

# ND NORTHAMPTON & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER—ISSUE 2/2020

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

You will be glad to know that the Kimbolton Members' Recital in February and the Corby Crawl in mid-March both went off well. There are full accounts of both those events, and of the CD choice event in January, elsewhere in this Newsletter. I'm sure you will find the whole Newsletter, so ably edited by Richard Tapp, an encouragement in these difficult times.

I am conscious that we all need to be alert and considerate, while each dealing with the current challenge in our own way. I am finding Psalm 91 a great help, with its assurance that *'He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.'* (Are there some good settings of those words?)

The Committee has considered how the Association should respond to the current health situation, and we are not making any plans for the RCO National Organ Day on Saturday 18th April. I had contacted some Kettering churches – Toller, Fuller, St Andrews and Ss Peter & Paul, and we can follow that up for the International Organ Day that the RCO now plans for 2021.

We have not cancelled the Young Organists' Day on 9th May, but it is likely that it will not go ahead, as the church might not be open and people might not want to travel. We have a half-dozen keen applicants, aged from 12 to 26, and I will liaise with them and the parents of the younger ones and keep members informed.

We are hoping we can still go to Southwell Minster on 6th June, but it will depend on whether the Minster is open for such visits and what the rules are for the over-70s(!). We are expecting to be able to go to Thorpe Underwood and Harrington on 18th July, to have the Garden Party on 31st August, and to have the Midlands Organ Day on 26th September, and I hope you will want to support those events.

Meanwhile, to those of you who depend on recitals and concerts and rehearsals and teaching for your income, please be assured that I realise the huge challenges you are facing. Let us hope that by pulling together, the community here and elsewhere can defeat the current health threat and we can soon resume the business of making music *ad maiorem gloriam Dei*.

**John Wilson** *President NDOA*

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The NDOA Newsletter is published four times a year. Contributions are always welcome and should be submitted to the Editor, please - by 1st June for the next issue.

### NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

**Registered Charity no. 274679**

### ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

**President - John Wilson**  
johnfwilson@btopenworld.com 01536 518941

**Hon. Secretary - Helen Murphy**  
secretary@northamptonorganists.org.uk. 01933 680955

**Hon. Treasurer - Glyn Hughes**  
treasurer@northamptonorganists.org.uk. 07505 798667

**Newsletter Editor - Richard Tapp**  
editor@northamptonorganists.org.uk 01933 664896

Cover: St. Andrew's, Kimbolton, where Robert Tucker generously hosted our Members' Recital reported on p.3. Photography throughout this Issue by kind permission of Alan and Gabriela Cufaude.



## MEMBERS' RECITAL 2020

### ST. ANDREW'S, KIMBOLTON

An enthusiastic group of members and friends braved Storm Dennis to delight in a superb Members' Recital and Composers' Day at St. Andrew, Kimbolton, where we enjoyed the generous hospitality of Robert Tucker, the Rev. Philip Howson (Vicar of Kimbolton and its surrounding villages), and Anne and Doris from the church who most kindly provided refreshments.

After a welcome and introduction from Rev. Philip, Robert gave us a most interesting description of the organ and its development over the years. He then demonstrated the dynamic range of the instrument to great effect in Howell's *Rhapsody No 1*, Opus 17. Robert's performance was followed by our Past President Alan Cufaude with Samuel Wesley's *Air and Gavotte*.

Colin Ashworth came to the console next with two of his own compositions - his *Earls Barton Fanfare* written especially to accompany a bride's journey to the altar, and an exquisite *Siciliano*, followed by Robert Jones' *Intrada*.

David Gibbs, whose *Peter and the Wolf* recital at St. Mary's, Wellingborough, is reviewed overleaf, was joined by Kimbolton School's Musician-in-Residence, Matt Gibson, in David's own spectacular transcription of the 4th movement of Mendelssohn's *Italian Symphony*, which was quite marvellous!

Our President, John Wilson, followed up with his own compositions including a *Hymn Tune Interlude*, his thoughtful and enjoyable *St. Andrew's Liturgy*, written for St. Andrew's, Fiji - which included audience participation ably directed by Rosanne Wilson - and his stylish *Fiji Fanfare for the Millennium*.

A splendid finale to a delightful afternoon was achieved by Jonathan Kingston, who played the impressive *Dance of the Moors* by Susato\*, entirely from memory, and concluded with Henri Mulet's fantastic *Carillon Sortie*. A number of other members - and the Vicar - were then able to sample the organ and the results of the very thoughtful and effective rebuild carried out under Robert's expert guidance in recent years.

Robert has kindly agreed to contribute an article on the organ in a forthcoming edition, and it is hoped that the *Newsletter* will also focus on the work of our composer members. If you would like your compositions featured, do please let the Editor know.

Sincere thanks are due to Robert for hosting the event, to John for encouraging and corralling the recitalists, and to Alan and Gabriela for the photos accompanying this article.

\*Members may be interested to know that Maurizio Machella's transcription for organ of Susato's *Dance of the Moors* is available for free download from [Freescor.es](http://Freescor.es) as *La Mourisque*.

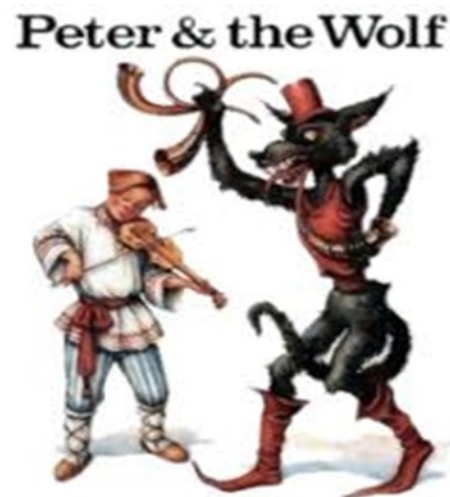


## PETER AND THE WOLF ST MARY'S WELLINGBOROUGH

ALAN CUFAUDE *with thanks to David Gibbs for his contribution to this article.*

The New Year's Day concert given by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra is world famous, but the organ recital given by David Gibbs on New Year's Day at St. Mary's was equally enjoyable for a sizeable audience, and without the travelling.

David Gibbs was appointed Director of Music at Kimbolton School in 2015 having served as Assistant Director of Music for the previous 10 years. He was organ scholar at Oriel College, Oxford and at York Minster before serving as Assistant Organist at Carlisle for 5 years. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists.



*Peter and the Wolf - from an illustrated colouring book of 1947*

David got the recital off to a bright start with *Sinfonia Wir danken dir, Gott, wir danken dir* (We thank you, God) by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750) BWV 29 (1731). What a popular opening piece for an organ recital. Jeremiah Stephenson gave the Third Roger Smith Annual Memorial Recital at St. Mary's in April 2019 and opened with the same piece. David took it at a cracking pace. The performance was displayed on a large screen which enabled the audience to better appreciate the performer's skills, and the delay problem at previous recitals between sound and vision, which was a little disconcerting, appears to have been solved.

That was followed by *Prelude, Fugue et Variation* by César Franck (1822-90). I try to play this piece myself so I know how tricky the final section is. David played it with impressive ease, and achieved as French a sound as I think it is possible to obtain from the St. Mary's organ. The organ at St. Mary's was completed in 1918 by Wm. Hill & Sons, later to become part of Hill Norman & Beard. Although both cases are highly decorated, in keeping with the opulence of the building, the specification of the organ is by comparison modest. There is no solo clarinet or other reed on the Great and so I think David must have used either the oboe or horn on the Swell as the solo. But rather than try to guess what registrations David used I emailed him and received the most helpful of replies which I cannot do better than quote in italics throughout this article.

*'In the César Franck, the original registration requests the melody to be played on the Swell oboe with an 8' flute. I generally find that English oboes do [not] have quite enough oomph compared with French oboes, but at St Mary's the Swell horn was just about right, in my opinion, so I used this with the accompaniment played on the Gt 8' flute.'*

That was followed by a transcription presumably made by David himself of the *Serenade for Strings* opus 20 (1892) by Sir Edward Elgar (1857–1934). Two of Elgar's works for string orchestra have become firm repertoire favourites, one of which is this *Serenade for Strings*. It is the earliest work by Elgar to have become well known – it preceded the *Enigma Variations* by six years – but is utterly characteristic. I imagine that this transcription could sound very impressive on a bigger instrument with larger string and diapason sections, but nevertheless David got some good colours from this organ.

*'The Elgar Serenade is indeed my own transcription, which I made and first played for a concert at St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in the 2005 [Edinburgh] Fringe Festival. I hadn't actually performed it in a recital since (just the occasional movement played before a service), but I thought the range of 8' colours available on the Wellingborough organ made it an ideal choice for the recital.'*

The highlight of the recital and what made it so very different from any other recital I have attended at St. Mary's was a performance of a transcription for organ of Sergei Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, again presumably made by David Gibbs himself. The narrator was Guy Matthews, a member of the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company until its demise in 1982. He was a member of the Sadler's Wells Opera as well as other opera groups, and has had an extensive concert career, particularly in the works of G&S. He is now retired and enjoying singing and serving at St. Mary's.

*'For the Prokofiev, I consulted several transcriptions, including one for organ duet by Roberto Antonello (I thought*

*this was rather fussy) as well as the widely-available transcriptions for piano solo by Prokofiev himself and a much-favoured arrangement by Thomas Dunhill (published by Boosey & Hawkes). In the end I played from this Dunhill version with my own adaptations annotated on the score - when time allows, I'll probably write out for organ solo for myself.'*

I will not repeat the story of *Peter and the Wolf* in this article, but as most of you will know it was composed in 1936 as a subtle introduction for young people to the sounds of the orchestra. My wife Gabriela grew up in communist Poland in the 1960s and 70s, and an appreciation of such works as this was one of the more pleasant parts of a compulsory education of Soviet culture. The bird is represented by the flute, the duck by the oboe, the cat by the clarinet, the grandfather by the bassoon, and the wolf by the French horn. This was very well reflected by David Gibbs through the sounds of the St. Mary's organ. There is no clarinet and so I think he must have used the horn on the Swell with a closed box. The grumpy grandfather was well represented by the Trombone on the pedals. The performance called for some very rapid and dexterous changes of registration which were carried out seamlessly. I think some compromises must have been necessary, for instance when using the Horn on the Swell for the wolf; I guess the cat must have become the Diapason on the Great. Not since David Briggs' performance of the Mahler Resurrection Symphony at St. Matthews in 2018 have I witnessed such dexterity of registration changes at the organ.

*'As you correctly spotted, the organ at St. Mary's doesn't have a clarinet, so for the cat I employed the Swell Oboe with 8' and 4' flutes plus the 8' Diapason for a little extra body. The duck's oboe was played on the Horn as this balanced better with the accompaniment on the Great. The bird was played on the 4' flutes, while the wolf was created using the Great 8' foundations accompanied with tremoloes on the Swell reeds - it just wouldn't work as a scheme if every character was played on a Swell reed. That said, because the Grandfather's bassoon solo stretches across quite a wide range, I was able to cover this with a dovetailing of the Pedal Trombone (the lower notes) and the Swell Horn (higher notes), which seemed to blend quite smoothly from one to the other.'*

The result was a superbly entertaining performance with the narration timed to perfection, and the length of the applause was testament to how well enjoyed the occasion was by the sizeable audience. I did not count the numbers, but the centre section of St. Mary's was full and my wife and I were confined to the outer pews. If someone told me there were in excess of 200 people present I would not have argued with them.

*'In terms of the audience number, I have no idea how many were present. I would have thought more than a hundred, but possibly not as many as 200. I was told, however, that it was the largest audience that the church had enjoyed for an organ recital, so that is rather nice to know.'*

I look forward to the next recital at St. Mary's when this most excellent series is able to resume.

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**LUNCHTIME LIVE – All Saints' Northampton.** Fr Oliver Coss 5th March 2020. Talk about hiding your light under a bushel – no doubt the All Saints' people were aware of Fr Oliver's other 'calling', but I wasn't, and what a programme he gave us! The *Plymouth Suite* by Percy Whitlock (who, along with that other Percy - Grainger of course - always puts me in a good mood) was his opener. I'm not sure of the reason why some of the movements seem to have changed their names (as in Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, each one reflects a particular individual), but I'm very glad that 'Salix' is no longer 'Allegretto'. 'Salix' (willow) is so much more evocative - the music in my synaesthetic brain manifesting itself as all long, sinuous green shapes.

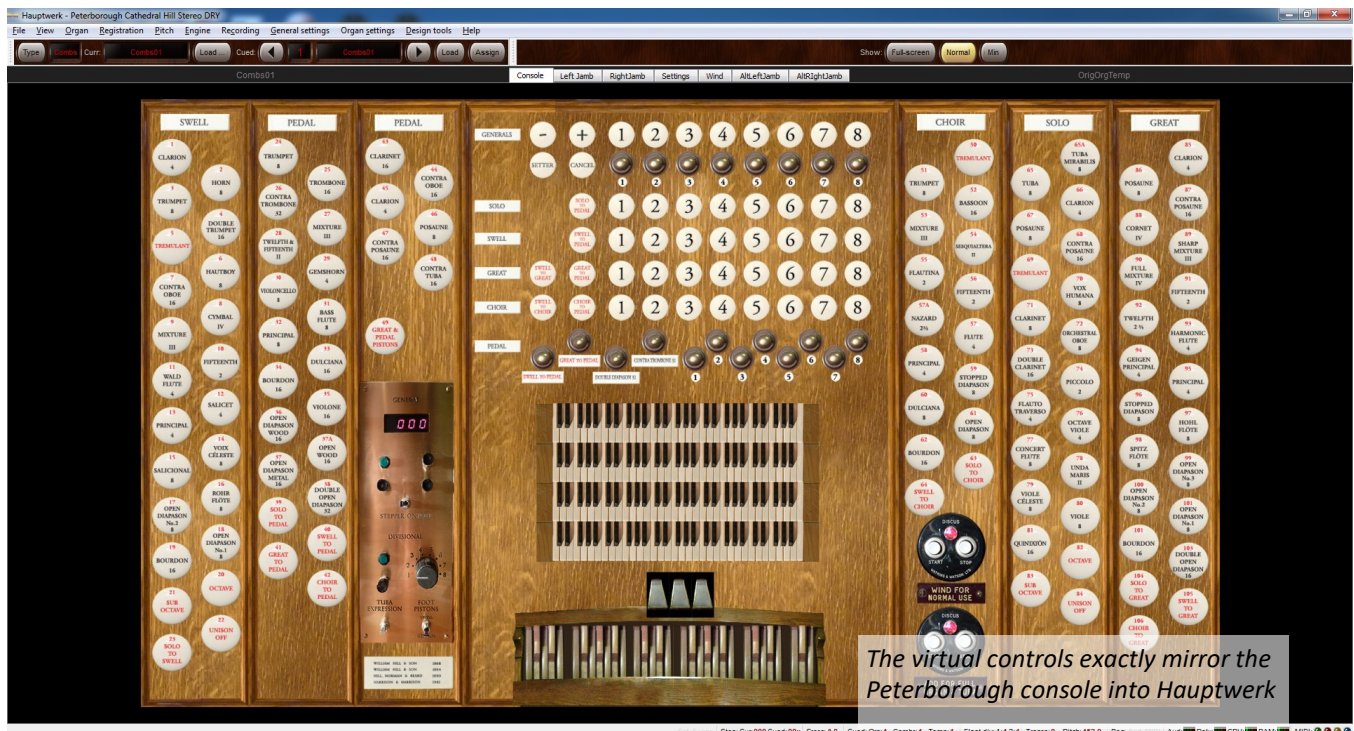
Naji Hakim's Marian set of Gregorian themes *Mariales* (with 'Arabic influences' as the excellent programme notes informed us) was of particular interest and did not disappoint: it was as if the monastic cantor singing the antiphons was led astray by a snake charmer and had burst into ecstatic improvisation. One of Hakim's influences was Langlais who, though blind from an early age, gained great renown and remained in post at Sainte-Clotilde until three years before his death in 1991. His 'Rosa Mystica' from *Triptyque Gregorien* is inspired by the well-known (simple version) *Salve Regina*, heard in its entirety towards the end of the piece.

As for René Louis Becker – whose *Toccata in D Major* concluded the recital – I'd never heard of him, though he was apparently well known in North America in the early 20th century, having been born in Alsace-Lorraine in 1882 and emigrated to the USA as a teenager. This lively *Toccata* was just the right antidote for a world increasingly beset by depressing statistics about c\*\*\*\*\*s. Salut! Helen Murphy



## PRESERVING PETERBOROUGH'S PIPES - H&H TO HAUPTWERK...

Many members will be familiar with the lovely Hill organ of Peterborough Cathedral, and the sensitive work carried out by Harrison & Harrison to re-pitch it to concert pitch which has been well-documented in *Organists' Review*. Less well-known is perhaps that the sound of the organ was digitally captured faithfully both before and after the re-pitch, and is now available as a Hauptwerk virtual organ set, thanks to Audio Angelorum.



**The Organ.** It's difficult to do justice to the organ in a few lines, but in summary, the instrument dates substantively from the 1894 Hill & Son build, incorporating some of the pipework from the Killeburgh instrument of 1735 and the William Hill rebuild and enlargement of 1868. The organ was again rebuilt and enlarged by Hill Norman & Beard in 1930, with a new console and a number of tonal alterations.

Harrison & Harrison restored the instrument in 1981, and dismantled, overhauled and reinstated it following the fire of 2001. The Hill instrument was originally constructed at old Philharmonic pitch (approximately A=452) and after many years of discussion, Harrison & Harrison have undertaken a substantial project to change to concert pitch, enabling it to be used in concert with other instruments.

The work has been done very sensitively, ensuring that the integrity of the instrument has been preserved and the possibility maintained that the work can be reversed at a later date. Additionally, a new Tuba Mirabilis has been added, together with a new Pedal 16' Open Wood and the addition of a Nazard and a two-rank Sesquialtera (based on the Nazard) on the Choir. The current instrument comprises 89 stops and around 5,400 pipes over 4 manuals and pedals, with enclosed Swell, Solo and Choir divisions, with a compass of 61 notes on the manuals and 31 notes on the pedals.

**The Peterborough Hauptwerk Project.** All this may be well known. Perhaps less so is that fact that one of the conditions of the work was that the sound of the organ should be captured and archived at its original pitch. In past years, this would have been done by recording some reference pieces, but in this case, Audio Angelorum utilised the Hauptwerk virtual pipe organ system, and a very extensive sampling process began.

**Audio Angelorum** is run by **Ben Trenchard**, an engineer, musician and software developer with over 30 years' experience in music technology. Ben was Head Chorister at the Cathedral in the 1980s.

In addition to the sampling of the Peterborough Hill, their current work includes a number of CD productions, location and studio recording, mobile location recording, audio editing and mastering.

This involved the sampling of literally hundreds of hours of audio. A robot was built in order to play the notes and select stops (using the built-in combination system), which allowed sampling to be performed non-stop throughout the night, with absolute accuracy in terms of note lengths and ensuring sufficient gaps between all notes for the building acoustic to die away.

The recordings were made in nine separate overnight sessions over a period of a few months at the beginning of 2015, with an additional two nights of recording made in 2017 following the re-pitch to capture the tonal changes and some of the re-pitched pipework. Microphones were placed in the organ itself, close up to the pipework, as well as ambient microphones in multiple locations between the choir stalls and in the nave. A series of six excellent *Pipewatch* videos capture the story of the repitch and these can be found on YouTube or the Audio Angelorum website.

Audio Angelorum has produced two Hauptwerk sample sets. The first, which is available now, recreates the organ as it was just prior to its re-pitch in 2015, at the higher pitch of around A=452. The second, which will be available shortly, will reflect the current specification and pitch following the re-pitching.

Considerable effort has gone into the creation of the very highest quality samples. In particular, careful consideration has been given to optimising the trade-off between removing background noise and preserving the intricate detail in the sound to give it life. In addition to processing note samples, all blower, stop, switch, key, tremulant and action noises have been reproduced, and a significant number of impulse responses taken from various locations within the organ. The organ's controls are all reproduced and fully functioning, including the solid-state logic capture system with 128 general level memories and 8 divisional levels.

**The Peterborough Hauptwerk Set** is available from [audioangelorum.com](http://audioangelorum.com) and requires Hauptwerk Version V software - more on which below. A trial Peterborough set is available at £18 allowing Hauptwerk users to trial it for two weeks; the full Peterborough set of the pre-pitch organ is £495, which is comparable with other Hauptwerk sets.

**HAUPTWERK VERSION V.** Hauptwerk is state-of-the-art virtual instrument software 'bringing the world's best pipe organs within reach of musicians everywhere'. It provides high-resolution audio and works with a wide range of digital organ consoles and purpose-built equipment through midi interfaces from the user's PC or Mac. There are now said to be more than 150 sample sets available for use with Hauptwerk, at prices ranging from around £100 per set up to £700 and more, including the Peterborough set mentioned above.



Version V has recently been launched and is said to be able to model organs of all sizes, from the smallest positif organs to the largest cathedral instruments. It uses at least one audio recording (sample) per pipe (or note per stop), and long samples, each of several seconds. This is claimed to allow for very realistic virtual organ models, with the only limitation being the memory and processing power of the user's computer.

The Hauptwerk Version V software package includes a free sample set from the 1907 Brindley and Foster organ of St. Anne's, Moseley, Birmingham. The Mosley sample set includes blower noise, stop-action noises and other details, and various playing aids.

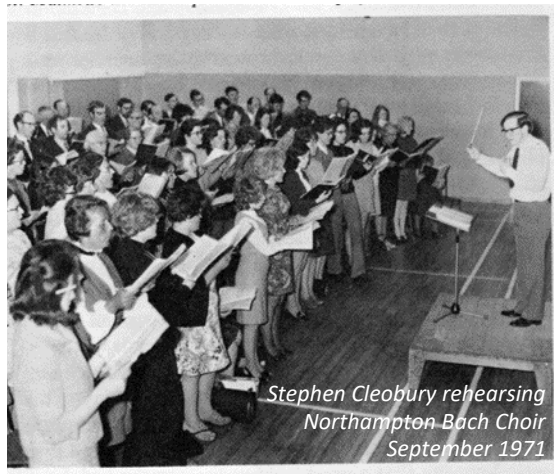
Many more details can be found at [hauptwerk.com](http://hauptwerk.com) together with system requirements and pricing.

*The Editor is most grateful to Ben Trenchard of Audio Angelorum for permission to reproduce material relating to the Peterborough Set and to the process of capturing the samples used to preserve the sound of the organ.*

## SIR STEPHEN CLEOBURY

1948 - 2019

Conductor, Northampton Bach Choir 1971- 74



Stephen Cleobury was appointed conductor of the Northampton Bach Choir in the summer of 1971 shortly after graduating from St John's College, Cambridge where he was Organ Scholar under George Guest. He was also appointed organist of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, and for a time taught music at Northampton Grammar School for Boys.

Stephen was born in Bromley, Kent, where his father was a GP and his mother worked as a nurse. His siblings, Nicholas and Judy, also became musicians, Nicholas being an Organ Scholar for Simon Preston at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford who subsequently developed a career as a conductor. The family subsequently moved to Birmingham and then Canterbury. In January 1958 Stephen auditioned successfully for the choir at Worcester Cathedral and he became a boarder at The King's School, Worcester, although much of his life as a pupil there was focused on music and the Cathedral. Whilst a chorister at Worcester under Douglas Guest, at the age of 12 he sang in a Three Choirs Festival performance of Verdi's *Te Deum* amongst other works, had lessons on the organ and learnt to play viola.

He became Organ Scholar at St John's College, Cambridge, under the tutelage of George Guest, and also helped with the training of the College Choir, ran the College Musical Society and was involved with a number of separate productions. He accompanied the college choir in their many broadcasts and recitals, as well as foreign tours including a three week tour to Canada and the USA in 1970. His first concert with the Northampton Bach Choir was on 20th November 1971 when the choir sang Vivaldi's *Gloria* and Britten's *St Nicolas*. Maurice Dunmore, the *Chronicle & Echo's* music critic, praised the performance but commented that 'Perhaps the performance would have profited from some sacrifice of accuracy to allow the choir to lift the music from the score more often. Understandably careful on his first occasion with the Bach Choir Mr Cleobury will no doubt find he can relax a little and trust these singers.'

Highlights of Stephen Cleobury's tenure with Northampton Bach Choir included a Mozart *Requiem*, Rossini's *Petite Messe Solenne*, and Bach's *St Matthew Passion* (in which Brian Kay sang the Christus). There was plenty of Bach and an annual Carol Concert in the Guildhall. Members of the choir who sang under Stephen's direction can recall his insistence on accuracy and his dry sense of humour, and it was even then clear that Stephen was destined for higher things. It was also a joy that his wife, Penny, came and sang in the soprano line. When Stephen left Northampton in 1974 he became sub-organist to Douglas Guest, then in 1979 he moved along Victoria Street to Westminster Cathedral where he stayed until his appointment in 1982 as Director of Music at King's College, Cambridge in succession to Philip Ledger. Stephen became conductor of Cambridge University Musical Society in 1983, was appointed University Organist in 1986 and Principal Conductor of the BBC Singers in 1995, a position held to 2007.

At King's he had a hectic year-round schedule of rehearsals, concerts, recordings and services culminating each year in the traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols broadcast around the world on Christmas Eve. He commissioned many new carol settings from distinguished composers including Bob Chilcott, John Tavener and Arvo Pärt, many of which have now entered the standard repertoire. His discography included 4 DVDs, 6 CDs as organist and some 37 CDs as conductor. Stephen was appointed CBE in 2009 and knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours in 2019.

He retired in June 2019 after 37 years at King's and moved to live in York. He leaves behind a lasting musical legacy, many friends world-wide, and some of us who were privileged to sing under his baton in those early years of his illustrious career.

**MARK GIBSON** Vice-President, Northampton Bach Choir



## Young Organists' Day

St. Mary & St. Giles, Stony Stratford

Church Street, MK11 1BD

Saturday 9th May 2020 - 10am—1pm

**Young Organists** (ages 10-20) are warmly welcomed to experience the magnificent three-manual Father Willis organ at Stony Stratford Parish Church and to perform a short piece of their choice.

Performance insight and friendly guidance will be provided by professional organist, **Jonathan Kingston**. Parents and friends are also welcome, and light refreshments will be provided.

The **Young Organists' Day** is free of charge to participants but notice to perform is needed. For more details and to book, please contact John Wilson, President NDOA, email [johnwilson@btopenworld.com](mailto:johnwilson@btopenworld.com), or telephone 01536 518941.



**In view of the Covid-19 situation at the time of going to press please consult our website or Facebook for confirmation of events in due course**

Buckinghamshire Organists' Association



**Saturday 26 September 2020**

**St. Matthew's Church**

Kettering Road, Northampton, NN1 4RY

**TWO EVENTS : ONE DAY**

### **I** IAO Midlands Organ Day Liturgical Playing

**10am** Including Masterclasses led by **Simon Johnson** (St. Paul's Cathedral) and **Richard Pinel** (Jesus College Cambridge) with **Andrew Reid** (Harrison & Harrison) & **Callum Alger** (Westminster Cathedral); Open Consoles to play outstanding Northampton organs including St. Matthew's and All Saints'.

### **2** Organ Recital Celebrating 125 Years of the St. Matthew's Organ

**7pm** Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the historic J W Walker organ at St. Matthew's; given by **Simon Johnson**, **Richard Pinel**, **Andrew Reid** & **Callum Alger**; featuring Duruflé's *Trois Danses*, & *Neptune* from Holst's *The Planets*.

#### **Tickets:**

Organ Day £18 (Non-members £20) • U18 or FT Student £10  
Organ Recital £16 • U18 or FT Student £8

#### **Bookings:**

via [www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day)  
online in advance or pay at the door.

The programme may be subject to alteration without notice

**[www.northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk)**

Events sponsored by:



Reg Charity No. 274679



St Mary Magdalene Castle Ashby

### **ORGAN CONCERT**

Saturday 4th July 2020 - 7.30pm

## **RACHEL MAHON**

*Assistant Director of Music  
Coventry Cathedral*

*Rachel is a multiple award -winner,  
acclaimed international recitalist and  
former Organ Scholar at  
St Paul's Cathedral*

Rachel will play the fine  
1872 Nicholson Organ

The programme will include music by  
Bach, Buxtehude, Brahms, Gerald Bales,  
Healey Willan, Mendelssohn and more

Tickets £15 including interval refreshments  
and a glass of wine available from  
Mrs Judith Cundell 01604 696340  
[judith@paradisefarm.co](mailto:judith@paradisefarm.co)  
or on the door

For more organ concerts at other venues see  
[www.organrecitals.com](http://www.organrecitals.com)

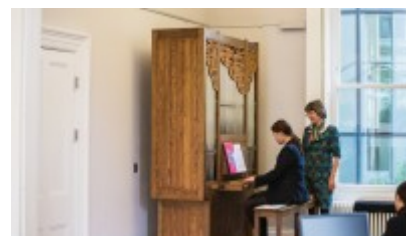


## BORROWINGS AND EXTENSIONS

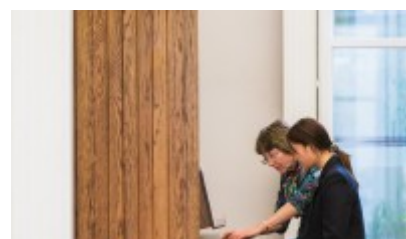
*An occasional series of updates on earlier Newsletter stories*

**THE ABBEY CENTRE TICKELL.** Sarah Baldock, College Organist at Cheltenham Ladies College, writes with further news of the lovely Abbey Centre Tickell, which members will recall has found a new home at the College. 'It's already much loved by the students here and we are also now able to embark on some work with local primary school children who will be getting to play it in 2020!' Sarah has also kindly provided the following extract and photographs from the College's Newsletter, which are reproduced here by kind permission of Cheltenham Ladies College.

**DONORS FUND 'LITTLE TICKELL' ORGAN.** Organ building is a niche occupation and one of the most well-respected craftsmen of recent times is the late Kenneth Tickell. In 2005, and thanks to the generosity of a large number of donors, College commissioned an organ from him and this beautiful three-manual instrument is used daily in the Princess Hall for Prayers, Sunday services, lessons, concerts and practice.



The art of playing the organ is appealing to an increasing number of students and there are now 13 having tuition, and a former CLC Organ Scholar is currently Organ Scholar at Pembroke College, Oxford. So when a rare early example of Kenneth Tickell's work - a beautiful one-manual mechanical action organ built in 1991 - was to be offered for sale, there was an eager desire to see if it could be acquired. This time a handful of wonderful donors stepped in at very short notice.



The vendors, Abbey Centre Baptist Church, graciously gave College first option to purchase, with a month in which to raise the funds. They felt this honoured the original donor of the organ to the Abbey Centre – one Miss Winifred Throssell, who gave the organ in memory of her sister Mrs Beatrice Griffin. Our two communities share a delight that this beautiful instrument is now being used in the Parabola Arts Centre by the next generation of young organists.

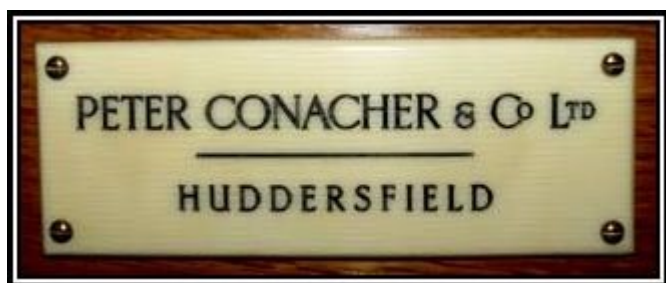


**I SAW ETERNITY THE OTHER NIGHT.** Mark Gibson, NDOA's President 2017-18 and Vice President, Northampton Bach Choir, writes: 'Timothy Day's fascinating book *I saw Eternity the other night* is on my bookshelf. I managed to purchase a copy at last year's Three Choirs Festival in Gloucester and have certainly enjoyed the read. However I would suggest that there is a small piece of information of local interest that is missing from the review; that is, that Timothy was Director of Music at St Matthew's, Northampton and conductor of the Northampton Bach Choir between 1974 and 1976, succeeding Stephen Cleobury and preceding David Ponsford. Timothy now lives in Hereford and my wife and I are in regular contact with him and have met up with him several time in recent years.'



**ORGAN BUILDING VOLUME 19 PUBLISHED.** The Institute of British Organ Building has published its excellent annual survey of organ building in the United Kingdom. Beautifully produced and richly illustrated, it includes a Review of the Year by Paul Hale, articles on the organs of Battersea Arts Centre, the Crown Court Church of Scotland and King's College Chapel London, and an incisive study of the Organ Reform Movement in the UK by Dominic Gwynn. There is also an excellent exposition of the 'ideal' specification of a two-manual organ by four eminent organ consultants including Daniel Moulton and Nicholas Thistlethwaite. Available from [ibo.co.uk](http://ibo.co.uk) at £19.50 plus p+p.





## CONACHER CINEMA ORGANS: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CONNECTIONS

PART 1: OF ORCHESTRAL AND UNIT ORGANS  
PAUL BLAND

Born in Scotland in 1823, Peter Conacher learnt his trade as an organ builder during several years spent in Europe. Returning to England he found employment with Hill & Sons, then J W Walker & Sons before, in 1854, establishing the company which bore his name for well over a century, Peter Conacher & Co.

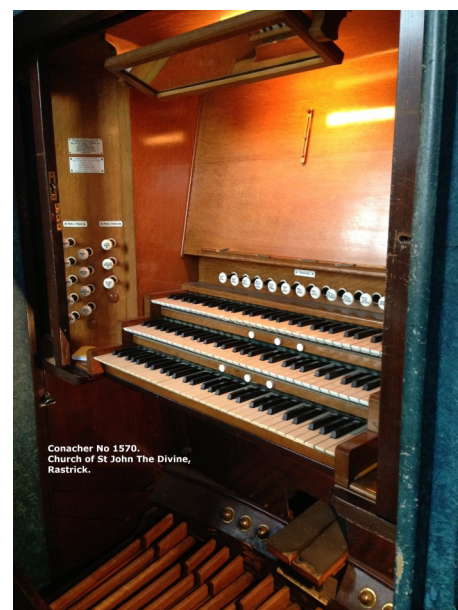
Initially based in George St, Huddersfield, the company moved to Springwood Works in Water Street in 1873. These premises were fully equipped and Conachers produced over 25 instruments annually for halls, churches and other venues. The years following the First World War constituted a period of optimism and development for the company. Viewing the potential cinema market, two instruments were constructed and installed. In 1916 the **Lounge** cinema opened in Headingley, Leeds. In 1919, a 3-manual Conacher, Job No 1558, was installed in two chambers. Opened by Leopold Jackson, details are scant. It remained until 1952, when it was removed for scrap.

More is known about the second Conacher installed that year. The **Empire**, Oldham opened in 1897, later becoming a cinema. Conacher obtained the contract for an organ and in 1919, Job No 1565, a 3-manual instrument with 21 speaking stops was installed. At a reported cost of £2215, the specification included Bass Drum, Kettle Drum, Cymbals, Triangle and an 18-note set of Tubular Bells. The **Empire** was demolished in 1981. The organ was, most likely, sold for scrap.

Two more orders were despatched the following year, 1920. Job No 1554 was an instrument of three manuals and 21 speaking stops with a fixed console. Haydn Harper Sandwell FRCO, Assistant Organist at Huddersfield Parish Church and Music Master at St. James' Grammar School, Huddersfield, presided at its opening in the **Picture House**, Huddersfield. The cinema remained open until demolition in June 1967 when the Conacher went to the scrapyards.

Harrogate was the destination for the second cinema installation of the year, Job No 1570 for the **Central Cinema**. Another instrument of 3 manuals, it was opened on 31st July, 1920 by William Elbourne, organist and choirmaster of Knaresborough Parish Church, who later became a cinema organist, before taking holy orders. Publicity proclaimed '...orchestral music with accompaniment on the Grand organ, installed at a cost of £3,300.'

The Conacher was removed in 1955 to the church of St. John the Divine, Rastrick and, modified, remains in regular use, the only survivor of the non-unit cinema organs. Surveyed for the National Pipe Organ Register, details are on the [npor.org.uk](http://npor.org.uk) site at R01135, while the church's website at [stjohnsrastrick.org.uk/music](http://stjohnsrastrick.org.uk/music) contains photographs of the organ as it is today. A hint of its past lies in the presence of two tremulants; not always retained when an entertainment instrument decamps to hallowed ground.



In 1921, the **Coliseum**, Sheffield placed an order for Job No 1571. Costing £2060, it was a 3-manual instrument, with chambers either side of the stage, being opened by David Clegg. A popular recitalist, Clegg (1867-1923) had been organist of Littleborough Parish Church, Manchester and Salford Borough Organist from 1907. He attracted a good press wherever he performed. The *Aberdare Recorder* of 11th October, 1913 noted, 'Mr David



*Clegg has now given over 3000 recitals in Principal Public Halls in the United Kingdom and is well known on the Continent.*’ further observing that Clegg had distinguished himself in America, performing ‘...before President Roosevelt and Officers of the Armed Cruisers.’ Despite this auspicious beginning, the organ soon faded from view. It was removed in 1935, modified then installed in South Anston Methodist Church, where it remained until 1987. Needing a major overhaul, it was removed to obscurity.

In Wakefield **The Picture House** welcomed Job No 1579, Conacher's second cinema installation of 1921. This instrument of 3 manuals and 23 Speaking Stops was also opened by David Clegg. Like most early Conachers, it retreated from public gaze, being scrapped in 1972. As Conachers took these steps into manufacturing organs for the cinema, their main focus remained the production and maintenance of instruments predominantly for church use. The company also operated a factory in Dublin. Opinions about Conacher's work vary, but frequent references to the marque's durability are made, such as this one to an unidentified church installation: ‘...like all Conachers, built like the proverbial battleship and soldiering on....’

The next cinema organ was for the **Picture House**, Woodlands, Doncaster, Job No 1626 in 1923. As usual, the 2-manual console was fixed. Another nearly anonymous Conacher, it passed into disuse long before removal. The **Grand Theatre**, Halifax, with interior by Frank Matcham, opened in 1889. In 1923 an instrument of three manuals and 24 speaking stops was installed. Job No 1632 was made redundant by the coming of sound and removed, presumably for scrap.

In 1925, Wurlitzer installed unit organs in Provincial Cinematograph Theatres’ (PCT) **Picture House**, Walsall, **Palace**, Tottenham and **New Gallery**, Regent Street, London. These still exist, the third in its original home. They were technically advanced and designed specifically for providing accompaniment for silent films, being significantly unified and extended. Despite this, Conacher, in 1927, installed their final orchestral organ in the **City Cinema**, Peterborough, then of course within Northamptonshire. Job No 1649 boasted a 4-manual fixed console and 30 speaking stops housed in two chambers. Cooper Francis, later Organist and Master of Choristers at Peterborough Cathedral, and a G Rhodes were the organists for the opening. During 1942, the **City** was struck by a German bomb which destroyed the organ. This ended the first stage of Conacher's involvement with the cinema organ. However, Springwood Works was to turn out a further 9 instruments, and thanks to a native of Daventry, Reginald Foort, (see box, below) further strengthening their links to Northamptonshire. The first contract awarded from this partnership was for three (Model D) 4/22 organs of identical specification for County's **Regal** cinemas at Wimbledon and Hull and their **Ritz** in Nottingham. These featured Deagan percussions and Steinway Grand Pianos. Conacher offered this for £4000 per instrument comparing favourably with the Wurlitzers at the **Paramount**, Manchester and the **Empire**, Leicester Square at £20,000 each and Quentin MacLean's for the **Trocadero**, Elephant & Castle, £15,000. Wurlitzers were subject to high import duty, later resolved by shipping them in component form for assembly in England. Despite their undoubted brand leadership, just 99 were brought to these shores out of some 600 organs installed in British theatres and cinemas.

In 1933 Conacher installed ‘The Big 3’ and a smaller instrument, a 3/9 organ in the Philpot Circuit's **Plaza**, Coventry. 1934 saw four more installations in the **Regals** at Margate, Southampton, Rotherham and another Philpot house, the **Forum**, also in Coventry. The final cinema installation was in 1935 when a 4/13 organ went into County's **Ritz**, Southend. Foort moved on, and no further orders ensued, Conachers paying the price for their late entry into this market dominated by Compton, Christie and Wurlitzer.



**Reginald Foort** was born in Daventry in 1893, son of a local church organist. He learnt the piano from the age of 7 and took up the organ at 11 after his family moved to Rugby, studying with Basil Johnson, Master of Music at Rugby School. He gained his FRCO by the age of 17, securing the post of organist at St Mary's Bryanston Square, London. Following war service he became a pianist for silent films, then progressed to the cinema organ. He was associated with the **New Gallery** Wurlitzer from 1925, quickly establishing his broadcasting and recording reputation and eventually becoming the BBC's first staff Theatre organist.. In 1933 Foort was appointed Musical Director of County Cinemas and also took a position as Technical Advisor to Conachers, designing the nine unit cinema organs which were to emerge from Huddersfield.

In 1939 Wurlitzer completed their final UK installation, the 3/13 instrument in the **Opera House**, Blackpool and that was effectively 'it' for the unit extension organ in the cinema. Changing public tastes, developments in electronics and cost-cutting all contributed to the fall of the 'Mighty'. That tale has been recounted elsewhere so this article returns to the instruments which emerged from Springwood Works.

In 1941, a German bomb completely destroyed the **Regal**, Margate. Two years later the **Regal** Hull was damaged in an air raid, necessitating removal of the console, although the pipework remained until 1957. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw many cinema organs removed for scrap or parts until only three Conachers occupied their original homes. The Model D in the **Ritz**, later **Odeon**, Nottingham remained until 1964, being broken up when that theatre was gutted to become the country's first twin cinema. The Rotherham organ, a 3/9, saw a renaissance during the 1970s that ended with removal in 1993. It survives in poor condition and is presently for sale.

Southend's Conacher had a different fate thanks to Blackpool's organ tradition. The **Tower Ballroom** had been home to a succession of instruments, the original 2/10 organ being enlarged to 3/13 before transfer to the **Empress Ballroom** and succeeded by the larger 3/14 which remains to this day. The **Opera House** still has its 3/13 whilst the **Palace Ballroom** had a 2/10 Wurlitzer assembled from parts in the English factory. Odeon built its largest theatre in the town, with provision for an organ but none was installed. Responding to the popularity of the Wurlitzer quartet, there is a rumour that a large Compton was ordered, being destroyed when the train carrying it was hit in a bombing raid. As Compton records vanished during the war this remains unsubstantiated. Odeon, having absorbed County Cinemas, employed Compton to transfer the Conacher from Southend to the Odeon where it remained until 1969. It now resides in Norfolk, awaiting restoration.

Parts of another Conacher found their way to Northampton in 1959. The Model D from the **Regal/Odeon**, Wimbledon was bought by A E Davies. The console was consigned to a bonfire in the cinema's car park whilst the remainder came back to their premises here. Some pipework found its way into a Garrison Church in Aldershot.

*That concludes the first part of this foray into the story of the Conacher cinema organs. The 1960s saw much swept away in the name of modernisation and progress and the products of Springwood Works were no exception. However, all was not lost and the next part will recount one survivor's journey to Northampton and on-going story into the 21st-Century.*

**STOP PRESS:** Conacher Job No 1626 in the Picture House, Woodlands, Doncaster has just been confirmed as found intact in-situ, which would make it the oldest cinema organ still in its original home.

*\*Paul Bland is a native Northamptonian, born in Far Cotton. Admitted to St. Mary's Church choir on Advent Sunday, 1960, he reckons his enjoyment of organ music harks back to the sound of the 2-manual Walker installed there for many years. He bumped into the Conacher, literally, in a corridor at the then Northampton Grammar School for Boys. That led to his becoming its 'guardian' during his time in the Sixth-Form, thence to part-time employment with a local organ builder. Paul is delighted to be re-acquainted with the Conacher and is actively involved in its restoration, the story of which will be told in the second part of this article.*



**Fire! Fire!** Our President, John Wilson, came across this Ecclesiastical Insurance Office notice warning of the grave danger of fires originating in the organ - from stoves set to combat damp, to tuners' lamps and candle flames. You have been warned!

**NDOA ORGAN QUIZ.** How good is your organ knowledge? Try this fiendish quiz set by John Wilson for the Members' CD day in January. Answers on our Facebook page @Northamptonorganists. No cheating!

**General:** 1. Which organist gave a public performance of Rachmaninoff's 3rd piano concerto at the age of 19?

**Local:** 2. Which local church is known as the Pork Pie Church?  
3. What make of organ does it have?  
4. When was the Walker organ installed in St Matthew's church?  
5. What well-known work was commissioned to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the church?

**History:** 6. What does the word 'organon' mean in Greek?  
7. What is generally accepted as the original of the pipe organ (in Greece)?  
8. What kind of organ is St. Cecilia portrayed as playing?  
9. Who sent a pipe organ as a gift to Pepin the Short, father of Charlemagne, in 757AD?  
10. Where and in which century was the first recorded pipe organ installed in England?  
11. Which French composer first called the pipe organ 'the king of instruments'?  
12. What displaced the pipe organ as 'the most complex human device' in the late 19th century?

**Anniversaries:** 13. What do John Henry Maunder and Max Bruch have in common this year?  
14. What is Maunder's best-known work?  
15. What do Charles Macpherson and Louis Vierne have in common this year?  
16. Which organ composer was born the same year as Beethoven?  
17. What is Beethoven's only organ work?

**Technical:** 18. What is the difference between a Dulcian and a Dulciana stop?  
19. What is the None stop?  
20. Name two electric organ builders that are not part of the Church Organ World group.



**Canadian Organ Music - Rachel Mahon.** Colleagues will recall that our gracious host at the Association's visit to Coventry Cathedral last year was the Assistant Director of Music, Rachel Mahon.

Rachel, who is herself a native of Canada, played for us the *Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue* by the Anglo-Canadian composer Healey Willan, which is also included in her new, and excellent, debut album on the Delphian label. The Canadian link to Coventry is strong: in 1952, Willan presented a sizeable donation from the Royal Canadian College of Organists, and the Canadian public, towards the cost of the organ for the new cathedral. It has also recently been announced that Rachel will succeed Kerry Beaumont as Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral in September. NDOA offers its sincere congratulations on her appointment.

**Canadian Organ Music**, DCD 34234, RRP £14.99 available from Amazon and usual sources.

**Rachel is scheduled to play at Castle Ashby on Saturday 4th July at 7.30pm. See details on p.9.**



## CORBY CRAWL

Just as this edition closed for press, members and friends enjoyed a most pleasant day of music, friendship and organs in and around Corby. We visited the instruments at St Ninian's and Ss Peter & Andrew, Corby, and St. Michael's at Great Oakley; as well as enjoying the delightful hospitality of Jonathan and Judith Mack, and Roger and Rosemary Skoyles.

The day began at Jonathan and Judith's home, where we were treated to a sumptuous light lunch and enjoyed Jonathan's home-built positive organ, with 8ft, 4ft from middle C and pull-downs - as well as a spinet. The organ was an amazing-looking bit of kit (think Heath Robinson) – assorted copper pipes bound with masking tape labelling – but, like Heath Robinson's machines, it worked. And to prove it, two sets of three players (one on organ, one on spinet and one on piano) played some of JSB's *Concerto for Three Keyboards*, followed by a *Minuet and Trio* by Leopold Mozart, featuring a Cuckoo, a Nightingale and a Tromp (yes!).



The Collins organ at Great Oakley



The President presides at the Willis of St Ninian's Corby

We then transferred to St. Ninian's Church of Scotland church, Beanfield Avenue, in Corby, to sample the one-manual and pedals Willis dating from 1978, with the organ sited on the wall and a detached console with electric action - and as our Chairman said in his pre-event publicity - enjoy the time delay! This was much more than it might seem – and in spite of the aforementioned brief time delay, produced a beautiful sound, much bigger than you might expect from the four ranks on the wall (all owing to skilful extensions). And if you're wondering about the large blue object on the organ stool, it was a (in our view) superfluous padded seat, folded up as best we could to get it out of the way (rest assured, we put it back as we found it!).

Our next stop didn't take us far - a short trip along Beanfield Avenue to Ss. Peter and Andrew, where we found a two-manual and pedals tracker by Wragg of Nottingham from c.1930 in this fascinating building, the cruciform church and hall dating from 1967. The organ here was sited on a gallery reached by one of those scary open staircases that were all the rage in the Sixties, and, despite the somewhat cramped conditions, we were all able to 'have a go.'







Our final church was St. Michael and All Angels, Great Oakley, with the delightful Peter Collins instrument from 1998. Roger Skoyles most kindly contributed a detailed feature article about the organ in our 'Organs that I play' series which appeared in Issue 2/2019 of the Newsletter, and the instrument most certainly lived up to its billing. One thing I hadn't appreciated from Roger's article - though he writes that it was situated 'in what was known as the Squire's Pew' - was just how cosy a fit it is: the late, lamented, Carlo Curley would not have coped!

The organ owes much to Roger's care and attention to it and its Collins build, and we were also more than appreciative of Roger and Rosemary's hospitality after our visit to the church. Everyone much enjoyed the afternoon tea which they had provided - as well as the chance to try Roger's two-manual and pedal Viscount. which was tucked away in a corner of his music room/study. Once again, we were all able to 'have a go' - while some of us were eating our splendid tea, others were entertaining us until it was time for us all to go home. It was a really enjoyable day - and I have to say that when I got home I sat quietly reading and listening to CDs, and deliberately didn't switch on the news as I didn't want my day to be spoiled by more news about the dreaded c\*\*\*\*\*s.

Our sincere thanks must go to Jonathan and Roger, to Judith and Rosemary for their exceptional hospitality, and of course to our President, John Wilson, for arranging the day.

**Helen Murphy**



**LONDON ORGAN DAY 2020.** The IAO's LOD 2020 - themed as a *Bach Kaleidoscope* - took place across the two venues of Union Chapel and St. John the Evangelist, Islington on Leap Year Day. This most enjoyable event was bookended with recitals by Tom Bell, the Artistic Director, in a cameo performance as W.T. Best, playing several of Best's arrangements on the Union Chapel 1877 Father Willis, and Martin Baker (as himself) on the 1963 Walker at St John's. We also heard about the *Organ Reframed* project at Union Chapel, recitals by Erwan Plaquin (winner of the Académie André Marchal competition *the Youthful Organ*) and by Adrian Gunning, and an appreciation of the Victorian organist Elizabeth Stirling by Eleanor Carter. LOD 2021- *Two Little Gems* - is already set for Saturday 6th March 2021 at St. Peter's, Vauxhall, with John Kitchen and Nicholas Wearne.

## ASSOCIATION NOTES AND NEWS

**New NDOA Website Launched.** After months of work and technical wizardry by our Past President, Alan Cufaude and his son Edward, a brand-new website has been launched, using the current address of [northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://northamptonorganists.org.uk). More details are on the back cover. Sincere thanks are also due to Paul Smith, son of our late Secretary, Roger, who built the previous website and has been most helpful in the changeover, and to Jonathan Harris for all his work on the old site. Association Officers now have [northamptonorganists.org.uk](mailto:northamptonorganists.org.uk) emails (see p.2) and we're also on Facebook @northamptonorganists.

**Midlands Organ Day and Recital - tickets now available online.** Tickets for the IAO Midlands Organ Day, and the St. Matthew's organ's 125th Anniversary Recital, both on 26th September are now online - see p.9 or visit [www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day).

The programme for the day is now finalised, and we feel that it will be a quite unique event which you will not want to miss. We have been able to bring together four of the organ world's finest musicians - all with Northampton connections - Simon Johnson, Organist and Assistant Director of Music at St. Paul's Cathedral; Richard Pinel, Director of Music at Jesus College, Cambridge; Andrew Reid, Managing Director of Harrison & Harrison; and Callum Alger, Organ Scholar at Westminster Cathedral. The day will include masterclasses led by Simon and Richard with contributions from Andrew and Callum, whilst in the evening all four artists will perform in a spectacular organ recital celebrating 125 years of the St Matthew's Walker, which has been described as 'the finest parish church organ in England.'

The day will also include an introductory talk about the organ by St. Matthew's DoM, Justin Miller and a short morning recital by Callum Alger. There will be the opportunity during the lunch break to play the organ of St Matthew's, together with those of All Saints' and New Testament Church of God, College St., and during the late afternoon, that of St Michael's Perry Street.

Pre-concert talks will be given by Harrison & Harrison on the restoration of the St Matthew's organ, and by Anna Hallett on the ground-breaking *Organ Manual* website. The day is jointly sponsored by Harrisons and Church Organ World, and Church Organ World will have digital organs to try, and their excellent range of organ music, CDs and DVDs available for purchase. We hope that by September it will be possible to run the day normally, and expect that this will be an exceptional day not to be missed.

**Lunchtime Live – Relunched.** Thursday, 6th February saw a welcome return to the latest 'Lunchtime Live' series at All Saints', Northampton, which again we look forward to resuming when possible. Our member Lee Dunleavy (former DoM at All Saints' between 2006 and 2014) kicked off the new series at the Chancel organ with a programme of Russian music – none of which I knew. He opened with the Passacaglia from *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District Op29* by Dimitri Shostakovich – a massive initial chord illustrating the moment she realises her fate, as Lee explained in his introduction. Alexander Shaverzashvili (who he?), in contrast with his near-contemporary Shostakovich, stayed in his native Georgia and kept his head below the parapet, thus avoiding the wrath of Stalin, but as a result, remained in obscurity (as least as far as the Western world was concerned). But we know about him now, and his Prelude and Fugue was a gentle delight – particularly the angular fugue.

Lee now headed for the Gallery organ for the final work, the three-movement *Uzbekistan Suite* by Georgi Mushel – Aria, Fugue and Toccata. Right at the start of the recital, Lee had drawn attention to the eastern modality pervading of all these



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6 February	Lee Dunleavy
5 March	Oliver Coss
2 April	Jem Lowther & Oona Lowther <i>Organ &amp; Cello Concert</i>
7 May	Paul Lavender
4 June	Laurence Caldecote
2 July	Matthew Foster

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works, with a strong folk-song background, especially apparent in the Aria from the Suite. So, all in all, this music was not a bit what I was expecting, that is, heavy, bombastic, heart-on-sleeve stuff (apart from Lady Macbeth's moment of realisation), being altogether more subtle, more yearning, more reflective, and with that gentle 'folk' element evident even in Mushel's Toccata. Thank you, Lee for an ear-opening, mind-opening programme. **Helen Murphy**

**Music for all at SMSG.** St Mary and St Giles, Stony Stratford ([www.musicforallsmg.org](http://www.musicforallsmg.org)) runs an outstanding music programme under the direction of its DoM, our Committee member Jonathan Kingston, with just some of the highlights being:

**Philip Bricher on St Nicholas's Day.** *Helen Murphy writes:* By the time you read this, all the commercial hoo-hah will be long over and we will have been forging ahead into a New Year and a welcome Spring... and who knows what?

But on St Nicholas's day, 6th December, Philip Bricher delighted his audience at St Mary and St Giles with his lunchtime recital of music for Christmas and Advent on its restored Willis (why not the more logical Advent and Christmas I'm not sure). Anyone who has heard Philip's programmes in the past will know that he shows great imagination in his choices, always offering us something unusual but relevant – in this case bearing in mind not only the Church's seasons but remembering three composers who all died in 2019 (Noel Rawsthorne, Peter Hurford and John Joubert) but not forgetting Berlioz too, the 150th anniversary of whose death also fell in 2019. At least this time I knew all the names – so often Philip throws in a new one for me; I don't know where he finds them, but they're always a delightful discovery. So, this time, including the four mentioned above, he also played seasonal pieces by Langlais, Reger and James Vivian. Thank you, Philip.

**First Friday recitals.** Philip's recital was one of the excellent bi-monthly First Friday recitals which are so popular at SMSG. The February recital was given by the 'gang of three' from our friends at the Buckinghamshire Organists' Association, Peter Willetts, Graham Nash and Francis Monkman (*pictured, right*) who delighted the audience on the SMSG Willis. Francis is scheduled to be back at SMSG on 5th June at 12.45pm, and it is great to be collaborating with the Bucks Association and the RSCM on the planned Young Organists' Day at SMSG.



**Young Organists' Day.** If virus arrangements allow, NDOA will co-host a Young Organists' Day at SMSG on Saturday 9th May from 10am to 1pm, led by Jonathan Kingston. Jonathan's experience and insight will be invaluable and we welcome all budding organists from 10-20 years to try the organ, to play a piece of their choice and to receive Jonathan's expert guidance. The day is free-of-charge to participants, but pre-booking is required, please, with John Wilson. John's contact details are on page 2.

**Members' CD Choice Afternoon.** A select group of NDOA members and friends gathered at Past President Alan Cufau's house on Saturday 11th January to share their CD choices and enjoy the thrills of Alan's whizz-bang equipment (Blu-ray? Bluetooth? Blue whale? Blue period? – oh no, that's Picasso!). Current President John Wilson welcomed everyone, noting events to come (particularly three out-of-county ones). Helen's offering was very apposite for two reasons: firstly, because she chose a piece, *Voluntary on 'Iste Confessor'*, by Colin Mawby (former Master of the Music at Westminster Cathedral) who had died just before Christmas and, secondly, because this piece was based on a plainsong hymn – and Liturgical Playing (which includes accompanying plainsong) is to be the theme of the planned Midlands

Organ Day, hosted by the NDOA, due to taking place on 26th September in St Matthew's , Northampton. Helen explained that the recording had been made in the shrine church of St Augustine (the Apostle of the English) in Ramsgate in 2015. St Augustine's had been fully restored after falling into disrepair by means of Heritage Lottery funding, work having been completed in 2012, when it was established as the national shrine. Since then, it has been functioning as a popular place of pilgrimage, with a complementary emphasis on the architect A.W.N. Pugin. (This is a long and interesting story, but for another time perhaps.) The organ was finally restored by means of a separate project in 2018 by Henry Willis & Sons, incorporating a new moveable console, with Neil Wright (of Farnborough Abbey) giving the inaugural recital. This recording however was made in 2015, with Thomas Neal playing Mawby's work on the plainsong hymn *Iste Confessor* and David Bevan accompanying the plainsong, sung by the men of the Victoria Consort.

As a contrast to a full-on Latin Mass (from which the previous choice was taken) NDOA President John Wilson outlined the typical Christian Science liturgy to which he was accustomed, which would consist of an organ prelude, an offertory, three hymns and an organ postlude and we heard Reger's Fugue on 'Wachet Auf' played by Brian Ashley on the large Aeolian-Skinner instrument in the First Church of Christ Scientist in Boston, USA. Robert Tucker's choice was Stanford's *For lo I raise up* sung by the choir of St. John's College, Cambridge, with Christopher Robinson at the organ.

John's wife Phylis and daughter Rosanne jointly chose an excerpt from Walt Disney's *Fantasia*, with the amazing (or not, according to your view!) orchestration by Stokowski of Bach's *Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor* – not only an aural but also a visual delight (however, those with synaesthesia would have their own unique images to revel in) – for which we were all appreciative of the aforementioned wizard equipment. Alan's wife Gabriela, an avid organ fan, gave us JSB's *Kyrie Gott Heiliger Geist BWV 671*, from the *Klavier-Übung*, played by Brian Ashley on the Aeolian-Skinner in Boston, as above.

David Blackwell's *Triumphal March on 'Lux Eoi'* (Sullivan's splendid tune, usually sung to that rousing Easter hymn, 'Alleluia, alleluia, Hearts to heaven and voices raise') was offered to us by Philip Bricher – who it turned out was also the organist on this recording made in St. Margaret's church in Leicester in May 2019.

At this point we adjourned for tea – a lavish spread of interesting savoury snacks and cakes, including mince pies (we were after all, still in the 'old' Christmas season, concluding at Candlemas on Feb 2nd) and a special 'organ' cake created by Rosanne (see photo, right). Appetites sated and belts loosened, we resumed our seats to tackle the quiz, set by John, which proved to be rather hard – even the winner, Philip, only managed 11/20. Try it yourself on p.14!

It needed Honorary NDOA member Simon Johnson, former DoM at All Saints' Northampton and current organist at St Paul's Cathedral, London, to bring us back to organ reality, by courtesy again of Alan's exemplary equipment, by means of a DVD whereby Simon talked about the organ there and all the pieces on the DVD – how they had been 'enhanced and enriched' at various times and by various people from a simpler original (not unlike Stokowski's orchestration above). That was certainly true of the piece Alan chose – the so-called *Trumpet Voluntary* by Jeremiah Clarke (long thought, erroneously, to be by Purcell), originally known as *The Prince of Denmark's March* – a basic two-part jolly piece in rondo form, but seriously 'bigged up' wherever and whenever it is played, and particularly so on this most magnificent of instruments.



We had enjoyed a convivial afternoon among friends, as ever, and left full of cake and the feeling that perhaps things weren't quite as bad as they often seem. Thank you, Alan and Gabriela for the hospitality and to John, Phylis and Rosanne for the scrumptious food.

**Helen Murphy**

## NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

### PROGRAMME OF EVENTS FOR 2020

**In view of the Covid-19 situation at the time of going to press please consult our website or Facebook pages for confirmation of events in due course**

**YOUNG ORGANISTS' DAY** jointly with RSCM and Bucks OA. **Saturday 9th May 10am - 1pm**  
St Mary & St Giles, Stony Stratford - hosted by Jonathan Kingston.

**VISIT TO SOUTHWELL MINSTER**

**Saturday 6th June**

**VISIT TO THORPE UNDERWOOD** (house organ) **AND HARRINGTON CHURCH**

**Saturday 18th July 2pm– 5pm**

Visit to Benedict Cadbury's house organ at Thorpe Underwood and to Harrington Church: talk on the Northamptonshire Villages Church Organ Trust.

**PRESIDENT'S GARDEN PARTY FUNDRAISER** **Bank Holiday Monday 31st August 2pm**  
84 Headlands, Kettering, NN15 5DQ. Garden Party 2pm; Tea from 4pm.

**MIDLANDS ORGAN DAY**

**Saturday 26th September 10am**

St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. IAO Regional Organ Day focusing on liturgical playing, including a short recital by Callum Alger (Westminster Cathedral) and masterclasses hosted by Simon Johnson (St. Paul's Cathedral) and Richard Pinel (Jesus College, Cambridge) with Andrew Reid (Harrison & Harrison). Open consoles will be available at St Matthew's and other local churches. Followed by:

**ORGAN RECITAL WITH SIMON JOHNSON, RICHARD PINEL, ANDREW REID AND CALLUM ALGER**

**Saturday 26th September, 7pm**

St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, celebrating the 125th anniversary of the J.W. Walker organ - *'the finest parish church organ in England.'*

*See inside (p.9) or [northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://northamptonorganists.org.uk) for more details and tickets for the Organ Day and Recital.*

**RELUCTANT ORGANISTS' AFTERNOON**

**Saturday 17th October, time tba**

Hardwick Parish Church, hosted by Tony Edwards.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND INAUGURATION**

**Saturday 7th November, 3pm**

St. Mary Magdalene, Castle Ashby, followed by Evensong at 4pm.

More details from our President, John F. Wilson at [johnfwilson@btopenworld.com](mailto:johnfwilson@btopenworld.com) or 01536 518941.

### NDOA ON THE WEB

**[www.northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk)**

Check out our brand-new website, with more about NDOA, our response in these difficult times, how to join us, our events programme (and any changes), and selected concerts promoted by our members. You will also find contacts for members willing to deputise at weddings, funerals and Sunday services, and links to other organ resources. For organ students - and those who would like to learn - there are details of those of our members who offer organ teaching; of local churches which offer organ scholarships, and scholarships and bursaries offering financial support to learn the organ.

Find us also on Facebook @NorthamptonOrganists