

# Northampton and District Organists' Association

Reg. Charity No. 274679

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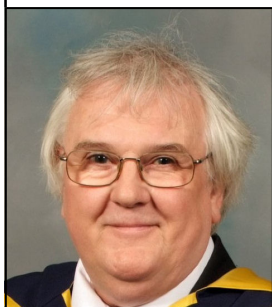


**December 2012**

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## FROM YOUR NEW EDITOR



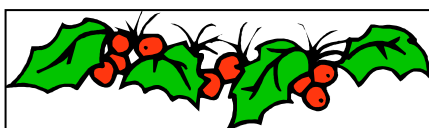
**A**s many of you know by now, Roger Smith, who has so ably filled the roles of Secretary to the Northampton and District Organists Association and Editor of the Newsletter, is standing down after many years of service to the Association. Roger has edited and produced the Newsletter for as long as I can remember. We had planned a handover at the beginning of 2013 but as Roger also stood down as Hon. Secretary at the AGM this year the change of editor has been brought forward. We all send Roger and his wife Diana our best wishes for the future.

As I take over as editor of the NDOA Newsletter I am conscious of the challenge in following in Roger's footsteps. His exemplary editorship of the Newsletter over the years has been informative, erudite and knowledgeable. This edition of the Newsletter contains a valedictory message from Roger together with his two final articles: *History of the Organ* Part 4 (p. 5) and *Organ Cases* Part 3 (p. 8). I am also sure that members will be pleased to hear that Roger has recently been accorded the honour of being named Director of Music Emeritus at the church of St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough.

What goes into this Newsletter: your triumphs, successes in examinations and competitions, news of events, concerts, recitals etc. will still depend upon you letting the editor know about them. Contributions, either to include in the Newsletter itself or to add as inserts, will continue to be welcome because the NDOA Newsletter is all about *your* news and views within Northamptonshire and the surrounding area. I also hope that you will be tolerant of my first attempts at producing the Newsletter using publishing software with which I am not entirely familiar.

*Barry Wadeson*

**Editor, NDOA Newsletter**



## Newsletter Editor:

Please submit articles, announcements and details of events etc., to:  
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# 88th Annual General Meeting



**I**t was a great pleasure to find ourselves back at St. Matthew's, Northampton, for our AGM. Over two dozen members attended (which is around a quarter of the membership). The meeting was chaired by Canon Paul Rose, President of the NDOA 2011 - 2012. A minute's silence was held for association members Iris Brown and Godfrey Philcox who passed away during the year.

This was something of a sad occasion being Roger Smith's last meeting as Hon. Secretary. For the last ten years Roger has steered the NDOA to become a successful and thriving association. Roger was warmly thanked for his work over the years and presented with a signed card by the members present and presented with the latest Margaret Phillips double CD of Bach's organ works and, in view of his appointment as Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral, a CD of Robert Quinney's Queen's College Oxford CD of Bach's Trio Sonatas.

Members heard that the David Morgan Education Fund had been used to great advantage with several young members passing their grade five ABRSM organ exams this year, almost all with distinctions.

The Hon. Treasurer reported that the IAO (of which the NDOA is a member) has doubled its capitation fees and a further cost to the Association has been the large increase in postage during 2012. Consequently, an increase in subscription fees (which have remained static for several years) was agreed at the meeting. 2013 subscriptions will be £21 for family membership; £14 for individual membership and £7 for students (under 22 and in full-time education). Subscriptions are now due and the Treasurer has set up a PayPal account so that payment can be made online via the NDOA website as well as by cheque or standing order.

Members approved the committee's nomination of Helen Murphy as Hon. Secretary and Barry Wadeson has been appointed as Editor of the Newsletter to replace Roger Smith. The Editor is appointed by the committee and is not a committee member. Retiring committee members were Canon Hilary Davidson, Ronald Gates and Michael Woodward. The following members were unanimously elected to serve on the committee: Sally Desbois, Ben Newman and Roger Palmer. The Hon. Treasurer Jonathan Harris and Hon. Auditor Barry Wadeson were re-elected to serve for another year.

Canon Paul Rose then handed over the Presidency to Stephen Moore. Stephen is the first Director of Music from St. Matthew's Church to hold the post since Andrew Shenton was president twenty-four years ago. President-elect for the year 2012—2013 is Lee Dunleavy, Director of Music at All Saints Church, Northampton.

At the conclusion of business the meeting broke for refreshments which were followed by a service of words and music organised by the Revd Nicholas Setterfield, Vicar of St. Matthew's Church and our new President, Stephen Moore. This unusual short service consisted of prayers, readings, hymns and interludes of Dupré organ pieces played by Stephen.

## **All Change at the NDOA - a final message from Roger Smith**

**H**aving read the summary of proceedings at this year's AGM, you will have seen that we have a new Hon. Secretary, Helen Murphy, and a new Newsletter Editor, Barry Wadeson — their biographies follow this, my final message, as a means of introducing themselves to you. Jonathan Harris has also taken on the management of our website: a vital tool in the armoury of most organisations and, via which, the majority of our new members join. In addition we have a considerable amount of new blood on the Committee the combination of which, I believe, can only benefit the NDOA. I do urge all members to support them in their endeavours but especially by contributing information, stories, articles, announcements and details of events to our new Newsletter Editor either direct, or via our Hon. Secretary. Both their addresses are on page one.

As for myself, after ten years as your Secretary, I am convinced that the responsibilities with which you charged me are being devolved into very capable hands. I am very grateful for all the support you have given me and for all I have learned in that time. I also value considerably the friendship of so many members past and present and relish the memory of meeting so many famous organists and playing some of the greatest organs ever built in venues in this country, venues famous the world over. Most of them were opportunities the NDOA arranged, and they are there for all members to enjoy. The NDOA is one of the more successful of the 80 or so regional Associations affiliated to the I.A.O. and to have been your Hon. Secretary for all these years has been both a privilege and a wonderful experience. Thank you all.

### **Introducing Helen Murphy, NDOA Secretary**

**I** was brought up in Wellingborough and educated, firstly, at the County High School for Girls and then Northampton School of Art, so my musical background and experience is entirely as an amateur (but I

never stop learning). It was at the Art School that via a fellow student (a chorister at St Matthew's church), I was introduced, not only to the Henry Moore and Graham Sutherland there, but to the delights of choral singing and liturgical music — and I've not looked back.

I've been singing seriously since the age of 17 in a number of choirs over the years (with only a short break in 1969 to 1970 when I spent a very unmusical year in Franco's Spain as a teacher of English as a foreign language); even my time in Italy in 1967 was not unvocal — although the Italians don't do choirs (only a number of soloists who happen to be singing at the same time), I managed to find a small girls-only choir capable of SSAA, which made a change from SATB. My most recent singing expeditions have taken me to Southwell Minster and Liverpool Cathedral (with Gloucester in the pipeline), as well as more local venues, not least to St Matthew's on its Patronal feast day (21st September) where, as part of the augmented choir, I was very pleased to sing in the first performance of its latest commission: *How beautiful on the mountains* by Paul Mealor.

I fell in love with the organ (both sound and repertoire) after going to recitals at St Matthew's when I was living in Northampton during the mid-Sixties, as a result of which I took lessons with the late Graham Mayo — at that time the DoM at All Saints' church. However, prior to that I had been received into the Catholic Church as a teenager, just before the Second Vatican Council, which was most fortuitous as I encountered a whole new world — the strange wonders of Gregorian chant (which I learned by a process of total immersion, firstly at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Wellingborough and then at St Gregory's in Northampton) — just before it was all swept away in a well-meaning (the charitable view) but misguided interpretation of *Sacrosanctum concilium* (the main document on the liturgy emanating from Vatican II) — but that's another story! After my spells abroad, I rejoined the church choir at Wellingborough and in due course inherited the position of organist, where I have been ever since (a long time — but no one else has expressed any interest in relieving me of my duties or even 'depping' for me on occasion!). Will I die at the organ stool, I

sometimes wonder? Possibly, but I know that when I can no longer sing, I shall be ready for Beachy Head.

### Introducing Barry Wadeson, Newsletter Editor

**I** learned to play the organ (although not very well) at the church of St. Mary, Shenley Church End, which is now part of Milton Keynes, whilst still at school. I knew at the time that I wanted a job that involved organs and became an apprentice organ builder with the Northampton firm of Alfred E. Davies & Son from 1962 – 1967. Life has many twists and turns and I later left organ building to work in mental health care before taking a degree in health and social science and later an MA in research methods in health care at the University of Warwick. I was a member of the choir of St. Matthew's Church under Michael Nicholas and later during Andrew Shenton's time as director of music.

My time in the choir throughout Andrew Shenton's tenure, during which I became the Choir Librarian, was probably the best and most exciting time of my life with new music always on the agenda as well as old favourites. Where else could one sing on the same Sunday Walton's *Missa Brevis* in the morning and Stanford's BI canticles in the evening, not to mention Tallis, Byrd, Lassus, Victoria, Britten, Leighton, Berkeley, plainsong and a whole range of other church music over the liturgical year? It is entirely coincidental that my history teacher at school was one Robert Britten, brother of Benjamin.

Whilst working for the Open University (and rather late in life) I availed myself of some of the OUs music courses. The Open University has a small but thriving music department and I completed a diploma in music theory, composition and performance in 2005 and in 2008 I was awarded an MA in Music gaining a distinction (the only one I've ever had in my life) for my dissertation on the 'Music and Musicians of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton' and for which I was also awarded the Antrobus Prize for best music dissertation of that year. I am currently working on a book of the same subject.

After taking early retirement from teaching I worked part time for Kenneth Tickell & Company keeping the accounts, invoicing clients and keeping a record of the tuners' visits. My office was next to the workshop where I watched new organs being built just outside the door; these have included the Choir Organ for Worcester Cathedral and a new organ (behind the old case) for Keble College, Oxford. The latest large organ is for St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle (designed by Augustus Pugin). The organ, which is as big as a two story house, will sit upon a gallery with casework designed to complement Pugin's Cathedral interior. Coincidentally, I had decided to retire completely this year when I was asked by Roger Smith if I would consider taking over the Newsletter as Editor.

I have written a number of articles for the Guild of Musicians and Singers' Journal and *Laudate* the Guild of Church Musicians' Journal. the most recent being on the legacy of Moody and Sankey, those magnificent gospel showmen whose meetings attracted 20,000 to 30,000 people night after night. I am also Hon. Curator of the Music Library at St. Matthew's which involves updating the music catalogue; and I am currently trying to trace some of the

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

**P**lease note that subscriptions are now due. At the Annual General Meeting it was agreed that subscriptions should be increased to:

Family membership	£21.00
Individual membership	£14.00
Student membership	£7.00

Payment can be made to the treasurer by cheque, standing order, or online via the NDOA website. If you pay by standing order please amend it now.

#### FUNERAL FEES

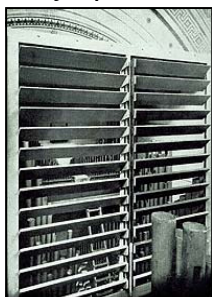
**F**uneral fees for 2013 will remain at £65 for a simple service with no choir and no rehearsal.



## History of the Organ Part 4

by Roger Smith

**A**s late as the Great Exhibition of 1851 at the Crystal Palace, when the Organist of the Chapel Royal, Sir George Smart, was asked if he cared to try out an organ there which had a pedal-board, he replied, "Sir, I never in my life played on a gridiron". Such prejudice had existed for a century or more and prevented Bach's organ music being played here until Wesley and Mendelssohn played his works on the one or two that did have pedals. Eventually, it caught on, and with the introduction of their own ranks instead of pull-downs, pedal divisions became recognised for the added versatility they provided. But if this country trailed



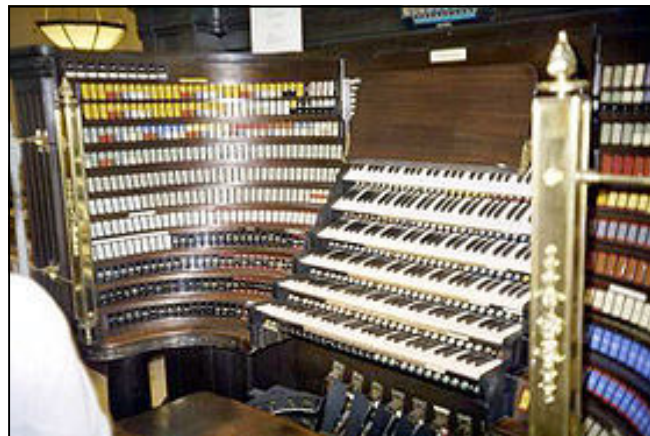
Europe in that the **Swell Box** (shown left) was an English contribution to organ building. Abraham Jordon (possibly with Christopher Schreider), is accredited with designing the mechanism for the organ of St. Magnus the Martyr, London, in 1712. It simply en-

closes the pipes of the Swell Division in a box on the front of which are shutters that can be opened or closed to produce controlled increases and decreases in volume. **Pneumatic Action** is also of British origin designed and introduced into organ building in the mid 1800s, as too was the **Combination Pedal** both devices being championed by Henry Willis and leading to widespread mechanical refinements to a huge number of organs during the late 19th century. However, the search to find an alternative to the laborious and costly practice of manually pumping the bellows was the utopia.

Although hydraulic and gas-engines had come into use, over time, the corrosive nature of the latter began to permeate and rot the leatherwork but, fortuitously, another source of power was emerging, **Electricity**. Long before electricity came to our homes (around the 1930s), its potential for transforming the action of organs had been realised. As early as 1826, ideas for using electro magnets were underway and in 1851 a patent was taken out for an electrical connection between the keys and pallets. By 1867, Bry-

ceson of London exhibited such an instrument at the Paris Exhibition. An electro-pneumatic action powered by multiple batteries had arrived and opened the floodgates to innumerable advances including for the first time, separate consoles, couplers, pistons and a host of other accessories as well as the jackpot - lighter action.

Meanwhile, and well into the second half of the 19th century, the vast majority of ordinary parishes were still dependant on their small bands to provide the music. Recorders, viols, clarinets, oboes and others, were among the instruments in regular weekly use until they in turn were made redundant by organs. There was no turning back, and although some organ builders still produce modern tracker-action instruments with refinements, computer wizardry has added the final touch, with memory and sequencing systems now common on larger instruments. Perhaps the view below of one of the world's largest organs will say it all - it's the 30,000 pipes, 6 manuals and pedals, Grand Court Wanamaker organ in Macey's Store, Philadelphia, U.S.A. Last count 399 stops!



This concludes the series and although I've only scratched the surface, I hope it has been useful to those unfamiliar with the organ's development.

### NDOA Visit to St. Edmundsbury

**D**espite its Anglican cathedral in which the Bishop has his seat (Cathedra), Bury St. Edmunds shares its Ordinary under the Diocesan title of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich, and is referred to not as a city, but a Suffolk market town. Originally, called *Beodericsworth*, the town's fame be-

gan to emerge after Edmund, the Saxon King, was killed by the Danes in 869 by (according to tradition), being tied to a tree and fired at with innumerable arrows until he was dead. His burial in the Abbey church and subsequent miracles performed around his shrine, together with the town's expanding pilgrimage status, brought such attention to the town that in 925 it changed its name to St. Edmunds Bury. The Abbey covered a huge area and prior to falling victim to the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1536-1541), the monks of the Benedictine Abbey endowed the town with three churches around the perimeter of the Abbey's grounds for the worship of the townsfolk. Two survive: St Mary's and St. James, the latter being elevated to Cathedral status in 1914. This is perhaps one of our lesser appreciated cathedrals in the public eye and yet, for almost a century, it has undergone an extensive programme of works to build cloisters, a north transept, chapter house, song school and vestries and, its crowning glory, the majestic tower, completed in 2005.

And thus it was to this charming town that a small number of NDOA and PDOA members joined up to visit the first of the venues—St. Mary's church. This impressive lofty building dating from 1424-1433 claims to be the fourth largest parish church in England, is the final resting place of Mary Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII, and boasts a beautifully coloured wagon-vault to the Choir, a magnificent hammer-beam vault to the nave, a long choral tradition spanning 600 hundred years and, a large four manuals and pedal organ of 83 stops to complement that tradition. We were met by the DoM, Peter Tryon who explained the instrument's origins as an 1828 instrument by John Gray, of London, with subsequent rebuilds by Walker, Hill Norman & Beard, Compton and, in 1988, Kenneth Canter, and is currently in the care of Warren Marsh of Brandon. It is an immensely powerful machine in order to reach the distant west end from its rather enclosed east end location, but despite the loftiness of the building, the uninspiring cases sit just a few feet above the choir stalls from where the power can be ear-splitting. But it also has plenty of softer tones, as demonstrated by organ scholar Glen Dempsey in JSB's *Trio Sonata in E flat*, and afterwards was explored by members with Karg Elert's *Nun Danket* (reputedly composed in St. Mary's by the man himself) and an impressive improvisation.

A couple of hundred yards away was the Cathedral of St. James and where we were met by James Thomas the DoM. James welcomed us and began by describing the new Harrison and Harrison organ played for the first time on Advent Sunday 2010. The cathedral vaulting is a kaleidoscope of colour and its two cases likewise, decorated to a scheme by the architect John Bucknall and a design by Alan Rome. The organ has four manuals and pedals and 59 stops and because the loft is so small and very high up on the north side of the Quire (shown right), a video screen was placed in the nave choir stalls for everyone to see James's demonstration of the instrument's tonality. He took us through 28 short improvisations to demonstrate characteristics of each division finally arriving at full organ and subsequently adding: Swell reeds, the Solo's Orchestral Trumpet, Pedal Ophicleide, Double Trombone and finally a flourish by adding the Solo Tuba. Despite the organ rebuild in St. Mary's church by Kenneth Canter and being told that it was 'a decision we have never regret-





ted for one moment', their organ didn't produce the quality of tone and wholeness of all-round sound of the Cathedral instrument which I'm sure was due to the combination of the high position of the cases (one west facing in the north transept, the other south facing across the Quire), and the masterly voicing skills of Harrison & Harrison. It was completely conducive to the building.



*The picture on the left shows our member Robert Tucker at the console of the organ at St. Edmundbury Cathedral (as seen on the video screen), with the nave stretching out to the west behind him.*

Our thanks go to President Paul Rose for organising the day and to the Directors of Music for their time and willingness to allow us to play two very interesting instruments.

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### David Morgan Education Fund

**Y**our Committee received three further requests for Grants from the Education Fund from Student Members currently studying the organ. They came from Nathan Lam, Tristan Hasson and Eleni Simpson (who has recently passed her ABRSM Grade V with Merit). The Committee was able to grant £200 to each of them towards their ongoing organ lessons.

### New Initiative for the NDOA

**T**he following announcement was circulated online to members in September, but in the event that you are online yourself and haven't notified anyone yet, do please give the link some thought.

The NDOA Committee, ever mindful of improving communications between members, has set up a Special Interest Group on the professional networking website 'LinkedIn'. Members of the group will receive, by email, up-to-date information regarding meetings and other events, as well as being able to use the SIG as a forum for reports, comment and discussion. If you would like to join the group, go to <http://www.linkedin.com>, click on the 'groups directory' tab, and search for 'Northampton and District Organists' Association'. The committee trust that this will enliven every-

one's interest in the Association and its activities, and hope that you will all sign up in order to participate fully.

### The Brereton Memorial Fund

**P**lease note! The application deadline for the Brereton Memorial Fund has been changed to 31st January each year. We hope that this eases time pressures for those who are applying for financial help towards attending educational courses such as those offered by the RCO or at Oundle. The trustees regret that we cannot consider applications at other times of the year.

Applications should be sent to: Judith Brereton, Founder Trustee, Brereton Memorial Fund, 78 Millfield Lane, York, YO10 3AL, Tel: 01904 413548 or [judebrereton@gmail.com](mailto:judebrereton@gmail.com)

### Welcome to Christopher Weaver

**W**elcome to new member Christopher Weaver who is organist of the Roman Catholic Cathedral Church of St. Mary and St. Thomas, Northampton. We hope his time as a member of the NDOA will be a long and fruitful one.

## Organ Cases Part 3

*by Roger Smith*

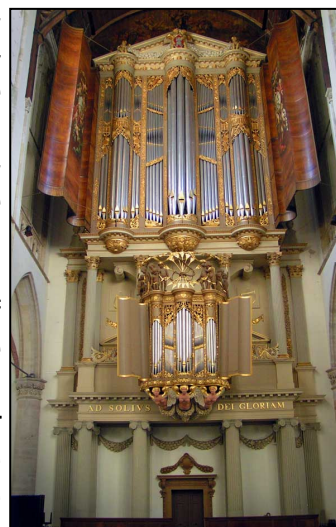
As explained previously, the continent was more successful in surviving the ravages of the internecine revolutions over the centuries between civil and ecclesiastic interests than was the case in this country and therefore was more able to sustain its historic culture of organ and case design. In the UK, we had to largely start again. Consequently, organs and cases across the continent (not all of course), are distinguished by their flamboyant tonal richness and opulent casework.



In January 2008, Kenneth Tickell gave us an erudite presentation of the organs of Gottfried Silbermann an example of which is the organ in the Lutheran Church at Reinhardtsgrimma, Saxony, shown on the left. Quite a few of Silbermann's instruments are installed in places of limited height giving the pipe towers a noticeably squat appearance and although his creations are superb, other builders went further. Just feast your eyes on the case on the right. It's Hildebrandt's 1746 masterpiece in the Wenzelkirche in Naumburg. There's no

doubt, (according to Ulrich Dähnert – author of studies on Hildebrandt and Silbermann), that it 'belongs to the most significant creations of late baroque organ building'. As you can see, it's dripping with ornamentation.

In a similar vogue is the 1634 Van Hagerbeer Orgel, Pieterskerk, Leiden, Netherlands, pictured on the left and the 1646/1725 van Hagerbeer/Schnitger organ shown on the right in the Laurenkerk, Alkmaar, Netherlands, which according to one reference, '...is perhaps the most beautiful organ in the world both to listen to and to look at'. But then, what about the organs of Cavallé Colle and several others and the exotic ceilings and cases in so many Bavarian churches. And so the list goes on. For certain, the stimulus in Europe was the



mantra of the Catholic Church that nothing can be too good for the adoration of Almighty God – a concept generally adopted by the faithful to this day. In this country, the Catholic Church was subjugated and freedom to build new churches limited until well into the 19th century.

Here I conclude the series on Organ Cases. It wasn't difficult knowing where to begin but difficult to know where to end because of the scale of the subject, but do remember, this has been about the 'artistry' of organ cases, not a study of organs, their builders or their specifications. If members would care to read an authoritative chronicle on the history and development of organ cases, may I refer them to John Norman's book, *The Box of Whistles* published by Positif Press, 130, Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1PA.



## August Bank Holiday Organ Crawl 2012

**S**ome two dozen members turned up on Monday 27th August for the Bank Holiday organ crawl. As is usual for a bank holiday the sun declined to shine and, although overcast, failed to curb the enthusiasm of members to such an extent that two parishioners from our first port of call St. James the Great, Hanslope, decided to join us. It was thanks to these two parishioners, who heard that we were coming, that eventually a key-holder to the church was found; it seems that the incumbent and most of the congregation had departed en-bloc to Walsingham for the day.

### Hanslope, St. James the Great.

The elegant spire of this church, which was begun in the 12th century, can be seen from miles around and, with Hanslope situated so close to the Buckinghamshire border, is a local landmark to nearby Milton Keynes. In the chancel is interred the remains of the Rev. James Mayne, Rector from 1842 to 1851. Mayne was an ancestor of the actress Patsy Kensit who, in 2008, featured in the BBC 1 programme *Who do you think you are?* More about the fascinating life of James Mayne in a future edition.



***The organ of St. James the Great, Hanslope.***

Inside this light, airy church with its wide nave and aisles there is a wonderful feeling of spaciousness which is at the same time intimate

with traditional pews arranged around a nave altar. The organ sits on the west gallery with gleaming gold-painted front pipes and a detached console down on the south aisle close to the chancel. The present organ came originally from St. Andrew's, Headington which in turn had acquired it from Merton College Chapel, Oxford. Built in 1924 by Rushworth and Dreaper of Liverpool it was moved to Headington by J. W. Walker in 1967. Further tonal alterations were carried out by A. Foster Waite in 1987 by which time the organ had acquired a two-rank mixture (19:22) on the Great and a three-rank mixture (22:26:29) on the Swell as well as a Sesquialtera.

In 2009 Kenneth Tickell & Co of Northampton installed a new organ in St. Andrew's, Headington and the former organ was moved to its present location at St. James the Great, Hanslope. There had been another pipe organ, in a chamber to the North side of the chancel, which is described in the National Pipe Organ Register as 'rebuilt and enlarged' by Ernest Holt of Walsall in 1921. This organ eventually became unplayable and was replaced by an electronic organ until the present ex-Headington organ was moved to Hanslope by F. H. Brown of Canterbury. A 4' Flute, Twelfth and Fifteenth from the old Holt organ were incorporated into the Great of the present organ and the console is fitted with draw stops, including the usual couplers. The action is electro-pneumatic. A radiating, concave pedal board finishes off a comfortable, well laid out console which includes plenty of pistons. The organ has enough power to support even the largest congregation as several members demonstrated. However, despite a wide and spacious main body of the church the acoustic is to all intents and purposes dead, even with only two dozen people in the church.

### St. Nicholas' Parish Church, Potterspury

Staying close to the Northamptonshire/Buckinghamshire border the organ-crawlers then made their way to the village of Potterspury (pronounced: Potters Perry). This medieval village was originally known as Pyrie (a place where pears grow) but in the 12th century when pottery kilns were introduced it became known as Potters

Pyrie. The church of St. Nicholas stands on a mound to the east of the village on a bend in the road: a classic village church location. The church has been successively 'reordered' since the twelfth century with the rood screen removed, and the interior walls clinically whitewashed. The present organ, dating back to 1875-7 is positioned to the east end of the north aisle. There may have been an earlier organ in the chancel; records suggest that the Duke of Grafton, who as lay Rector was responsible for the upkeep of the chancel, had 'a barrel organ converted to a finger organ'.

The current organ was built by Alfred Hunter (1827 – 1911) of London. Hunter was born in Lambeth and apprenticed to George Maydwell Holdich. After serving his time with Holdich he worked for Henry Bevington Senior (who at that time shared premises with Holdich) and later James Chapman Bishop. In 1856 Hunter set up in partnership with another of Bishop's employees, Henry Webb, who was also Hunter's brother-in-law. The partnership of Hunter and Webb ended after ten years when, in 1866, Webb left to become a publican. By 1881 Hunter employed 13 men and 4 boys and had built a large four-storey house at 87 Clapham High Street with a showroom at the front and workshops at the rear.

Hunter's son, Robert, joined the firm in 1855 as a partner and the company was thereafter known as Alfred Hunter & Son. The firm became well-known for its quality of workmanship and many of its organs were exported abroad to Australia, France, Ceylon and Buenos Aires. Alfred Hunter died in 1911 and the company continued under his son Robert up until 1932 when he too died. For a while the firm struggled on but was eventually bought out by Henry Willis & Sons in 1932. One of the last significant organs to be built by the firm was for Magdalen College, Cambridge in 1927.

The organ in St. Nicholas is of modest proportions, built almost as a cube. The Great organ is straightforwardly 8,8,8,4,4,2; however the Swell has a 16' Double Diapason, a Mixture (15,19,22) and a Cornopean, the bottom octave of which was added in 2009 by Peter Collins when the organ was refur-

bished; an 8' Principal was added to the pedals and a 4' Flute and 2' Gemshorn to the Swell. Who would have imagined that so much organ could be squeezed into such a small space? The drawstop labels are in black and red gothic-style lettering and the action is mechanical with an attached console below gold painted front



pipes.

***The Hunter organ at Potterspurpy being inspected by President-elect Stephen Moore and Callum Alger, organ scholar at St. Matthew's.***

Before moving on to our final destination at Towcester it was time for a meal and a mile or so up the A5 the Old Talbot provided a welcoming repast with many members taking advantage of the comfortable surroundings to relax and enjoy the break. For those wanting something more substantial, the Super Sausage further up the road no doubt provided for their needs.

### **St. Lawrence Parish Church, Towcester.**

St Lawrence is a large ironstone church built with stone from Whittlebury Forest. The oldest portion of the existing church is in the style of Early English architecture, about 1200 A.D. The eastern part of the chancel, with the crypt, is in the Decorated Style. The tower and aisles were commenced in the reign of Edward IV (1461-1483), and completed in the reign of Richard III.

The original organ sat on the West gallery and was built by John Crang (later Crang & Hancock) in the 1760s for William Beckford's imposing gothic revival house called Fonthill Splendens in Wiltshire. William



Beckford the younger who wished to build Fonthill Abbey (a grandiose, gothic cathedral which later collapsed and came to be known as Beckford's Folly) sold many of his late father's possessions, including the organ, to fund his obsession. The organ which had a spectacularly elaborate case with trophies of music 26' high and 15' wide was eventually bought by the Prince Regent for £304-10s (it was originally built for £2,000 a huge sum in those days). However, the organ later came into the possession of the Earl of Pomfret (of Easton Neston) who gave it to Towcester Church in 1817.

In 1885, it was moved to the North East nave by W. E. Richardson of London and it was rebuilt by Nicholson's in 1906. A further rebuild was commenced in 1966 by Anthony Worsdell, trading as John Conyers, a one-man organ company situated just outside Buckingham. An entry in the NPOR from 1973 described the work as 'not yet completed' with the comment – 'disastrous'. Not, however, as disastrous as the fire, a result of vandalism, in 1976 which destroyed the organ. Historical parts of the organ, including the casework were taken to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London to be restored.

The present organ was installed in 1978 coming from the redundant church of St. Edmund in Northampton. It was built in 1886 by Hill of London and when installed in St. Edmund's consisted of Pedal, Great and Swell organs although provision for a third manual had been made. In 2000 a Choir organ was added as well as 3 new pedal stops and a new Swell Mixture by The Village Workshop of Finchingfield, Essex. This organ has to have one of the most recessed consoles ever seen. The entry is through a gate into a space as large as a small chantry chapel, from which the organist is protected from brickbats and tiles by a screen.

During the day we heard a variety of styles of music from members including works by Guillemant, Karg Elert, Howells and unless my ears deceived me a jolly piece by Lefébure-Wély. Grateful thanks are due to President, Canon Paul Rose for organising the day. (BW)



*The enlarged organ of Towcester Parish Church which came from the redundant church of St. Edmund, Northampton.*

## ORGANIST WANTED

**S**t Luke's, Wolverton Road, Newport Pagnell needs an organist, or good pianist, to play the organ for the 11.00 am Holy Communion/Sung Eucharist service on Sundays. The post would also include rehearsing the small choir, which has traditionally met for an hour at 7.15 pm on Friday evenings. There is a weekly fee. The position would be suitable for someone wishing to develop his/her skills further. Anyone interested in enquiring further, please contact:

Reverend Michael Godfrey Rector, Newport Pagnell w Lathbury & Moulsoe  
The Rectory, 81 High St, Newport Pagnell, MK16 8AB  
Tel 01908 611145

or by e-mail [rector\\_08@btinternet.com](mailto:rector_08@btinternet.com)



## What's On

Saturday 8th December	<b>Northampton Chamber Choir. <i>O Come Emmanuel.</i></b> Music by Handel, Tippet, Whitacre, Kodaly, Górecki and Stanford. SS. Peter & Paul, Abington Park at 7.30 p.m. Conductor: Stephen Moore, NDOA President. Tickets: St. Giles Music or 01604 635959.
Also	<b>RSCM Event. <i>Stirring Music for Advent and Christmas.</i></b> A mix of Advent and Christmas carols at Pitsford School. Tickets £5 (students £3) with refreshments. 6.00—8.00 p.m. To book a place, contact Andrew Moodie: (01604) 780507 or akjmoodie@aol.com
Sunday 16th December	<b>Stephen Moore (NDOA President and Director of Music, St. Matthew's Church, Northampton)</b> will perform Messiaen's <i>La Nativite du Seigneur</i> at St. Matthew's Church, 5.30 p.m.
Saturday 19th January	 <b>An afternoon of CDs.</b> Members' selections of CDs Starts at 3.00 p.m. at the home of Sally and Robin Debois - 1, Jacks Close, Lavendon, Bucks. MK46 4HQ
Saturday 9th February	<b>RSCM Event. <i>Taster Day for Young Choristers.</i></b> At St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, run by Stephen Moore. Free workshop. Contact: Andrew Moodie: (01604) 780507, akjmoodie@aol.com
Saturday February 16th	 <b>Painted Pipes Make Merrier Music.</b> Talk by Paul Hale at St. Matthew's Church, Kettering Road, Northampton. Starts at 2.30 p.m. (tea break included).
Saturday March 2nd	 <b>Beginners' Guide to the Organ.</b> Led by Jonathan Harris and Stephen Moore. St. Michael's Church 2.00 p.m. Perry Street, Northampton; St. Matthew's Church 3.00 p.m. Kettering Road, Northampton
Saturday March 9th	<b>Northampton Philharmonic Choir.</b> Vaughan Williams <i>Mass in G Minor</i> ; Howells <i>Requiem</i> ; Tippet <i>Five Spirituals</i> . St. Michael's Church, Perry Street, Northampton at 7.30 p.m. Bookings: 07958 768661.
Also	<b>RSCM Event. <i>Come and sing Fauré's Requiem.</i></b> 3.45 —7.30 p.m. at St. Mary the Virgin, Higham Ferrers. Cost £5 (non-affiliates £6; students £2). Contact: Jane McKee (01780) 762398 or janemckee21@gmail.com

**\*Please submit all items of news, events, and other articles that you wish to be included in *What's On*, to: Barry Wadeson, 24, Bransgill Court, Heelands, Milton Keynes, ML13 7LN. Email: [editor.ndoa@gmail.com](mailto:editor.ndoa@gmail.com)**

**Internet Address: [www.northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk) The Association's web site has received a total of 5378 visits.**