

# The Journal

Number 67

Spring 2009



Published by the  
Norfolk Organists Association

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For your diary		

*Last date for copy for the next Journal is Saturday 23rd May 2009*  
*Why not send your contribution by email*  
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### *The editor writes.....*

I occasionally dip into one of my favourite books entitled *Lexicon of Musical Invective* which is a collection of the writings of music critics giving their views of the new works of those whom we now regard as the great composers. It is highly amusing as some of the compositions which were written off as rubbish have turned out to be the most lasting in the repertoire and true masterpieces. Here are some extracts:

- *Beethoven's second symphony is a crass monster, a hideously writhing wounded dragon that refuses to expire, and though bleeding in the Finale, furiously beats about with its tail erect.*
- *Beethoven's eighth symphony depends wholly on its last movement for what applause it obtains; the rest is eccentric without being amusing and laborious without effect.*
- *Beethoven often sounds to me like the upsetting of bags of nails, with here and there an also dropped hammer.*
- *Berlioz, musically speaking, is a lunatic; a classical composer only in Paris, the great city of quacks. His music is simply and undisguisedly nonsense. He is a kind of orchestral Liszt, than which I could name nothing more intensely disagreeable.*
- *There is in Brahms's C minor symphony an iteration and reiteration of mere fragmentary ideas...which makes it simply tiresome, and the opening movement is suggestive of The Lord Chancellor's song in Iolanthe. The orchestra did wonderfully good work in all this tiresome waste of endless harmony.*

- *Of the four movements of Brahms's fourth symphony the first has at least a semblance of vitality in it; but like the other three movements it is characterised by Brahms's besetting sin - a profuse lack of ideas.*
- *How blessed are they who are born deaf and are spared the agony of listening to the hideous sounds of Symphony No. 3 by Roy Harris performed by the BBC's Symphony Orchestra. Roy Harris should have stuck to truck driving instead of insulting music-lovers with his senseless noise.*
- *We shall say very little about M Liszt's compositions. His music is all but unplayable by anyone but himself; it represents improvisations without order and without ideas, as pretentious as they are bizarre.*
- *Liszt's orchestral music is an insult to art. It is gaudy musical harlotry, savage and incoherent bellowings.*
- *Mahler had not much to say in his Fifth Symphony and occupied a wondrous time in saying it. His manner is ponderous, his matter imponderable.*
- *Saint-Saëns has, I suppose, written as much music as any composer ever did; he has certainly written more rubbish than anyone I can think of. It is the worst most rubbishy kind of rubbish.*
- *We looked in vain (in Schumann's Allegro, op 8) for a steadily developing melody, for a harmony that would hold for even one bar - everywhere only bewildering combinations of figurations, dissonances, transitions, in brief, for us, torture.*
- *Like other so-called innovators, Dr Schumann is essentially as trivial in idea and as poor in resource as the most intolerable of the 'Philistines'.*

- *I found the Second Symphony of Sibelius vulgar, self-indulgent and provincial beyond all description.*
- *Herr Wagner, a noisy and empty pretender, with a host of satellites such as Brahms, Raff, Bruch, Liszt (perhaps the very worst composer that ever existed), could no more achieve an oratorio like Pierson's Jerusalem than they could write a tragedy like Hamlet.*
- *The debauchery of the Meistersinger is the maddest assault ever made upon art, taste, music and poetry.*
- *To hear a whole programme of Ravel's works is like watching some midget or pygmy doing clever, but very small, things within a limited scope. Moreover, the almost reptilian cold-bloodedness which one suspects of having been consciously cultivated, of most of M Ravel's music is almost repulsive when heard in bulk; even its beauties are like the markings on snakes and lizards.*
- *Reger's Quartet op. 109 looks like music, it sounds like music, it might even taste like music; yet it remains, stubbornly, not music. Reger might be epitomised as a composer whose name is the same either forward or backward, and whose music, curiously, often displays the same characteristic.*

The writers of these observations were all music critics employed by august publications, The Times, The New York Tribune, Musical Opinion, The New York Times, Deutsche Zeitung, Critique et Littérature Musicales and so forth. They were all, one assumes, appointed by those publications on the strength of their musical knowledge and expertise and no doubt their opinions carried some weight.

One is tempted to wonder by what criteria reviewers are appointed by the newspapers and magazines which we encounter, in particular the local papers, the EDP and Evening News.

A recent review in the EDP by a theatre critic who had been to see *Romeo and Juliet* at the Theatre Royal seemed plausible enough until he exposed his ignorance of the English language and the plight of Juliet by making an absurd observation about that moment in the play when Juliet utters the words "wherefore art thou Romeo?". What credence could one thereafter place on anything written by someone who clearly didn't understand what he was watching, and how did he come to be the EDP's Theatre Critic?!

Readers will no doubt remember the reviews by CVR (Charles Roberts) who could be waspish but who certainly knew what he was talking about. His reviews of amateur productions often failed to make allowances for the shortcomings of amateur producers and performers for he judged everything by the standards of polished professionals. Yet amateur groups could, if they so chose, learn from his comments and improve.

It could be said that some of the critiques published above are less than helpful and nearly all are dismissive but I am sure that the creative geniuses, whilst being annoyed, even upset by the comments, still carried on writing the music they felt they were destined to pass on to the world. Let's face it, most geniuses are ahead of their time.



## *Cathedrals outreach project*

*David Lowe*

Norwich Cathedral and Norfolk County Music Service have won £35,000 of government funding for a singing project set up in conjunction with St John's Roman Catholic Cathedral and Norwich School. The scheme has already been hugely over-subscribed and will involve some 750 young singers from 12 primary schools, in the first year. Beverly Downes, Norfolk's Choral Animateur, together with the Cathedral Choristers and Master of the Music, David Lowe, will visit all the schools, singing for and with the children. Music teachers will be provided with in-service vocal training and the Cathedral's five Choral Scholars will play an important role as trainee singing leaders. The children will also visit the Cathedral to sing and have tea with the Choristers, then stay on to watch the preparations for Evensong.

The first two visits have been great fun. Once the children get used to singing into the Cathedral acoustic they seem every bit as inspired by it as those who are lucky enough to sing here every day. The Choristers enjoy showing off their skills to such a receptive audience and Messrs Dunnett and Primrose demonstrating the Cathedral organ is a great hit – especially David Dunnett's rendition of *The Simpsons'* theme tune!"

Starting in February, the plan is to form a Children's Chorus for a concert to take place in St John's Cathedral in June 2009. All the children on the scheme will perform in the Norfolk County Music Festival. This is Phase One of a projected three year scheme, hopefully leading to performances of an opera for children in

both Cathedrals. It is a very exciting prospect, providing cross-discipline education and experience in movement, music, arts and crafts.

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### *Have you ever wondered how they fix the date of Easter?*

This has, over the centuries been the cause of much controversy with no shortage of different theories and systems. Several Popes have had their hand in it and there have been excommunications of those whose approach differed. In 1997 at a summit in Aleppo, Syria, the World Council of Churches proposed a reform of the method of determining the date of Easter which would be defined as the first Sunday following the first astronomical full moon following the astronomical vernal equinox as determined from the meridian of Jerusalem. The reform should have been implemented in 2001 after which the Eastern and Western dates for Easter would coincide. However it has not, as yet, been implemented.

In the Western Church, Easter has not fallen on the earliest of the 35 possible dates, March 22nd since 1818, and will not do so again until 2285. It fell on March 23rd in 2008, but will not do so again until 2160. Easter last fell on the latest possible date, April 25th in 1943 and will next fall on that date in 2038. However, it will fall on April 24th just one day before this latest possible date, in 2011.

The cycle of Easter dates repeats after exactly 5,700,000 years, with April 19th being the most common date, happening 220,400 times, or 3.9% compared to a median for all dates of 189,525 times, or 3.3%.

*It was only last year...*

*Martin J Cottam*

Association members will be aware that, for various reasons, some of last year's events did not receive the usual written report in the pages of the Journal. I will now try and rectify those unfortunate omissions:

**March 1st:** Despite various enforced absences a goodly number of members gathered in the parish church at Thorpe St Andrew to enjoy a rich and full evening hosted by the resident organist, Andrew Hayden. The church houses a very fine organ built in 1901 by Abbott & Smith of Leeds and Andrew began the evening by ably demonstrating its various qualities and colours in a short recital.

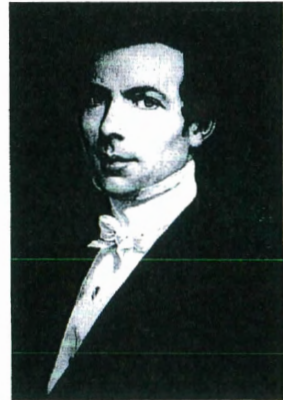
The instrument possesses an unusually pure, bright and clear chorus for its date, even more notable given the complete lack of Mixtures. The top end sings rather than shrieks. The influence of the great German builder, Schulze is apparent.

After delivering a detailed talk on the instrument's history Andrew enjoyed a rare opportunity to hear the organ from the main body of the nave for himself as members availed themselves of the chance to play. Standing at the back of the nave, he and I savoured the singing quality of the Great Fifteenth only to discover on returning to the console that Tim Patient had actually been playing on the Swell throughout using the Octave Coupler!

We ended our visit in the choir vestry where we were treated to a slide show of Andrew's marvellous and regularly published photographs of organs, large and small. Capturing the way an instrument relates to its

surroundings is an important component of Andrew's photography. He is building a most precious visual archive to be passed on for the research and delight of future generations of organ lovers and historians.

**April 26th:** Brooke Methodist Chapel was the venue for my own talk on the great 19th century French organ builder, Aristide Cavailé-Coll (1811-99). With the aid of recordings made on organs of all sizes spanning the entire career of this master builder I sought to highlight a comprehensive array of qualities that lift his instruments to the highest echelons of the craft, the far reaching innovations, the craftsmanship, the genius of the voicing resulting in an array of singularly beautiful individual colours that possess an uncanny ability to blend together into an ensemble that does not cloy but retains remarkable transparency as well as power.



I also highlighted the immense influence Cavallé-Coll's instruments had in directly inspiring a whole school of organ composition from the likes of César Franck to Messiaen and beyond. His initiative in securing lessons for the young Widor and Guilmant with the Belgian organist Lemmens gave rise to a new



discipline in French organ playing; the flowering of an almost unparalleled generation of organist composers that resulted (Vierne, Tournemire, Bonnet, Dupré, Duruflé et al) is further testimony to Cavallé-Coll's legacy and greatness.

**June 21st:** The grey, dismal, drizzle mizzle weather (portent of the dullest of summers) did its best to cloak the glories of the West Norfolk churches to which an intrepid band of members journeyed in search of organ and architectural treasure; but they could not be obscured. Guided by the hospitable and informed hand of Michael Whitehall (organist at West Walton) we began our tour at the mighty church of Walpole St Peter.

A worthy addition to the notable fittings for which this church is famed, the 1997 Boggis organ stands just ahead of the soaring west tower arch. Though comprising only 14 stops spread across 2 manuals and pedals, the organ's tone penetrates well into the main body of the church without being unnecessarily forceful. There is sufficient variety of colour to cope with a remarkably wide range of repertoire and the organ was more pleasant to my ear than I'd been led to expect. Such a shame a colony of bats are allowed to add their decorative spottings to the shiny showpipes. Higher authorities than the Church insist the bats are more important than those who tend and use the building.



Bats are a problem too at West Walton church where we ventured next after a satisfyingly tasty and filling 'Lite Bite' lunch at the adjacent King of Hearts pub. The sublime 13th century Early English interior is blighted by the protective sheets of polythene draped over the nave chairs but the organ here is of peculiar interest. Its origins are obscure but it contains a significant amount of early 18th century pipework of unusually large, straight line scaling.

Of just 8 stops disposed across one manual and pedal this fascinating instrument possesses a power that belies its size. It is also capable of withstanding the most bizarre and inadvisable stop combinations. 'Gap' registrations such as Open Diapason + 3 rank Sesquialtera or Stopped Diapason + Twelfth really shouldn't work but somehow they do! In some mysterious and quite wonderful way voicing, scaling, and accoustic conspire to fill in the missing harmonics. Remarkable! Of more familiar tradition is the large Harrison & Harrison/Richard Bower instrument that threatens to burst out of its enclosure at the end of the south aisle in St. Peter's Church, Wisbech. Here we ended our tour, several members availing themselves of the opportunity to repel all boarders with Tuba blast.

This last instrument was the highlight of the day for some, the epitome of the English organ for liturgical accompaniment. For others, the smaller instruments proved more intriguing and even, dare I suggest, more resourceful. How fortunate to be able to explore such differences amidst such architectural splendours in such close proximity to each other... regardless of the weather's attempts to put a dampener on proceedings.

*The composer speaks – Professor Peter Aston St Peter's Brooke*

*David Watson*

The guest speaker at our February meeting needed little introduction to a Norfolk audience. Now holding the title of Professor Emeritus after 25 years distinguished service to the music department at UEA, Peter Aston has made an outstanding contribution to the musical life of East Anglia as academic, performer and composer. Many of his works have been written for the church, and it was therefore highly appropriate that his recent 70<sup>th</sup> birthday was celebrated by a service of choral evensong at Blythburgh at which all the music was from his pen. Who better to talk to the Association about writing music for the church?

So vast a subject had to be brought within bounds, and Dr Aston explained that he had chosen to base his talk around seven choral compositions of his own, written at various times over the past four decades. They all had in common the fact that they were written in response to commissions, and he would say something about the way in which the piece reflected the precise nature of the commission and then comment on the piece itself.

It might be thought that too specific demands could prove a straightjacket, but Dr Aston said that very often they added spice to the challenge. Thus, when asked to write a piece for the cathedral choirs to celebrate Norwich's 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary the challenge was to put the girls' choir in the chancel and the men and boys in the nave stalls and have them performing together, with the conductors communicating via CCTV.

Perhaps the most extreme example was the church which wrote to say that their choir had a very good soprano line, and a superb tenor, only he would be away on the occasion of the performance; there was a fine bass, but he usually sang the treble part an octave lower; oh, and the organist had just quarreled with the Vicar and been sacked, and the assistant organist wrote separately to say that he suffered badly from nerves and wasn't too sure about the pedals. A commission from the underworld, you might think. Far from it. We heard the result; a charming setting of verses from psalm 47, with nary a hint of the difficulties which lay beneath the surface.

Dr Aston said that behind his music there lay a determination to use traditional means in new ways. He agreed with Debussy when he said that "sounds should be allowed to be themselves"; in looking for a new syntax for chord relationships there was a place for dissonance which did not necessarily have to be carefully prepared for. A particular feature of several of the pieces we heard was modulation to the Mediant, which was almost becoming a 'signature' technique. As a pianist he confessed that he sometimes found the organ troublesome, particularly jumpy pedal parts! Several of his pieces were written for a summer school in Nevada; American amateur choirs were first rate, except for the wobble, and so long as they were not expected to sight read. Once they had learned the music from demo tapes things were fine. Mind you, some continental choirs also found sight reading difficult, having been brought up on sol fa. He had always admired the sightsinging skills of British choirs, but felt that they were in danger of being eroded in recent years.



The final piece we heard will be of particular interest to those of the Association who will be taking part in this year's RSCM Festival in the Cathedral; Dr Aston's lively setting of the Jubilate having been chosen as the first choral item in the festival booklet. I am sure that we will all sing it with much greater understanding having been privileged to gain so fascinating an insight into the mind of the composer.

### *Quiz and chips*

*Ronald Watson*

Once again this event brightened up the dark and cold of mid-winter, this year in the splendid facilities of Holy Trinity church in Norwich.

Some members arrived a little early to afford themselves time to have a go on the church's organ but the events proper were underway by 7.30 pm with those present forming themselves into five teams.

Martin Cottam had devised a varied collection of brain teasers, not all of a musical nature. (How many Doctor Whos can you name?). The fish and chips were nice and hot and extremely tasty and the pitting of wits against the questions provided much amusement and entertainment.

Thanks are due to Martin, and to Mathew who went to collect the food, and to those at Holy Trinity who let us loose in their church and on the organ.

### *Visit to Holland October 2008*

*John Plunkett*

Ginny and I needed to make a visit to Hanover last October, and, if we had gone only for the two days required, the ferry costs would not be best spent, so as usual we stretched it to five. We enjoy the Netherlands, and as we often fail to get access to some of their smaller churches, I thought I would try to make some arrangements to play, hear and examine some organs in Holland.

At the opening of St Anne's Limehouse restored organ, I was introduced to one of Robert Shaftoe's customers, Gerard Verloop. We had not been talking very long, when he extended an invitation to visit him and his wife when we were next passing through. Gerard collects house organs, has published the well known Journal "de Mixtuur" for many years, and has been the driving force behind numerous wonderful organ projects. A phone call confirmed his keenness to help us, explaining that some of the more famous instruments would be worn out by continuous use if made more accessible, but he would fix something for us. We left it all to him.

Come the day, we trundled down to Harwich, took the overnight Stena Line ferry to the Hook; sea slight, captain's class cabin, twin beds (not bunks) complimentary wine and goodies, slept well, good breakfast, off ferry a bit late, morning tea in Alkmaar, and later, lunch. The Grote Kerk, which is in the care of the council, was locked, even a peep inside was impossible. So, somewhat behind schedule we made our way to Schagen to meet Gerard.

First call was at Kolhorn, where we encountered a small instrument built circa 1725, (builder unknown) for a church in Purmerend, moved here in 1892, and restored for a second time by Flentrop in 1987. One manual, 4 octaves, C compass, one octave of permanently coupled pedals, wisely from bottom C! Stops Prestant 8, Holpijp 8, Octaaf 4, Fluit 4, Quint 3, Cornet III, Pedal Aangehangen. See, you have learned some Dutch already! It stands cantilevered slightly from the front of the west gallery in this small but lofty building. The dynamic range is remarkable, endless registrations are useable. The player sits behind the organ, on a stool mounted on a box two feet above gallery level, and faces east, but with no step to help you up, and no view of proceedings.

Here we learned something new. Gerard's wife Neli, now in her 80s learned the organ in Amsterdam under the organist of the Oude Kerk, (the job Sweelinck once had). With limited sight, she explored the various registers, paused briefly for thought, introduced a psalm or choral melody, and improvised in traditional Dutch fashion, known as "breecken der psalmen". Nothing was said, but this clearly came from the soul. It was between her and God. We were moved.

I had the honour of blowing the organ using the two foot levers which raise the feeder bellows. This is an art in itself. While one is falling under gravity the other is charged and released before the first runs out. It is interesting to discover that the human blower can introduce the occasional expressive shake or pitch variation to decorate earlier styles of music. I wonder if this was ever done by arrangement. You must pay attention!

Next call was Lambertschaag where we found a two manual organ (16 8 8 4 4 3 2 III & 8 8 4 4 2 , Pedaal Aangehangen) on the west gallery, with components from the 16<sup>th</sup> (Gt. chest) 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, united in 1866 by L. van Dam & Zn in 1866. The console was on the North side of the beautiful case, offering a view of the proceedings at the expense of more complex action layout. Ginny was disappointed that once again we had only permanently coupled pedals, and her favourite pieces would not really work.

Last call on day one was back in Schagen at the R. C. St. Christoforuskerk where the face of serendipity smiled upon us. There in the North transept of this spacious building stood the John Nicholson of 1878 which had once graced the church of St. Mary Magdalene in Worcester, and was rescued by BIOS and Gerard, and restored, delivered and rebuilt as original here in Holland, by Bishops of Ipswich under John Budgen, with Harold Gilbert, foreman. It was opened by our NOA friend, Francis Jackson in 1981.

The specification is:

*Great* 16 8 8 8 8 4 4 2 IV 8

*Swell* 16 8 8 8 8 4 4 2 3 8 8

*Choir* 8 8 8 4 2 8

*Pedal* 16 16 8 16

As expected, a bold and exciting sound from Victorian England. The organist Tsjeward van de Ploeg, a great English church music enthusiast, introduced it with Parry, and handed over to Ginny, who played Andrew Carter's *Trumpet Tune*, followed by *Andantino* by Denis Bédard. It was pleasing to discover when talking to David Watson recently that this was the very organ on which he had learnt to play.

*To be continued*



## *A Peep into the Archives 11*

*Compiled by Tim Patient*

*From Issue No.29, July 1974:*

The old Hill organ which had previously stood in St Giles' Norwich and then in Horsford Parish Church has been found a new home in Itteringham Parish Church where it stands at the west end of the Nave.

Oulton Parish Church contains the 'Home-made' organ by Archie E Chaffey of Cawston, many of the pipes are made of cardboard, and this has been restored and replaced in the church, as yet, still minus its pedalboard, the work having been carried out as a labour of love by Messrs E & W Storr. They were also responsible for moving the organ from Horsford to Itteringham and have also recently completed restoration work on the organ originally built by A S and J Godball in St George, Tombland, Norwich.

On September 14<sup>th</sup> next, a Saturday, the Guild will welcome Miss Gillian Weir to Norwich where she is to give a master-class at the Cathedral. Three of the four students taking part are Guild Members and your committee is asking all members to come along to the Cathedral at 11 am both to welcome Miss Weir and to support the students. There will be a Public Recital at 7.30 pm.

*From Issue No. 30, October 1974:*

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> July saw one of the largest gatherings of Guild members for some time eager to sample an 'Organ Crawl'. The weather was excellent and in keeping with the instruments we were to visit during the course of the day. Our first stop was at Redenhall church near Harleston. Standing as it does alongside

the main road from Diss to the coast, it is frequently missed by those on pleasures bent. Here the organ is an early Holdich, 1843. A joy to see, standing on the west gallery, it was first demonstrated to us by the organist and then members were able to have the pleasure of trying this fine 'old-world' instrument for themselves. Our next port of call was Fressingfield, where Archbishop Sancroft lies buried. The organ here was the old 'Father' Willis of 1864 which stood in the Savoy Chapel, London, until 1939 when it was ousted by an early Hammond! Bought for this church at a cost of £55 it was re-erected in singularly unfortunate position, being crammed into the north chancel chapel with the organist in the unfortunate position of having to sit almost in complete isolation in the vestry, unable to hear or see what might be going on in the church. Hill, Norman & Beard carried out the removal which, together with a new case and necessary alterations, cost then a further £295. Boggis of Diss last overhauled the organ in the early 1960s and our Editor, organist here for a time, himself added some of the prepared-for ranks. The organist told us that it had to be used as if it was two organs, playing with the manuals coupled was a near physical impossibility, as we were to find out for ourselves and he then gave a short demonstration of its tonal qualities before allowing us the freedom of the console. How much better it would have sounded had it been placed at the west end of this church, as it was at the Savoy Chapel, is a matter of conjecture, certainly the blank west nave wall at Fressingfield would have allowed it to stand without alteration and to a far better acoustic advantage. Here, at Fressingfield, we were able to partake of an excellent lunch then, the

inner man being satisfied, we made our way back to the quaint market town of Beccles where, unfortunately because of a wedding, we were unable to see and try the organ in the Parish Church. This seemed of little consequence as we were made most welcome at the Martyrs Memorial Baptist Church. Here was the most modern instrument we were to see on this day, an Abbott and Smith of 1925, originally built for Millinghall Methodist Church, Harrogate. It was purchased from that church on its closure and was re-erected here, with the addition of a 4ft rank on the great, also by Abbott & Smith and from the now dispersed organ from Magdalen Road Congregational Church, Norwich, by Wood, Wordsworth & Co. of Leeds and opened in 1972. This had been a partly 'do-it-yourself' job, as the organ, placed at the east end of the church on the north side, and standing at ground-level, meant that the gallery above had to be removed and this not inconsiderable task had been undertaken by church members under our Guild Member, Mr Ernest Thompson. Although relatively small, this organ sounded extremely well in the building and after Mr Thompson had most ably demonstrated it to us, making it sound far larger than the nine stops it contains, once again the console was thrown open to us. At this church, Mr and Mrs Ernest Thompson had invited us to tea and a most lavish spread awaited us in the church hall. Here, thanks were suitably expressed to them and to their willing helpers who made this visit so enjoyable.

On then to Framlingham, where the fine Perpendicular Church with unusually good acoustic properties contains one of England's major historic organs. Originally build for Pembroke College

Cambridge at an unknown date, Thamar of Peterborough built a new organ in which he incorporated some of the older one and used the old case. When, in 1708, 'Father' Smith built a new organ for the college, the old one was given to Framlingham and set upon the west gallery, complete with its case. Byfield is known to have worked on the organ in 1751 and, much later, in 1898, Alfred Hunter rebuilt the organ adding a full compass Swell and removing the instrument from the west gallery to the north chancel aisle. At the same time, the Trumpet and Cornet were removed from the Great and the gallery was found a new home in Framlingham Castle. In 1969, as part of the scheme for restoring this church, plans were drawn up for the restoration of the organ which was once again placed on its gallery, now given back to the Church from the Castle, the careful restoration of the casework and the organ itself. This was entrusted to Mr John Budgen of Bishop & Son and, amongst other work carried out, it included the replacing of the great Cornet, the pipes of which had been providentially found hidden in the Vicarage loft, the addition of a matching Trumpet, thus making the entire Great, with the exception of the Trumpet and a few Cornet pipes, to consist of 17<sup>th</sup> century pipework. The Swell is a mixture of old and new pipework as is also the Pedal, ingeniously hidden by the screen below the gallery. This organ was nearly scrapped at one time, and the Rector, Canon Martin Bulstrode, gave us, in his welcoming talk, a short history of what might have happened had one firm of nationally known organ builders been allowed to work on the instrument and Mr Geoffrey Hannant, who later gave us a



superb recital on the organ, told us more of the technical details. It was with the greatest pleasure that we sat in this gem of English Church architecture with the evening sun shining brightly through the great west window to hear the masterly playing of Mr Hannant. His choice of music was such that almost every school was represented: his execution and his articulate playing were superb and one felt that it was a pity that the day had to end. However, we were also allowed the freedom of this console.

So many of our members turned out for this day's programme that those responsible must have been extremely pleased. Everything went off so smoothly and it was a thoughtful and very much appreciated gesture to provide a sheet giving the short histories of and the specification of the various instruments we were to hear and try during the course of the day, attractively produced with a line-drawing of the Framlingham organ included. We should also be grateful for the few words about each instrument as we arrived at the respective Churches. Altogether, a most enjoyable and successful day.

*James Lilwall has extended a warm invitation to anyone who wishes to try the new Makin organ in Bawdeswell church. If you would like to take him up on this offer 'phone him on 01362688499 or email pjililwall@hotmail.com*

## **Organ news**

*Geoff Sankey*

W & A Boggis have repaired wood worm damaged wooden pipes on the Glasspoole organ at Forncett St Peter Methodist Church. This single manual and pedal organ built in 1903 is reputed to be the only surviving organ actually built by Glasspoole Bros of Wymondham which was supposed to have been built from new and has not been altered since. As a result of this, it has been awarded a BIOS Historic Organ Certificate.

Given the bad weather this winter, it is not surprising that they have done repairs on two organs as a result of water damage: these were at St Catherine's Church Norwich and Holy Trinity Church, Blythburgh (the latter of course being an instrument built by Rodney Briscoe). They have moved the one manual organ from the redundant St Peter's Church Thetford to the Chapel at Thetford Crematorium.

They have also finished building the replica organ for Hempnall Church. This is now installed in the church, replacing the Lincoln organ, which was sold in the autumn and relocated to Marjon College in Plymouth. This new instrument is at present hired from W&A Boggis by Hempnall Church and is available for sale.

We had hoped for an update from Richard Bower on his work at Cawston, but unfortunately he has not yet been able to supply this. Watch this space!

## *We are making progress*

*Ralph Bootman*

Reading about the new instrument in Bawdeswell parish church I was reminded of other electronic instruments in the county and diocese, some dating from decades ago. Perhaps some readers do not know that Norwich Cathedral had one! After the fire within the old organ before the war, a Hammond organ was offered as a stop-gap until something more suitable was available and this early instrument received much praise at the time. 'You really cannot tell the difference' wrote one reporter after hearing a recital given on it! What would he have thought of today's instruments? Another of the pioneers was the Constant Martin organ with 3m and pedals installed in St George's Catholic Church in Sprowston Road. Visiting members of the Organ Club and other Associations were anxious to hear and play it for themselves and came from far and wide to do so. Much was made of the 'loudspeaker', a specially designed concrete horn with a final opening some 12 feet square! The Catholic Cathedral of St John now has an electronic organ taking the place of the old Norman Brothers instrument which came from the old Catholic Chapel, Maddermarket. This was intended as a stop-gap until the old organ ex the Chapel in the Tower of London can be installed.

Several of the other Catholic churches within the city boundaries have electronic instruments, of varying degrees of 'authenticity', today. A two manual Compton 'Electrone' was installed in St Gregory's, Norwich in the 1960s and members of the Organ Club on a visit to the city, actually queued up to try it in preference to the fine Norman & Beard in

the church. Smaller, one manual Comptons with a divided and coloured keyboard allowing a solo melody to be played with the right hand and a suitable accompaniment with the left, were to be found in the parish churches at Attlebridge and Raveningham. Many instruments were actually built here in the city by Constant Martin and found their way into churches and chapels both here and abroad. Later the company became known as Norwich Organs, now making some excellent organs, that at Felmingham is a fine example of their work, and another, again a very fine installation, is to be found in Holt parish church.

Many churches greeted the earlier organs with open arms and simply did not use their old pipe organ which was, perhaps needing some restoration. With no annual tuning costs, an electronic instrument would actually save the church money! I well remember, at Stoke Holy Cross, watching as the old 3m Hunter was wantonly destroyed by some male members of the church pushing and shoving it back into the organ chamber, greeting with great joy the advent of an instrument by Compton-Edwards, which, if I remember aright, had the same stops on the Great as it did on the Swell except for a reed, and with the peculiar compass of just 60 notes, which was playable as soon as it was plugged in and switched on. Dereham Road Baptist church was well served by good organists but wanted something better than their two manual Norman & Beard. So they sold this to a school in Lincolnshire and installed what was then a state of the art electronic by Allen and which continues to sound well. Many churches bought organs which were most unsuitable for church use, so called



'theatre' or 'home' instruments, with, perhaps, an octave of straight pedals capable of being played by left foot toes only. They had weird and wonderful gadgets on them, Tremelos of variable depth and speed, 'wow-wow', pre-set rhythm effects and stops with names which bore absolutely no affinity to the names on the stop-tabs. One 'gem' had a simple device to act as general swell, a volume control knob as on a radio! Such was progress. However, as time passed, these electronic organs became better and better and today we have instruments which imitate the pipe organ to such a degree that it is impossible to know whether the organ sound is being produced by pipes or by loudspeakers as has been proved by fair and open trials.

There have been several highly successful attempts combining electronic additions to conventional pipe organs. Hill, Norman & Beard added electronically produced pedal stops in the 1930s, notably at St Mary Abbots Kensington, but because suitable loudspeakers were not available then, the idea was not pursued until after the war. With the advance of electronics, however, experiments proved that not only bass notes were now possible, but that far more 'original pipe organ' sounds could be produced for the manuals. These were a far cry from the sounds we have come to expect and appreciate in the 21st century. Only recently a leading organ builder was expelled from one of the organ builders Trade Associations, for working with a foreign builder on a pipe/electronic, and highly successful project. Progress cannot be halted and now this 'marriage' is becoming accepted.

Compton's sometimes added electronic sections to their pipe organs

and a good example of this was to be found in the Central Hall, Great Yarmouth where the third manual was entirely electronic. Alas, electronic systems had limited life as components, such as valves, wore out, and this organ was sold to a private individual near Diss.

Newer and far more realistic electronic organs have taken the place of old pipe organs or have been combined with them and there is an excellent example of this combination at West Runton. Here is an extension organ built by Williamson & Hyatt, high up at the west end of the church but it was of little use in supporting the choir, away in the chancel. A new electronic section and a third manual have been added by Hugh Blanton Organs with loudspeaker systems situated at both the west end and in the chancel. It is an excellent 'marriage'.

Certainly there has been a large increase in the number of private house installations and there are many in Norwich itself with others around the county.

Several members of the Association are the proud possessors of electronic organs and, no doubt, prefer to practise at home on a winter's day, rather than make a journey to a cold church in order to do so. Whether we like it or not, they are here to stay and one wonders just what the future holds. I know that I have changed my views about them!

# **For your diary**

## ***St Mary's Church Hellesdon***

*Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April at 7. 30 pm*

'All in the April Evening' featuring the Windmill Handbell Ringers with Bryan Ellum and Jane Berry (Organ duets and solos)

## ***St George's Parish Church Rollesby***

*Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> April at 7. 30 pm*

Music for St George's Tide. An evening of organ solos and duets presented by Bryan Ellum and Jane Berry. Admission £5 to include refreshments

## **Hungate Church Beccles**

Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> May at 7. 30 pm

### **Dr Ian Tracey**

Liverpool Cathedral

Tickets £8 Concessions £7

For further details contact 01986 892602

## ***St Andrew's Hall Lunchstop recitals***

All Mondays except 18th August which is a Tuesday.

Tickets are £2.50 and start time is 1.10 pm.

### *June*

1st David Dunnett

15th Henry Macey

### *July*

6th Adrian Richards - St. Margaret's Kings Lynn

20th Roger Rayner

27th Tim Patient

### *August*

3<sup>rd</sup> Maureen MacAllister & Robin Jackson

10th David Ivory

18th Anne Page

24th Matthew Pitts - St Peter Mancroft



## *Forthcoming Association Events*

### **Saturday 28th March, Princes Street URC, Norwich at 11.30am:**

***Annual General Meeting:*** This year we hold our AGM amidst the well-appointed surroundings of the Princes St United Reformed Church. A ***free buffet lunch*** (£5 per head for non-members) will follow the Business meeting after which Harry Macey will treat us to a ***recital*** on the very fine ***Willis organ*** that graces this church.

We hope that once again as many of you as possible will be able to attend and enjoy what has proved to be a most rewarding point of contact with other members.

**For catering purposes please let Martin Cottam know by Wednesday 18th March at the latest if you wish to have the buffet lunch.**

### **Saturday 18th April, Brooke Church at 2.30pm:**

***Desert Island Discs:*** We are very highly honoured indeed that Dr. Roy Massey MBE has agreed to be our castaway for 2009. Dr Massey is perhaps best known for his tenure as Organist of Hereford Cathedral (1974-2001) and his life story and personal choice of discs, teased out as ever by Ron Watson, will be well worth hearing.

**May:** A late change of plans for our May event means we are unable to give definitive details at the time of going to press. We hope to visit and play the exciting new Makin organ at All Saints, Bawdeswell (see page 19 of the last edition of the Journal), possibly followed by a visit to the newly restored organ at nearby Cawston. Members are advised to check the Association website regularly for final details or to contact Martin Cottam nearer the time.

### **June:**

***Outing to North Norfolk;*** It is hoped that we shall be able to visit and play the organs in the glorious churches of Cley, Blakeney, and Wiveton. Date and details to be confirmed.

### **Saturday 11th July:**

***President's Day:*** We cross the border into Suffolk to partake of the various enticing delights our new President, David Bunkell will have waiting for us there. Full details to follow.

### **August:**

***Young Organist's Recital:*** We are delighted to announce our 'young' recitalist this year will be David Ballard. Date and venue to be confirmed.

### **Saturday 19th September, St. Thomas's Church, Earlham Road, Norwich at 2.30pm:**

***J.S. Bach's 'Orgelbüchlein':*** Tim Patient presents a Lecture Recital on this most enduringly popular collection of Bach's Chorale Preludes. There will also be opportunity for members to perform the chorales for themselves, both on the fine neo-classical organ at St Thomas's and with their voices!

*Please don't hesitate to contact Martin Cottam (01603 703921 or martin@cottam.eclipse.co.uk ) if you have any queries or require further details of any of our events.*