a much more detailed analysis of the next piece he would play), he continued with Charles Marie Widor's, Sixth Symphony. Although again the tempo throughout seemed to be very fast, the technical ability to play the piece cannot be under-estimated.

During the interval, when some managed to get refreshment, the enduring discussions were to the forthcoming content of the second half. This was because it was to improvisations on themes by J S Bach. Mr Marshall duly asked for contributions from the assembled audience ranging from *Wachet Auf* to *Sheep may safely graze* to themes from violin concertos. To say that the resulting improvisations were good would be an insult; I seemed to lose track of time, but recognised many familiar tunes. The improvisations were in a French Symphonic form and lasted approximately 40 to 45 minutes. As I struggle after about 10 minutes, the scale of the undertaking was outstanding.

So, to summarise, was it a good recital?

Yes.

What was the highlight?

The César Franck and the second half.

The only disappointing part was that we only heard French music, but never mind, maybe next time!!

Thank you Wayne Marshall.

<b>Programme</b>	
Grande Choeur in D	A Guilmant
Pastorale, Op 19	Cesar Franck
Symphonie No 6 in G minor	C M Widor
Improvisation on themes suggested by members of the audience	

## **THOMAS TROTTER**

14th February 2001

David Pether

The arrival of the year 2000 provoked a considerable amount of hype, amid overstated claims of an impending New World Order.

A more considered view at the start of 2001 is that little of substance has changed during the course of one year....but there have been a couple of minor developments within the secular organ world which must give all lovers of the organ and its music a warm glow of satisfaction: the resumption of solo recitals in the Royal Festival Hall on an equal footing with orchestral concerts at the "prime time" of 7.30pm, so far playing to close on capacity audiences; and nearer to home, the regular use of the magnificently-restored Willis at Reading Town Hall, with average attendance at the Celebrity Recital Series averaging more than 300 despite the low-key advertising of organ events by Reading Arts.

Such an apparent renaissance of public interest in the organ undoubtedly owes much to there being the opportunity to listen in comfort to performers selected from the international top rank playing well-constructed programmes on quality instruments. It is a far cry from the church recital where one can often be relieved to reach the end in order to get up from an unforgiving pew and go in search of a hot drink. In the concert hall one may not experience the camaraderie derived from being among thirty dedicated and well-wrapped listeners in a damp and draughty church, but there is most definitely a sense of occasion.

So it was in February when Thomas Trotter unleashed J.S. Bach's *Fantasia & Fugue in G minor* on an expectant crowd. Although the *Fantasia* provided fewer dramatic contrasts than is usual, some added decoration was effective in those remarkable bars of ascending chromatic chords over an ever-descending pedal line, and the *Fugue* danced along in typically effortless fashion, demonstrating rock-solid technique coupled with thorough musicianship.

Two Movements from the *Symphony No.8* by Widor reminded us of the influence of Cavallé-Coll's tonal innovations on Father Willis; the *Moderato Cantabile* also sufficed as a romantic nod in the direction of St.Valentine's night.

Schumann's *Canon in A minor*, written for pedal piano and containing a good deal of pianistic figuration, preceded the *Sonata No.1* in F minor by Mendelssohn which

provided ample opportunities for the organ's contrasting choruses to be pitted against one another.

After the interval, John Ireland's *Capriccio* came as a refreshing novelty. A most enjoyable and perky little piece, with a few (optional) splashes of tuba for good measure; it is surprising that this is not heard more frequently.

An idiomatic rendition of the central movements from the Whitlock *Sonata* left one wishing that the entire piece had been programmed, but perhaps this is not the best instrument for that repertoire. Judith Weir's entertaining tone poem *Ettrick Banks* aims to recreate the impression of a bubbling waterfall in a brief toccata, and made for an interesting comparison with the preceding Whitlock Scherzo.

The published programme closed with Bizet's *Carmen Suite* in the arrangement by Lemare. This was unfortunately the evening's only demonstration of Trotter's speciality, the transcription; a talent honed to perfection through his 18-year tenure as Birmingham City Organist. Seemingly uninhibited by the few playing aids available, this was a performance of great gusto, orchestral colour and rhythmic vitality which deservedly brought the house down. The *Toccatina – Humoresque* by Pietro Yon provided further amusement as an encore before the audience could be ushered out into the cold Reading night.

Programme	
Fantasia and Fugue in G minor BWV 542	J S Bach
Moderato Cantabile and Allegro from 8 <sup>th</sup> Symphony	Widor
Canon in A flat	Schumann
Sonata No 1	Mendelssohn
Capriccio	Ireland
Canzona and Scherzetto (from Organ Sonata)	Whitlock
Ettrick Banks	Weir
Carmen suite arr. E H Lemare	Bizet

The organisation at the Town Hall has improved immeasurably over the past year, and there seems to have been some moderation in the ferocity of the heating also. The programme contained excellent notes on the music (although inexplicably omitting details of the Whitlock movements) by David Gammie, who also assisted as registrant.

With the Celebrity Recital Series now well established, perhaps the Association can find ways in which to encourage further use of this instrument and develop a relationship with the audience in the hope of enticing some to attend recitals at other local venues.

# LUNCHTIME RECITAL BY PHILIP ASPDEN

Wednesday 16th August 2000

Peter F Smith

A good-sized audience turned up to hear the Town Hall Organ after its restoration and the instrument sounded in good heart. The recital was not one to miss. Our organist selected pieces which succeeded in demonstrating the varied sounds which the organ produces. The programme was mainly French. We first had a rendering of *Grand Choeur Dialogue* by Gigout. This showy item demanded and received great skill in execution. A lighter piece of Dubois followed (*In Paradisum*) which showed off the Vox Humana, although a fault in the system had to be corrected by manual assistance.

The highlights of the occasion were, to me, the lucid rendering of Franck's *Piece Heroique* (however, the compilers of the programme missed the double accentuation to the title) and as good a version of Cocker's *Tuba Tune* as I have heard. The Tuba stop of the Town Hall organ seemed as nice as that at Liverpool Cathedral. The rather grand Widor *Marche Pontificale*, as well as the sonorous resonances of Vierne's *Finale* went down well. I had not heard Guilmant's *Fantaisie* before – it was worth the introduction.

There is no “echo” in the Town Hall to boast of, which is unavoidable but rather a drawback if one applies cathedral standards. However, Philip Aspden gave an outstanding performance. It even overcame the fact that the French pieces would, with no disrespect to the builders or restorers of the Town Hall organ, surely sound even better on a French Cavaillé-Coll organ. Perhaps Mr Aspden should consider treating us to a recital on one of these delightful instruments in situ.

Programme	
Grand Choeur Dialogue	Gigout
In Paradisum	Dubois
Piece Heroique	Franck
Scherzo Op 2	Durufle
Marche Pontificale (1er Symphonie)	Widor
A Song of Sunshine	Hollins
Tuba Tune	Cocker
Fantaisie	Guilmant
Final (1er Symphonie)	Vierne

## “ONCE UPON A TIME”-

Reflections on 68 Years as Organist of  
St.. Mary’s Twyford and St. James’s Ruscombe

“Write something for *The Berkshire Organist*” they said - but what, I ask? How does 68 years of experience fit into a couple of pages? How things have changed in our life of church music during that time?

Once upon a time – many years ago, when I was a child, I went to Church with my Father - a bellringer and chorister – I carried my ivory-covered prayer book given me at my Christening, and this contained words of every service needed plus hymns. Since then I became organist and, after 68 years at Twyford, I find I now need about 5 to 10 books + M/S in order to play one service! How times have changed! But what of the wonderful experiences in those intervening years.

It was in 1932 that I received a letter from the then vicar saying that the organist at Ruscombe was ill, and could I play? I had been learning the organ for about four months and had never been to Ruscombe – but I went . . . and have played about every Sunday since - 68 years! Ruscombe and Twyford became a joint parish, so playing at Ruscombe involved playing at Twyford too. Taught by R J Brind, Twyford Organist, (who himself studied under Gustav Holst), I became his assistant until he left for St.Peter’s Earley, in 1939, whence I took over as Organist and Choir Mistress of both Parishes.

I have worked under five vicars, all different, – definitely a challenge – but survival was the keyword! For 30 years it was five services a Sunday, chasing from one church to another:

10.00 am	Sung Eucharist	Twyford
11. 15 am	Matins	Ruscombe
2.30 pm	Children’s Service	Twyford
4.30 pm	Evensong	Ruscombe
6.30 pm	Evensong	Twyford

The bonus was that I had such wonderful choirs – 18 men, 18 boys (who could, and would, sing) never fewer and, of course, music was of a very high standard.

Les Davis, who some of you know, was organist at Sonning for some of the time and, between us with one super choir, we used to arrange Choir Festivals etc., bringing in all the little choirs from surrounding villages. It’s difficult to find choirs today but I was alright until we had a vicar with three daughters who decided girls should be allowed in the choir – that was the end of the boys!

Weddings and funerals were part of my life of music. Over 1,000 weddings, and today couples come back to celebrate golden weddings and find me still there. Brides come to discuss music and say “You played for my Mum (and my Gran’)” – where has the time gone? What a wonderful achievement, 68 years of playing music in the Churches – making sure that every service was worthy of the Glory of God, just like you who read this.

Flower Festivals, Concerts, Nativity and Passion Plays, etc., all have been my privilege to produce in my time as musician. I have written a poem about it, entitled “68 Years”, which follows.

If, like me, when receiving your copy of Organists’ Review, some of you turn straight to the page written by a lady under the title *Corno Dolce*, my church life is a mirror of her experiences – the humour with which she accepts all eventualities, or at least describes them. “Where is the organ seat?” I asked in one church when deputising for a funeral. “Just find your way through the broom cupboard” they replied! Then there was the ladder to the organ loft, made of rope! Many of her characters I have met too. Today, when some churches have not yet coped with new liturgy, Holy Spirit and/or Holy Ghost creates problems and I find her word “GORRIT” must be a help! Yes, I’ve had it all – I once gave a recital in a large church in Wales walked through a flock of sheep to get to it – never a dull moment.

Looking back I think that some of us older organists had wonderful church music to play at services, so different from today where most of the music seems to be in unison or unsingable or, if it is good, maybe it is obliterated by clapping of hands or rattling of coffee cups. Gone are the days of the “voluntary” in lots of churches. A few weeks ago I played in a church where there is no resident organist. Afterwards I heard that the congregation enjoyed hearing the organ but complained that they “couldn’t hear themselves talking before the Service”. Ah, me!

Once upon a time – memories – but my thanks are due to all who have listened, encouraged, helped, and made all my years of service so wonderful, even if difficult at times.

In retrospect it is easy to wonder if it has all been worthwhile, but somehow I feel that somewhere along the line amongst the hundreds of people who have crossed my path, there may be many who have felt their lives enriched – or even found a lost faith – by the music to which I have contributed, and for that I am grateful. This, of course, must apply to so many other organists, many of whom we have known, who devoted their lives to being Church Organists.

To the young organists of today I say, times may be different, but your work is still very much needed to show that all we do is for the Glory of God. To the older ones I say “thank you” for all you have done and are still doing.

God bless you all  
Sybil

[Sybil Stephenson completed her 68 years as parish organist of  
Ruscombe and Twyford on Sunday 26 November, 2000]

## **SYBIL’S POEM**

Sundays – St Mary’s, St James’s, and Sybil - that was routine for me,  
Father helped to ring the bells, and was in the choir you see.  
I’d sit there happily at the back, the highlight of the day,  
Listening to the music, and watching the organist play.

Pianos were never a problem, at 11 I played and could sing,  
But I longed to play the organ, more than anything.

Let's move on a bit to March 1932,  
This older girl knew just what to do.  
By that June I'd saved my pennies, enough for me to go  
And ask Reg Brind our organist if he'd take me in tow.  
I always enjoyed those lessons, practices were never a bore,  
I got to know and love that organ more and more.

One Saturday in 1932 – a most eventful year,  
I received a letter from Ruscombe that decided my career.  
“Our organist” wrote Rev Jenkins “is sadly ill in bed,  
She can't be at tomorrow's services – can you play instead?”  
After some deliberation I did accept the call,  
That, very briefly, was the beginning of it all.

When amalgamation of St Mary's and St James's came, service times  
coincided,

But Reg and I managed to cope with the work divided.  
When he left for St Peter's in 1939,  
I became official organist for both churches at this time.

We had Father Dowland, then the service pattern changed.  
I was able to play at all the services and so it was arranged.  
10 am Sung Eucharist at Twyford, Ruscombe Mattins 11.15,  
2.30 Sunday School at Twyford - little children on the scene.  
Back to Ruscombe at 4.30, leaving there 'ere long,  
To be ready at 6.30 for Twyford Evensong.

Now I've served with five vicars- some musical, some not,  
It's been a kind of “Challenge Sybil” - between us we've done the lot!  
Being asked to play “Match of the Day” didn't wrong-foot me at all  
After working out with Gang Shows, I was prepared and on the ball.

68 years of memories, some comical, some sad,  
But some so very beautiful they really make me glad.  
Like the Coronation Specials - 100 voices there to sing,  
Festivals of Flowers - and Easter, come the spring.  
Stainer's *Crucifixion* – everyone who hears  
“God so loved the world”, must be moved to tears.

Nine Lessons and Carols – Christmas is here,  
Always a favourite time of year.  
I could sit at the organ, pull out all the stops,  
With Handel's *Messiah* still top of the pops.

With the circling of the decades, many an old refrain  
Is turning up as fresh as paint- discovered yet again!  
“Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine”

Is just as emotive as “Shine, Jesus, Shine”.

A thousand brides - yes quite a few,  
Plus the one when the vicar forgot he was due.

Hymns sung in the blackout when war was on,  
Harmonium in open air when the sun shone.  
Playing in churches, High, Middle, and Low,  
(If I was needed I did try to go.)

A little Welsh Chapel on high mountain ways,  
Where it was obvious “Sheep safely graze.”

Now I must stop or you’ll be reading all night,  
But to leave out my “thank you’s” wouldn’t be right.  
To the Clergy, Congregations, all those who have helped me on the way,  
Self-effacing friends who brought me safe to this day,

To every member of every choir, love, gratitude, and great respect,  
They’ve always done more than I could expect.

I always asked so much of them to keep my standard high,  
And they never did desert me, but kept on standing by.

After receiving so much loving kindness for 68 years or more,  
My grateful humble thanks are due to one and all.

To all those dear friends of the Berkshire Organists, past and present, who have supported and worked with me over the years, I say thank you too to you.

Sybil M. Stephenson

## **THE ORGANS AT ST. ANDREW’S CHURCH, SONNING**

Leslie Davis and David Duvall

In the early 1800’s there was a barrel organ in the west gallery (there were galleries all round at that time). It had three barrels of old hymn tunes, including Bishop Ken’s morning and evening hymns. This organ was sold to a church in Lincolnshire for £50, and in January 1849 an organ built by Mr. Holdich of London for £300 was installed in the west gallery, the gallery having been strengthened with pillars to support the extra weight. This opened up considerable possibilities for the music and the choir.

This organ was taken down and stored during the year when the church was closed for restoration. It was found to be in need of repair, and Mr. Holdich carried out the work and rebuilt the instrument in the space beneath the tower. The bell-ropes were removed to the storey above. The organ, though good in many respects, was not sweet in tone, and Mr. Holdich was commissioned to build a new instrument, making an allowance for the old one.

For six months there was no organ, and it was not until the spring of 1865 that the new one was completed and set up at the west end: it had great power and richness of tone, especially on the Swell. At this time the Rich memorial stood at the rear of the

Lady Chapel. However there were problems over the distance between organ and choir, and some improvement was sought by moving the instrument to the west end of the south aisle. The Rich monument was then moved to its present site beneath the tower.

In 1898 Beale & Thynne undertook restoration. The organ was rebuilt with the console in the south chancel aisle and the action at the rear of the Lady Chapel. There were (and are) two manuals and pedals on one of the first detached consoles featuring tubular pneumatic action, and a mechanical swell pedal. Hand blowing was effected by one blowing lever and a large flywheel, operated by two worthies. The tone of the organ is rich and warm with a strong range of string tone stops. The console is naturally dated in design, but quite manageable.

Electric blowing was installed in 1947, and Gray & Davison carried out a cleaning job at the same time. I believe that the pedal action was assisted by an electric rectifier in the 1950's. During my period of office (1946-53) the organ gave no trouble. Apart from extracting the skeleton of a starling from one of the front pipes, I had no recourse to going inside. On the demise of Gray & Davison, Norman and Beard (latterly Hill Norman & Beard) took over, with their long-serving tuner Ernest Davey.

To me the tone of this organ *is* Sonning Church in all its rural beauty, and it is an ideal instrument for backing and supporting the choir without being overwhelming.

Leslie Davis (Organist 1946 – 53)

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Leslie Davis very kindly researched and wrote the above for us in 1989. When I became Organist in 1977<sup>10</sup> (the organist in between us was of course Archie Lusty), Ernest Davey gave the organ ten years to live. Through his expert ministrations it has actually lasted for over 20, serious deterioration not setting in until Ernest retired. I suspect that this is the story of quite a few local organs: Ernest was a fine tuner and a very special man.

The Sonning organ is rather like an Armstrong-Siddeley motor car – a rare and valuable example of a very defunct make. Beale & Thynne operated ('flourished' is too strong a word) for a short period in the 1890's and 1900's. We cannot be entirely sure which of the current stops are by Holdich and which by Beale & Thynne, although Christopher Kent has made an informed guess. But they did a good job. 100 years without major work is a fine record by any standards.

However, by the 1990's, in the immortal words of P.G. Wodehouse, *'The Church Organ.....was in a bad way. For years it had been going round with holes in its socks, doing the Brother-can-you-spare-a-dime stuff, and now it was about due to hand in its dinner pail'*.

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<sup>10</sup> In 1977 a new pedal Bourdon stop, from a dismantled organ in Thatcham, was fitted to replace the Echo Bourdon which remains on the Swell

We took a lot of advice, and the unanimous view was that this was a fine instrument which should be restored. To his eternal credit, this was also the view of Ernest Hart of Copeman Hart. By last year, through a very generous legacy and a successful public appeal, we were at last able to get going, and we engaged J.W. Walker & Sons, one of the very few builders who have experience of tubular pneumatic actions.

As I write, they are coming to the end of the job, and we should shortly be able to hear the Sonning organ in all its glory. By the time that you read this, we will be able to welcome visitors (especially Leslie) and, I hope, arrange recitals and concerts. Part of our vision has been to make our beautiful church a place where musicians will want to come and perform. Let us hope that thanks to Walkers' expertise the organ will be good for the next hundred years.

David Duvall (Organist since 1977)

## **LESLIE DAVIS**

On Sunday 9 July 2000 members of the Association met at St Michael's Tilehurst to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Leslie Davis. The following testimony was given by Roy Nash.

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It gives me great pleasure to pay tribute to Leslie, having reached four score years and ten and still going strong. This is a remarkable achievement as I am sure you will agree. In the demonstration he gave of the new Makin organ at St. Michael's it was evident that Leslie has lost none of his skill.

Leslie was born into a musical family who can boast a continuous line of Church organists right back to 1800 – of interest to me was that his grandfather was the first organist of All Saints' Reading. At one time the family owned two music shops in the town. Leslie was educated at Sutton Central School where he received a good commercial education that he was later to make use of. He started piano lessons when he was only four and progressed to the organ when twelve, and made such good progress under George Pettingell, the organist of Holy Trinity, that he soon became his assistant. After three years studying music at Reading University, he became a cinema organist in the early thirties, playing in turn at the Pavilion in Oxford Road, the Regent Cinema in Bristol and finally at the Regent Cinema in Swindon – mainly accompanying silent films. He had become a cost accountant at Great Western Motors and his boss who was keenly interested in organs, allowed him to leave work early to travel to the Bristol Regent to play for the films. He actually left the Pavilion in Reading because it was too near home – the Vicar of Finchampstead would not approved of his cinema exploits so Leslie moved further afield! However, with the advent of talking pictures which provided their own music, many cinema organists found themselves out of a job.

When we visited St Alban's Organ Museum, and recently at a private gathering at the Town Hall, Leslie demonstrated that he had not lost his love or gift as a cinema

organist. He stayed at Finchampstead for seventeen years, 1930 -1947 and then moved to Sonning until 1953, where he resurrected the Three Choirs Festival. Then Christ Church became vacant and Leslie was appointed to one of the plum organ jobs in Reading, staying there happily from 1953 – 1985.

He was President of our Association 1969 – 1971 and I well remember those Presidential Services in which he maintained an excellent choir. At Christ Church he worked tirelessly to help raise £30,000 for the new Makin organ and now he has a smaller one here at St Michael's. He still does his stint at the Crematorium every Monday, which must become tiresome at times. I must also mention that in 1981 he was appointed Borough Organist and Custodian of the Town Hall organ. To mark the occasion of Leslie's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday there were two splendid photos in the local Chronicle, one of him at the console of the Wurlitzer in the Tower Ballroom, Blackpool, and the other at the console of the Town Hall organ. I am grateful to Gerald and his wife for providing me with these various details, and it was good to see so many of his family present to mark the occasion. It is interesting that Leslie has come to St Michael's to help the Church where one of his relatives, 'Charlie Davis', was organist for some fifty years!

Leslie, we all extend our congratulations to you on your remarkable achievements' and best wishes for the next ten years.

## LUNCHTIME RECITAL BY JONATHAN HOLL

Wednesday 21 February 2001

Our second lunchtime recital since the restoration of the Concert Hall was attended by an audience of nearly 100 and was given by Jonathan Holl who has performed for the Association on many previous occasions.

It is not difficult to understand the reasons for Jonathan's choice of the first item – the Tuba Tune of Reginald Porter-Brown – with the magnificent Tuba of the organ. Most recitalists include an acknowledgement to JSB, and on this occasion his *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr* came over very successfully – one has to be very careful with registration on the Father Willis when playing music of that period. Subsequent works demonstrated Jonathan's liking for French organ music, and he ended with César Franck's Final on a very "full organ".

Altogether it was an excellent recital and for many of the audience must have been a delightful way to spend part of one's lunch hour. It is certainly to be hoped that we shall be able to have lunch-time recitals on a regular basis.

Programme	
1. Tuba Tune	Reginald Porter-Brown (1910-1982)
2 Chorale Prelude <i>Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr</i>	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
3. Basse et Dessus de Trompette	L-N. Clerambault (1676-1749)
4. Sketch in C	R. Schumann (1810-1856)
5. Concerto Decimo	P. Morandi (1745-1815)
6. Final	César Franck (1822- 1890)

## A WEEKEND IN HOLLAND

Amsterdam Trip 25 – 28 October 2000

Michael Rivers

On Wednesday 25th October six members of the Association met up at Heathrow Airport for our flight to Amsterdam. Our flight was delayed for three hours, and this delay prevented us visiting the Rijksmuseum. However we were able to catch the last canal trip where we enjoyed the evening lights of Amsterdam. On the recommendation of our hotelier we dined at the Suisse Bar where a plentiful supply of food and drink was enjoyed by all.

On the following day, after breakfast, we travelled to Haarlem by train where we were met by Mr Anton Pauw the Cantor of the Bavo Kerk. The Gothic Church is outstanding but the jewel of the church is the magnificent 18th century organ built by Christian Müller. The organ case fills the west end of the nave with its 32-foot façade. We were allowed the morning to play this fantastic instrument, Mr Pauw acting as registrant. Every stop is beautifully voiced and the quality of sound cannot be improved. I have many recordings of this instrument but nothing can match hearing this organ in the flesh. Alas our morning soon went and we travelled back to Amsterdam where after lunch we caught a coach to the village of Oosthuizen to see and play the organ at the Grote Kerk. We were met by Mr Van Leuven, who told us about the 16th Century Church, which is slowly being restored. Half of the church is

without plaster due to damp and the bare brick is exposed. The organ is of the same period. The condition of the instrument is poor but everything worked. In the late afternoon we travelled back to Amsterdam to meet Riet Nouwens and Joke Linders, friends of our President, for drinks and dinner.

On Friday morning some of our party visited the magnificent Rijksmuseum while the others visited the Van Gogh museum. After lunch we travelled back to Haarlem to visit the Nieuwe Kirk which possesses a late 18th Century organ by Hess of Gouda. It holds a renaissance manual, some French pipes and 19th century material, and is tuned to old pitch. We were a little late in arriving and missed the organist



The Party

Mr Wijting. However the Custos of the church allowed us in to view and play the organ.

After our visit we walked back to Haarlem Station to travel to Alkmaar for an organ recital at the Grote Sint Laurenskerk. Unfortunately this was not on the world famous 17<sup>th</sup> Century Hagerbeer / Schnitger organ but on the newly restored early 15th century Van Covelens organ in the north choir aisle, claimed to be the oldest playable organ in Holland. The recital of Early European Baroque was well received by a large audience. Another magnificent church dominated by the Hagerbeer / Schnitger organ at the west end with its beautifully painted door panels.

Alas this was our final excursion in our brief visit to Holland, as the next day we flew back to England. The trip was thoroughly enjoyed by all. It is a great pity that other members of our Association do not share our interest in overseas activities.

A big vote of thanks must be given to Dr Barend Linders, our President's friend, who made the arrangements for our visit.

Christine Wells

Knowing that Haarlem was a Mecca for organists I was pleased when Graham announced that he had a Dutch friend who would arrange a visit for us. Six of us met at Heathrow on 25th October 2000. The British Midland flight was delayed by two hours so after a rather turbulent landing we arrived at Schiphol in the late afternoon instead of the late morning. My first new experience was seeing a "double decker" train which had arrived from Brussels. The second new experience was learning to avoid being run down by a cyclist. It was so easy to walk inadvertently in the cycle lanes.

We managed to board a late canal cruiser not far from our hotel. Unfortunately engine noise drowned out the commentary but it was a leisurely and relaxing journey and the best way to see Amsterdam. We arrived back in the semi-darkness with lights twinkling on the waters before going for some "Drunken Lamb" at the Suisse restaurant.

We were up early next morning to take the train to Haarlem and made our way to the old St. Bavo church which contains the marvellous Christian Müller organ which Handel and the young Mozart played. On entering the massive building there was a noise like thunder but this turned out to be someone moving chairs, such was the reverberation. Mr. Anton Paulo whose name translated means "peacock" was our guide. Though not quite living up to his name he was nevertheless a very helpful young man. It was a thrill to play this beautifully voiced instrument.

We had to return to Amsterdam in order to reach Oosthuizen by bus. It was good to have a chance to see the countryside of dykes, canals and pastures topped by lovely clouds which reminded me of paintings by Cuyp. Oosthuizen is a small village with a large church which unfortunately is not used very often for religious services. Part of the small organ dates back to 1500. It is only tuned once a year and on this occasion was an assault on my ears but interesting all the same. A chatty Mr. Van Leuven had many anecdotes to tell us.

Returning to Amsterdam, we had an excellent evening with the two sisters who were friends of Graham's, first at a lovely apartment overlooking two canals and then at a restaurant. It was a pity that Barend, the husband of one of the sisters, who had arranged our tour had to be at Gatwick at this time.

On the next morning some of us went to the Rijksmuseum. There was so much to see but for me it was the Rembrandts that I shall remember. As we walked back through an underpass beneath the museum we heard a superb brass quartet play Bach etc. much enhanced by the excellent acoustics. We caught a train back to Haarlem to visit another church there. This was nearly a disaster as our contact had not waited for us but at length a lady verger kindly obtained permission to let us in. The organ was built by Hess of Gouda in 1791 but it did not compare favourably with the Muller in the old St. Bavo Church.

We journeyed on by train to Alkmaar where after another excellent meal served by a friendly New Zealand waitress we heard a recital of early music on the small Van Covelens organ. The St. Laurenskerk was filled with organ enthusiasts from all over Europe as this was the opening recital on the restored organ. It was very enjoyable. The recitalist chose to end the programme with pieces by John Bull.

The train journey back to Amsterdam was enlivened by some drunken Dutch youths who decided to drop their beer glasses all over a first class compartment. They were dealt with firmly by a female train official. Saturday morning came all too soon and after another delayed flight it was back to a wet journey down the M4. This was an enjoyable few days and we are greatly indebted to Graham's friends for arranging our schedule .

## LOCAL RECITALS

David Pether

The year 2001 has seen a resumption of the local recital series organised by the Association. These events give members the opportunity to perform in public concert, away from the restrictions of a church service, often on an organ which is not their regular instrument. In the process the profile of the Association is raised, and with regular and accessible programming in a variety of venues we hope that the potential audience for organ music in the area will increase.

Up to the date of the AGM, the following recitals have taken place:

January 27      Christopher Cipkin at Wesley Methodist Church

March 24        Peter Bernard at Caversham Heights Methodist Church

May 12          Graham Ireland at Reading School Chapel

It is hoped that in future that recitals will be held on a monthly basis, with breaks for Easter, August and Christmas.

# RESOURCES FOR ORGAN ENTHUSIASTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF READING

Christopher Cipkin

I thought some information about music resources at the University of Reading would interest members. In my role as both University Music Librarian and a committee member of the Association, I have invited the Events Committee to plan a visit to the University to see two collections of interest – The Lady Susi Jeans Centre for Organ Historiography and the University Music Library. It is hoped that such an event could be combined with a visit by members of the Wiltshire Association, of which Dr. Christopher Kent (Lecturer in the Department of Music and former Berkshire Association President) is now a member.

Lady Susi Jeans<sup>11</sup> (1911-1993) was an Austrian organist, keyboard player and musicologist who studied with a number of eminent figures, including Franz Schmidt at the Vienna Music Academy (1925-31), Straube (1932,1934) at the Kirchenmusikalisches Institut, Leipzig, and Widor in Paris (1933). In 1935 she married Sir James Jeans (1877-1946); one of the foremost British scientists of his day who was also an accomplished amateur organist. As a result of her marriage, she became a naturalized British citizen and assumed a prominent position in the British organ world. Her home at Cleveland Lodge, Dorking, contained an extensive collection of instruments including a working model of a water organ, a neo-Classical organ (built by Eule in 1936, the first to be introduced into England), and several chamber organs. Her performances reflected informed and assiduous scholarship and she did much to help initiate an interest in the historically informed performance of pre-Romantic organ music. As a result of her studies, a significant archive of organ related material was accumulated.

The Lady Susi Jeans Centre for Organ Historiography at the University of Reading was founded in 1993 after her death. It holds a general collection of books (including old editions of Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians) and periodicals relating to the technical and tonal history of the pipe organ, research papers and microfilms from the collection of Lady Susi Jeans. Microfilms and microfiches of the records of major British organ builders are available, as well as artefacts and demonstration material and online access to the National Pipe Organ Register. The collection is primarily used by postgraduate students of the University studying for the MA in Organ Historiography, but reference facilities are available to any member of the public, including members of the Association. Availability is by prior appointment.

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<sup>11</sup> In the 1985 Issue of this journal we reported that on 28 April 1984 Lady Jeans gave a fascinating talk to the Association about her early studies and her opinions about organs, and she followed this with a memorable recital on the organ of St Giles' Church. Her passing in 1993 was acknowledged by a tribute by Guy Oldham in our 1993 Issue.

The Music Library contains a general collection of materials to support teaching and research within the Department of Music. There is a good range of biographical and analytical material, dictionaries and reference tools as well as virtually complete runs of periodicals such as *Musical times* and *Music and letters*. The Finzi Collection includes the books and printed music belonging to Gerald Finzi (1901-1956). It includes many autographed scores given to Finzi by his contemporaries such as Vaughan Williams, Edmund Rubbra and Herbert Howells, in addition to a wealth of nineteenth century British music from the collection which belonged to Hubert Parry. The Library also houses some early editions of seventeenth and eighteenth century books and music, some of which were transferred to the University from St. George's Chapel, Windsor. For the organ enthusiast, the Library contains a good collection of books on organ design and construction to support the Organ Historiography course, as well as runs of periodicals such as *The Organ* and the *Journal of the British Institute of Organ Studies*. There is also an extensive collection of organ and keyboard music. The Library is open 9-5pm Monday to Friday and its facilities are available for reference to any member of the public. Borrowing rights are granted by applying to the University Librarian. Further details about the University Library, including Unicorn, the online catalogue, can be found at: <http://www.rdg.ac.uk/libweb/>

Contacts :

Lady Susi Jeans Centre: Dr. Christopher Kent. Phone: (0118) 931 8416.  
email: [c.j.kent@rdg.ac.uk](mailto:c.j.kent@rdg.ac.uk)

Music Library: Christopher Cipkin. Phone: (0118) 931 8413.  
email: [c.b.cipkin@rdg.ac.uk](mailto:c.b.cipkin@rdg.ac.uk)

Biographical information on Lady Susi Jeans taken from the article by Gillian Weir and Dr. Christopher Kent in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (Macmillan, 2001).

## **THE ORGANIST ONLINE**

Christopher Cipkin

At recent Committee meetings there has been some discussion about the possibility of establishing a web site for the Association. It struck me as appropriate, therefore, to write a piece about the Internet, and more especially, the World Wide Web and what it has to offer the organist. In many ways, this complements the article above, which focuses on locally available printed resources. Many organists I speak to are extremely knowledgeable about organ-related sources on the Web, not least of all students studying for the MA in Organ Historiography at the University of Reading. I find it heartening to discover that what is primarily a group of mature students have fully recognised the information potential of getting online.

To give a systematic account of all the main organ sites is an impossible task. I did a search (using the Google search engine, which tends to be selective and accurate) on "organists" and retrieved well over 27,000 links to organ related sites. This makes the point that the organist needs a place to start: a gateway to reliable, relevant and

authoritative sites. In this article, therefore, I have selected just three sites which I have found useful or particularly interesting as a starting point.

All links mentioned below were live on 13 March 2001

The Royal College of Organists <<http://www.rco.org.uk/>> provides an excellent starting point. Its site provides a great deal of information about the College itself such as courses available (not just examinations!) and other events it is involved in. Facilities available to RCO members, such as the library are also mentioned. Its links page provides an international overview of some of the main organ related web sites in different countries around the world providing, for example, direct links to American and German organ societies. The RCO appears to have selected authoritative and reliable sources, although I did find that one or two of the links had not been maintained.

The Great Britain and Northern Ireland section of links from the RCO provides a connection to another popular site, namely the British Institute of Organ Studies <<http://www.bios.org.uk/>>. For anyone interest in the history of organs and organ builders in Great Britain, this is an excellent starting point. BIOS provides information about itself, its events and online publications about organ conservation. It also provides links to three unique databases: The National Pipe Organ Register (NPOR), the British Organ Archive (the other BOA!) and the Directory of British organ builders (DBOB).

NPOR is paradise for any specification buff in that it aims to provide stop lists, builder and other details about all British pipe organs, in Anglican churches at least, with results from a survey of Methodist churches also incorporated. Sometimes information is not up to date or incomplete, but, considering the enormity of the task of setting it up, the database is an excellent resource. There is a facility for correcting entries and sending in updates. BOA is a database which points the organ researcher to primary and secondary research material on individual instruments. A search on Reading Town Hall, for example, lists two Willis ledgers as primary source material, three secondary sources and an illustration. DBOB is pretty self explanatory and provides addresses, patent information and dates for defunct and existing organ builders.

The BIOS web site is part of the Organ Ring which is a list of nearly 500 organ related web sites at <<http://209.235.102.9/org20050/>>. The ring includes sites about classical and popular organs, organists, organ builders and organ associations and so its coverage is broader than the two sites mentioned above. After viewing all the sites in the ring, the surfer is returned eventually to the site from which he or she began. There is also a primitive search facility which allows you to search for sites of particular interest listed within the ring.

I hope readers are tempted to get online! I have highlighted just three gateways to the world of organ information on the World Wide Web. Perhaps "Web site of the month" could be a new feature in the newsletter, allowing other members to nominate useful and interesting sites?

## LUNCHTIME RECITALS IN ST MARY'S

Gordon Hands

There have been 23 lunchtime recitals in the year 2000, and they have become very popular with an average attendance of over 50 people.

These series are now in their 11<sup>th</sup> year and the one on April 20<sup>th</sup>.2001 was the 200<sup>th</sup> performance,

It is generally invidious to mention any individual especially because we are most grateful to all the good people who so kindly give their services. However mention must be made of a distinguished visitor from overseas – Renata Bauer – who is a friend of our member Maria Mojzes and is well known as a recitalist in Eastern Europe. She is Professor of Organ in the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia and we were very pleased to welcome her to St. Mary's.

Over £1,000 was raised during the year and this enables us to keep the 1862 Willis in reasonable condition.

We must congratulate Robin Rance, our tuner, for keeping the old organ going. Perhaps one day we may be able to afford a complete restoration.

The following were our contributors to the recital programme this year.

Ray Isaacson (twice)	Mary Harwood
Francis Brookes (twice)	Elizabeth Cooke
Jeremy Plummer	Christine Wells
Graham Ireland	Jason Childs
David Pether	Ian May
Jonathan Holl	Daniel Sandham
Philip Aspden	Wendy Watson
Renata Bauer	David Old
Cynthia Hall	The Minster Mid Week Choir
Malcolm Stowell (twice)	directed by Bob Norman
Michael Howell	

## BERKSHIRE ORGANISTS ON THE WEB

David Pether

With an increasing number of members becoming "internet literate", the Association has seized the challenge and established a presence on the World Wide Web. We have our own registered domain name, [www.berkshireorganists.org.uk](http://www.berkshireorganists.org.uk), and free server storage space for web pages generously supplied by [hosting4uk.com](http://hosting4uk.com).

Although the web site currently consists of little more than a holding page, the content will gradually be expanded to provide a range of services for members and those interested in what the Association does. This might include news and events, downloadable membership forms, church situations vacant, and lists of organ teachers and deputies in the area.

A related innovation is the release of monthly email listings of organ-related events to a growing mailing list of both members and non-members. This service is free to all who submit their email address to the Association.

It is hoped that it may eventually be possible to provide a dedicated email address for enquiries to the Association, but in the meantime please send your comments and suggestions to David Pether on david.pether.1983@pem.cam.ac.uk

## NEWS FROM THE ROYAL SCHOOL OF CHURCH MUSIC IN BERKSHIRE

David Duvall

Education and Training Officer, RSCM Thames & Chilterns area

In last year's issue I outlined the seven sorts and conditions of people for whom the RSCM aims to cater, in order to provide as complete a service to church musicians as possible: organists (and all keyboard players), choir directors, music groups, adult singers, children, clergy (and all worship leaders) and congregations.

We have had a very varied programme since then, and the following should give you an idea of what we have been up to.

Of most immediate interest to readers of *The Berkshire Organist* is the **Organ Day** which we held at Reading School, run by David Oldfield with much support from Graham Ireland and from Simon Williams of the RCO. This attracted over 20 young organists - mostly existing pupils of David or Graham. Both our organisations urgently need to keep young people interested in church music, and we will put on more such events.

We run a **Choristers' Course** for boys and girls up to the age of 16 every October at half-term, and last year we were very fortunate to have Simon Lole direct it for us. Simon is Organist and Master of the Choristers at Salisbury Cathedral, and a great supporter of the RSCM. The last day expands into a workshop for both adult singers and children.

Our other major event in the last 12 months has been a Saturday workshop on **Common Worship** on 24 February, led by the Bishop of Reading and Professor John Harper, our Director-General. They are two of the leading experts on Common Worship in the country, and this was truly a regional event with over 120 people coming to Twyford and receiving a hugely stimulating day. I commend to you the resource books 'Music for Common Worship' which John has compiled and can be ordered from the RSCM (01306-872800).

The RSCM's other main aim this year, apart from giving help and support to Church of England churches introducing Common Worship, has been to encourage choirs to take up the 'Voice for Life' programme which is being developed for singers of all ages. John Wardle, our Regional Director, introduced it to us last year, and returned in May 2001 to bring us up to date with progress.

In addition to open events, it is very much part of our mission to visit churches who need our help in any way. I recently led the music for a Choral Evensong at East

Hagbourne in Oxfordshire, where the three choirs of the united Blewbury Benefice came together. This is a perhaps unexpected benefit of several parishes sharing a vicar – in this case a very supportive and musical one. I would be delighted to do something similar in Berkshire – a Deanery Evensong or Eucharist would give choirs an opportunity to sing music which on their own they might not try.

Like any such organisation, the RSCM exists to encourage people to make the most of their talents – and ideally to help them to achieve more than they think they can. If you or your church – of any denomination, not just the C of E – would like help or to host an event, do please get in touch (Reading 969 6308).

## NEW MEMBERS

David Pether

The Association continues to attract new members covering a wide range of age and ability.

The youngest of the recent recruits at nine years is **Paul Manley**, who sings in the choir and plays the organ at St.Peter's, Earley. Having already passed Grade 1 Piano with Distinction, he is now taking organ lessons.

**James Williams** has a few more years to his name, aged 16, and is studying for Grade 7 Organ having achieved Grade 6, also with Distinction. In addition to singing and playing at All Saints', Downshire Square, James plays electronic keyboards, drums, guitar and trumpet and is interested in computing and MIDI.

**David Price** is an accountant by profession, and shares something in common with each of those mentioned above. He is Organist at St.Peter's, Earley, and counts computing amongst his hobbies. He has been playing the organ for some 30 years.

Fifteen-year-old **Andrew Balch** is at Wells Cathedral School. Although he declines to describe himself as an organist, he plays the organ for pleasure and also sings and plays the piano and violin.

**Joan Humphreys** first learnt to play the organ over 40 years ago (her teacher at Kendrick School was Arnold Bentley), and has taken up the instrument again following retirement from the position of Coordinator for Music Education in Berkshire Secondary Schools. Outside the musical sphere her interests include writing poetry, photography, antiques, dolls houses, photography and keeping fit.

**David Reynolds** is a peripatetic music teacher, listing recorder and brass playing, choir directing and singing in addition to his position as Organist at St.Nicholas' Parish Church, Newbury. As happens so frequently when dealing with organists, he is also interested in steam railways and has a gauge I garden railway. He trumps the other newcomers with a remarkable 50 years of playing under his belt.

We welcome all our new members, including those not introduced above, and hope that the Association can benefit both from the wisdom of the more experienced and the enthusiasm of the young.

## MATHS TEST

The opinion has been expressed in the past in many quarters that as organists we tend to be too insular and not know enough about other musicians. The following test is therefore submitted for you to assess your knowledge of the orchestra.

1. Armando is the dynamic new conductor of an orchestra that has increased the ticket sales for the classical series 95%. If the concert hall holds 3200 people, and the concert begins promptly at 8:05pm, how many digital watch alarms will go off (a) within one minute of 9.00pm? (b) within 5 minutes?
2. Richard has been a professional timpanist for 35 years. In his personal kit he owns 32 different yarn mallets, 12 different wool mallets, 5 different rubber mallets, and 2 different polished brass tack hammers. What are the odds that a conductor will ask him to use different mallets at the first rehearsal of (a) a Haydn symphony? (b) a Mahler symphony?
3. Julinda's orchestra performs Dvoraks "New World" symphony every 6 years, Sibelius' Swan of Tuoneola every 4 years, and Berlioz's Overture to Benvenuto Cellini every 3 years. What are the odds that, in any given year, the programme notes will include the sentence "The English Horn is neither English nor a horn"?
4. Sandy is tired of paying for clarinet reeds. If she adopts a policy of playing only rejected reeds from her colleagues, will she be able to retire on the money she has saved if she invests it in mutual funds (yielding 8.7%) before she is fired from her job?
5. Jethro has been playing the double bass in a symphony orchestra for 12 years, 3 months, and 7 days. Each day, his inclination to practice decreases by the equation: (total days in the orchestra)  $\times$  .000976. Assuming that he stopped practicing altogether 6 months ago, how long will it be before he is completely unable to play the double bass?
6. Wilma plays in the second violin section, but specializes in making disparaging remarks about conductors and other musicians. The probability of her making a negative comment is 4:7 for any given musician and 16:17 for conductors. If there are 103 musicians in the orchestra and the orchestra sees 26 different conductors each year, (a) How many negative comments does Wilma make in a two-year period? (b) How does this change if five of the musicians are also conductors? (c) What if six of the conductors are also musicians?
7. Horace is the General Manager of a symphony orchestra. He tries to hear at least four concerts a year. Assuming the orchestra plays a minimum of three pieces at each concert, what are the chances that Horace can avoid hearing a single work by Mozart, Beethoven, or Brahms in the next 10 years?

8. Betty plays in the viola section. Despite her best efforts she is unable to play with the rest of the orchestra and, on average, plays 0.35 seconds behind the rest of the viola section, which is already 0.16 seconds behind the rest of the orchestra. If the orchestra is moving to a new concert hall with a reverberation time of 2.7 seconds, will she be able to continue playing in this way undetected?
9. Ralph loves to drink coffee. Each week he drinks three more cups of coffee than Harold who drinks exactly one third the amount the entire bass section consumes in beer. How much longer is Ralph going to live?
10. Rosemary is unable to play in keys with more than three sharps without making an inordinate number of mistakes. Because her colleagues in the cello section are also struggling in these passages, she has so far been able to escape detection. What is the total number of hours a day they would have to practice to play the complete works of Richard Strauss?

[With grateful acknowledgements to Valerie Hyman for permission to reprint.]

## **REVIEW OF COMPACT DISCS**

Mark D. Jameson

The new recording of the restored READING TOWN HALL organ is first on my review list. This is by Priory, and in their “Great European Organ Series”, Number 60, catalogue number PRCD687. As always Priory are innovative with their selection of music and have produced a really interesting CD that lasts 67 minutes. Adrian Partington is the chosen organist and the pieces are:

Trumpet Tune, followed by Aria for Organ, Andrew Carter [b.1939]

Phantasie über den Choral “Wachet auf” – Max Reger [1873-1916]

Intermezzo “Moonlight” by Lemare [1865-1934]

Toccata in B Flat by William Wolstenholme [1865-1931]

Variations on the Agincourt Song, by Mark Blatchley [b.1960]

Passacaglia by Aron Copeland [1900-1990]

Variations on Wondrous Love by Samuel Barber [1910-1981]

Sunset Hour and finishing with Postlude, by Hugh Blair [1864-1932]

Our Patron, Dame Gillian Weir features on Priory label [PRCD751] the first of The Organ Master Series, a recording at the First Church of Christ Scientist, Boston, (USA). Brilliant! On a 74-minute CD one gets Jongen’s Sonata Eroica, Willan’s Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue; Hindemith’s Sonata 1 concluding with Reubke’s Sonata on the 94th Psalm. Dame Gillian’s late husband Lawrence Phelps was the designer of this organ. Whilst on holiday in September 2000 in Boston & Maine I saw adverts everywhere for a concert to be given by Dame Gillian at the Merrill Auditorium, in Portland, Maine. This is another “town hall” organ. Pro Organo have

recorded the municipal organist, Ray Cornils [CD7050] playing this 1912 Austin organ of 6588 pipes with a very varied programme.

Last year I reviewed two Douai Abbey recordings. There is yet another! Baroque Bells commissioned a recording of five of the Handel Organ Concertos on the Tickell organ played by Jane Watts with Sir David Willcock conducting. Concertos 1,2,4,5 and 13 are the subject of this recording – it is very good. Distributed by Priory it is Chix CHIX699.

Another organ in the same category as Reading is the 1914 Stephen Taylor organ in the De Montfort Hall, Leicester. This organ restored by Richard & Roy Young must be heard! The building and organ are in a similar situation to the Reading Town Hall. Unlike Willis, organs by Taylor have all the stops laid out in a horizontal line with 10p-sized knobs – a very different style. Kevin Bowyer has produced an exciting recording on the NPC Label [NPC007], 78minutes long. There is popular music, transcriptions, serious and light (e.g. Dick Barton's tune). The Disc is called Organ Xplosion, Volume 1 and highly commended.

Staying with UK organs, Paul Derrett, well known to many BOA members released several CD's in 2000, two of which are exemplary. First, a programme of music by Karg Elert played on the organ of Norwich Cathedral, recorded by Amphion, PHI CD164. Secondly, Paul has issued No.4 in his Benchmark's series, covering six locations in the Wisbech and Kings Lynn area. Benchmark recordings are definitive records of church organs, with music appropriate to the instruments, photographs and specifications. This is under his own label, number 806804CD. Telephone Paul on 01531 890764 for details of the series. The quality is excellent.

In 2000 several of the organ journals carried advertisements by organ builders of CD recorded for use as marketing tools. I sent for two, which were FREE. They make an interesting comparison. The organbuilder Seifert, of Germany has produced an all Bach disc to show their new organ in the Laurentiuskirche, Luxemburg. Situated in a stone vaulted 900 year old building this steel coloured Silbermann temperament organ is put through it paces. The CD is attractively produced in a card case, along with all details. Electronic organs are often advertised with CD's, one caught my eye. David Briggs's whose excellent playing is well known recorded for Rodgers a programme of organ and choral music on the temporary organ used at Gloucester during the pipe organ rebuild. Quite honestly, if you play this CD you will find it difficult to identify it as electronic. It has Rodgers reference OM24783 and is available exclusively from them.

Now two choral discs. The first is a sponsored CD of the church music of Sir Arthur Sullivan recorded at, and with the choir of, Keeble College Oxford, conducted by Mark Laflin. I very much enjoyed this recording [Priory PRCD691]. My parents met through the works of Sullivan (and Gilbert) and for that reason this composer has always been of particular interest. Secondly, over the past few years, I have made a number of organ trips to Sherborne in Dorset and to my niece at the Girl's School. Unlike the Boy's school, the girls used the Abbey for their services. So it was with considerable pleasure I bought the recently released Oxrecs [OXCD83] recording of the Girl's School Choir singing in the Abbey a programme called "Praise the Lord O

my Soul". In a very mixed programme of traditional and new there is an hour's music. It is also the first CD I am aware of featuring the Abbey organ. Yes, my niece, Philippa is one of the choir!

Two overseas recordings have made an impression on me. A CD released in 2000 featured Felix Hell who was born on 14th September 1985. This is his second CD. This young German organist is winning many competitions; he has given over 150 recitals in the USA, Asia, Russia, France, and Spain as well as all over Germany. He is currently studying in New York. Schott Publishers have released this disc [ORG7010-2] with Felix playing the 5- manual Schantz organ in the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Newark, New Jersey. 65 minutes of well played and varied music. Can we get him to come to Reading? There are few Canadian Organ CD's; Motette CD12621 features the Oratory of St. Joseph, in Montreal. Rachel Laurin born in Quebec plays just 2 pieces in 68 minutes – Liszt Sonata in H-moll and Brahms Variation and Fugue on a Handel theme. Excellently played – another suggestion for the Town Hall?

Finally two very different recordings. Oxrecs OXCD82 is Organ and Harp recorded at St.Asaph Cathedral. This is not a common combination, and I think it works well. Graham Eccles is the organist and Eira Lynn Jones plays the Harp. There are also two choral works and the recording was made to celebrate the restoration of the organ by Wood of Huddersfield. 13 items in English and Welsh are included on this disc. A brand new disc from Priory, is Victorian Organ Sonatas, Volume 1 played by John Kitchen on the McEwan Hall organ at the University of Edinburgh. This is Priory PRCD756, and it features four works in a 69-minute programme. The composers are John E West [often available on sheet music, but rarely recorded], Hugh Blair and two works by W Battison Haynes whom I had never heard before this disc.

## **THE ASSOCIATION'S ARCHIVES**

Philip Bowcock

The Association was founded in 1921 and since then has accumulated a large collection of minute books and other documents. Hitherto these have been held by the Secretary for the time being, and have latterly been in our President's office in Reading School.

Most of them have recently been deposited in the Berkshire Record Office which has just moved to its new building at the top of Castle Hill (next to Births, Marriages and Deaths) and which was opened by Princess Anne on 28 February this year. Documents are available for anyone to inspect by appointment.

They also hold parish records and many other documents including title deeds and family records which are of great interest to anyone doing historical research. This is obviously an invaluable source of reference for people researching their family history, and the public desks are very busy. Our records are being indexed at the time of going to press, and we hope to include a full list of reference numbers in the next issue.

# HONORARY FELLOW

Dr Francis Jackson

## PAST PRESIDENTS

(Dates are the year of election for the following year)

- 1921 - 23 *Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL*  
1924 - 26 *A C P Embling MusD FRCO*  
1927 *Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL*  
1928 - 30 *F G Goodenough FRCO*  
1931 - 34 *B Probert-Jones MusB FRCO*  
1935 - 37 *Albert Barkus FRCO*  
1938 - 42 *A Yould FRCO ARCM LRAM*  
1943 - 45 *Archibald H Lusty ARCO HonFTCL*  
1946 *Percy R Scrivener FRCO FTCL*  
1947 - 48 *W Hugh Rowe ARCO*  
1949 - 50 *Albert E Rivers*  
1951 - 52 *A Warren FRCO*  
1953 - 55 *Prof H C Barnard MA DLitt*  
1956 - 57 *F Gordon Spriggs*  
1958 - 60 *Leslie Pratt FTCL*  
1961 - 63 *Roy N Nash*  
1964 - 65 *Miss E G Goodship ATCL*  
1966 - 68 *H D Anthony MA BSc PhD FRAS*  
1969 - 71 *Leslie F B Davis*  
1972 - 74 *R P J Pepworth*  
1975 - 76 *J C Lawes*  
1977 - 78 *Donovan L Jones*  
1979 - 80 *Mrs Evelyn A Fisher*  
1981 - 82 *Harold H Hartley MA BSc FRAS MBCS*  
1983 - 84 *Peter B Marr PhD GTCL FRSA ARCO*  
1985 - 86 *Derek M Guy AFCM*  
1987 - 88 *Christopher Hood BA*  
1989 *Christopher J Kent MusB MMus PhD FRCO  
ARMCM*  
1990 - 91 *David Duvall MA FCA*  
1992 - 93 *Philip Bowcock BSc MRICS IRRV*  
1994 - 95 *Graham Ireland BA BMus MMus FRCO*  
1996 - 97 *Donald Hickson*  
1998 - 99 *Christine Wells BMus FRCO LRAM*

## **PAST SECRETARIES OF THE ASSOCIATION**

1921 – 1926	S T Chamberlain
1927 – 1931	Sidney Collins
1932 – 1976	Archibald Lusty
1977 – 1983	Ron Pepworth
1984 – 1986	Christopher Hood
1987 – 1991	Norman Hutt
1992 – 1993	Graham Ireland
1994 – 1996	Donald Hickson
1997	Christine Wells
1998 – 1999	Graham Ireland

## **EDITORS OF *THE BERKSHIRE ORGANIST***

1948 – 1973	Albert Rivers
1974 – 1977	Leslie Davis
1978 – 1987	Gordon Spriggs
1987 – 1997	Gordon Spriggs and Philip Bowcock