

The Journal

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The editor writes.....

The Festival is with us again and our first encounter was with The Sixteen in Norwich Cathedral. The music was all by Josquin, Brumel (of whom I had never heard), and Lassus. I have attended some impressive musical events in my time but this had to be one of the most impressive. The cathedral was packed and there was not a whisper from the assembled concert goers as the music unfolded. As one who, for over thirty years, tried to reach very high standards with a choral group, I was spellbound by the perfection of blend, accuracy and control of this world class ensemble. The only word to describe their performance was impeccable.

But that was not the only thing to wonder at. There was the wonder of the music itself. Always totally engaging in its invention and beauty; the textures and rhythmic interest held one's attention totally.

I could not help but wonder at the miracle that these 15th/16th century composers could write such complicated yet beautiful pieces – and for what resources? They must have had singers at their disposal who were capable of performing this music, otherwise what would have been the point of writing it? The next miracle was that of the notation by which the composer was able to capture the sounds he heard in his imagination and write out individual parts.

And what of those who heard it? Did they wonder at it? Were they moved by it? Did they realise what a miracle it was?

What an enormous debt we owe to the scholars who unearthed this music and

to the likes of The Sixteen who bring it to life in our very presence.

With the initial Festival Service not in the official programme there has been much discussion surrounding the relationship between worship and the arts. The Festival organisers seem to think there is none but will no doubt have latched on to the fact that the cathedral itself is all art. Architecture is art, the carvings, the sculptures, the paintings, the stained glass, the poetry and music of hymns and anthems. If they are not art then what is? And if they aren't worship then what are they?

Perhaps the cathedral needs an unmade bed or two, or some animal in formaldehyde!

Listening to such music and gazing at sculptures by Bernini and Michelangelo one wonders if art has progressed at all. It is difficult to marry the perfection of such works of art with the seemingly primitive conditions in which they were produced. Today's creators have it very easy by comparison but are Vaughan Williams and Lowry better, or just different?



David by Bernini

Annual General Meeting

Michael Flatman

This year's Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday 31st March in St. Michael's Church, Aylsham at 11.30a.m. Thirty three members were present.

As is customary a silence of one minute was held for members who had died during this past year, John Hudson and Dennis Long. Harry Macey presided over the proceedings and the business was conducted swiftly and efficiently Reports were then given by the President, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Events Secretary. All officers and committee members were thanked for their tireless work. Next came the election of officers and the committee for the coming year. The overall impression given was one of optimism for the future of the Association, which is in a healthy state under Harry's fine leadership.

Martin Cottam and Ron Watson have both expressed a wish to stand down from the posts of Events Secretary and Journal Editor respectively but have agreed to continue in their posts for a transitional period before finally handing over the reins to newly appointed members in due course. We would urge members to give serious consideration to taking up either of these posts.

The business of the meeting was concluded at 12 noon and was followed by a superb lunch which was provided by Melanie Macey to whom we must express our thanks.

After lunch a recital was given by our two youngest committee members Matthew Bond and David Ballard on the

Norman & Beard organ which in January 2012 was awarded Grade 1 HOCS historic status on account of it being the largest surviving organ with the Alfred Hollins/Herbert Norman console layout and for its patent Norman & Beard 'Norwich' action. At the mid-way point, Matthew and David combined their talents to play a duet: *A Fancy for Two to Play* by Thomas Tomkins. Other pieces played were *Sonata No. 4 in B Flat Major* by Mendelssohn, *Chorale Prelude 'Gelobet Seist du, Jesu Christ' BWV 604* by J.S. Bach. *Paeon* by Kenneth Leighton all played by Matthew, followed by *Spring Song* by Alfred Hollins, *Trio in C Minor BWV 585* by J.F. Fasch, arr J.S. Bach, *Fugue in C Minor on a theme of Henri Rabaud* by Duruflé, *Dance to Your Daddy* by Sverre Eftestøl and finally *Toccata in B Minor* by Gigout.

Harry Macey gave a final vote of thanks to Matthew and David for their fine performances and to all present for attending. He then extended an invitation to any members who wished to play the organ.

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The further adventures of Organ Morgan

Ralph Cupper

Who is Organ Morgan? Have you heard of him?

That is the question I raised when I spoke to my English colleagues in London and Norwich twenty-four years ago. I did not really get an answer to this question until I had contact with one of my former colleagues in Lowestoft.

I am referring to the gifted organist, Martin Lennox, who at that time had already served five years in exile at Saltdal in Norway. I recently received an email from the aforesaid Mr Lennox, who was trying to overcome the effects of his Lutheran Easter in a tiny village in the middle of the jungle about 28 km from the Cambodian/Thai border. It is surprising what we church musicians will do in order to stay compos mentis during the liturgical year!

Regarding our friend 'Organ Morgan', I came across his picture in the English periodical 'Classical Music'.



There was an article written by Leonard Pearcey. It described the mass exodus of

English organists to Norway. The 'Organ Morgan Illustration', as you can clearly see, depicts a Welsh organist, pedalling at great speed through the countryside on a bicycle going from one job to the next. On the front of his bicycle he has two hymn books and a bible. On the back of the bicycle he has a few volumes of J S Bach's organ music and two organ pipes.

I thought this illustration was amusing at the time, but I did not realise how apt this really is because it depicts the ever increasing travel that we Norwegian/British organists have to undertake in order to do the work here in Norway. As my wife Karin said, the illustration should be upgraded now to a four-wheel drive Land Rover with spiked winter tyres, a box of hymn books, a few organ pieces, a very reliable mobile telephone, plus a good supply, possibly a library, of Agatha Christie novels! The purpose of these will be revealed later in this article. All of this is what you need in order to undertake the hazardous work of an organist/church musician in rural Norway.

I was born in Norwich and educated at the The Royal Academy of Music, London and in Cambridge. I was also privileged enough to study a short time in Berlin and later had tuition from Nicholas Kynaston, Susi Jeans and Bernard Bartelink in the Netherlands.

When I commenced my musical career, I had definite plans to become a concert organist and was well prepared for this work. After several years travelling in Germany and the Netherlands, I quickly became disillusioned with this stressful life. In order to make music at this high level on a continuous basis, one has to have something different to say musically each time one appears in concert. There

were at that time so many young organists specialising in Baroque music, as I did, that it was becoming very difficult to compete with them and earn a living at the same time. Therefore, I had to do the same as many other organists and seek a church appointment and teach on a full-time basis to pay the bills between the concerts.

One of my last appointments in England was at Christ Church, New Catton, where I was fortunate enough to meet my wife Karin, who was one of the sopranos in the choir. I was also privileged to play Richard Bower's superb pipe organ in that church.

Many gifted church musicians just bite the bullet and put up with the hard work and lack of income in England to further the cause of church music and I admire the people who do this. However, several other English organists, including myself, opted to try something different in order to earn a living and have an interesting and colourful life, hence the massive exodus of British church musicians to Norway.

In my youth I travelled to Burgdorf, Germany each year to visit my grandparents because my mother is German. As soon as I learnt to play the organ and could make it sound respectable my attention on these visits naturally gravitated to the local church of St Pankratius in Burgdorf with its Hans Scherrer/Hillebrand organ.

There I met Kantor Gerhard Reich. Gerhard actively used me musically during my holidays in his parish. This was a great privilege and an honour and I can say that Kantor Gerhard Reich was a formative influence on my early musical training. He not only taught me to harmonise, improvise and read scores at

the organ, but also helped me perfect my written and spoken German.



I observed over the years that Gerhard Reich only had this one full-time job as Kantor (Organist and Choirmaster) and had no other employment in Burgdorf. He was not at all 'stressed out' darting around from one job to another in order to make a living.

Gerhard Reich was employed full-time by the Lutheran Church in Germany. This fascinated me. I wanted to do the same work. Many years later after training at the RAM., I attended 'Die Berliner kirchenmusik Hochschule' in Berlin with a view to qualifying as a full-time State Lutheran Church Musician i.e. Kantor or Kirchenmusikdirektor, but was not allowed to take the final examination by the governing body of the German State Church i.e. 'Das Berliner Brandenburg Konsistorium'. The reason given was that West Germany already had a growing number of unemployed church musicians and would not make the problem worse by employing foreign musicians. So I returned to Norwich to work in adult education.

Upon returning to England, I did investigate, with the help of my friend Michael Austin, who was working in Denmark at the time, the possibility of working full-time as a church musician there, but the State Lutheran Church in

that country had already stopped foreign church musicians from migrating into the country. As it was, Michael Austin had to take both the final state examinations, both practical and theoretical in Lutheran hymnology, theology and church history before he was allowed to keep his church appointment with full pay. This is no mean achievement if you are not fluent in written and spoken Danish! So that avenue was also closed to me!

One day in 1987 I received a surprise telephone call from my Martin Lennox in Norway. I told him what happened in Germany and Denmark, so he told me about our old friend 'Organ Morgan': "*Why not come to Norway and join the DNK - 'Den Norske Kirke'? We have fun here. In some of these more remote places there is not much work to do at all! However, there are a lot of meetings! We drink a lot of coffee and eat a considerable amount of cake and play the organ and direct a choir, if there is one, from time to time. What is more, this is full-time work and you can live off the salary. What do you think Ralph?*" It was like General Kitchener, on those old first World War Posters saying with the pointed finger: 'WE NEED YOU'!!!! So I packed my hymn books, bible, a few organ pipes and a few volumes of JSB's favourite organ works and pedalled off with our friend Organ Morgan to Norway!

Upon arrival at the local airport in Sandane, I was met by the Vicar in the Parish of Eid, the late Oddvar Grøvlen. Oddvar was a man of few words. He just stretched out his right hand in a mechanical way and said quite spontaneously: "*ME GRØVLEN, YOU CUPPER: COME!!!*"

When we arrived at the car park, Grøvlen pointed to his car, we sat in it and

we drove to his house in Nordfjordeid. I was so impressed at the time with the stunning landscape here, namely the mountains and the fjords. I stayed with Oddvar for three days. During this time I was interviewed by the local Lutheran church council.

This is my story so far. I am still surviving! In the time I have been here, life is not quite as relaxed as Martin Lennox led me to believe....but more of that later.

To be continued

I hope that many of my old friends and colleagues will come out to support me on the 20th June when I come to Norwich Cathedral.

There will also be an 'Organ Extravaganza' at St Thomas's church on Friday 22nd June. On that day I will share a programme with David Dunnett. David is a fantastic organist and his performances are electrifying, so I do hope that many of you will come out to support us that evening.

After the concert at St Thomas's I will 'hit the road again' and travel with my family to Szczecin in Poland where I have been asked to take part in the Szczecin International Organ Festival on Saturday 30th June. The next day, Sunday 1st July, I have another concert in the Pomeranian Castle with Szczecin University Choir. It will be a pleasant but a very hectic time for us all. Nevertheless, when one has something to say musically, the time just flies!!!

Desert Island Discs

Michael Flatman

On Saturday 25th February our 'Desert Island Discs' was held at the Church Room, Brooke. Ron Watson told us that alas, our guest 'castaway', the Rev Canon Jeremy Haselock, Precentor of Norwich Cathedral, had to pull out at the very last moment. He is Vice-Dean and while the Dean was away was obliged to attend a meeting in Manchester. He was very disappointed at having to miss our event and we look forward to welcoming him back to the 'Island' later this year.

So Ron asked our Events Secretary, Martin Cottam, whether he would be willing to be cast adrift with his choice of discs in Jeremy's place and Martin agreed.

Martin was born in 1955 in Croydon and is the eldest of two children. He spent his early childhood in Surrey and Kent and moved to Crowborough in Sussex in 1964. He told us that there was always music in his home and his father was a keen pianist. As a child Martin had piano lessons but admitted his teacher at that time was rather uninspiring! This led us to his first choice of music which was '*Chopin's Nocturne in D Minor, Op 27 No. 2*' played by *Dinu Lupatti*.

In 1966 his family lived in "The Huntsman" pub in Eridge, Sussex where he sang as a choirboy in the local church. From 1967 to 1974 Martin was a pupil at Skinners' Grammar School for Boys in Tunbridge Wells.

From his earliest years he was attracted to early jazz recordings as his father used to play recordings of Fats Waller and Django Reinhardt at home and therefore his second choice of music was

'*Honeysuckle Rose*' played by *Django Reinhardt*.

While at school Martin took the opportunity to learn the cello which gave him the experience of playing as part of groups of musicians such as the school orchestra, which he enjoyed more than the instrument itself! Never having felt that he got on with the cello and having failed Grade 4 he took up the organ in 1972 and started to have lessons.

His introduction to the organ can be attributed to the advent of North Sea Gas. Bach's famous '*Toccat & Fugue in D Minor*' was used as a backing to a television advert of the day and his father remarked that they should really get a recording of the piece. Martin duly went to his local record shop to seek out a copy. He had the choice of two and opted for one played by the young Swiss organist Lionel Rogg, being drawn mainly to it by the attractive cover picturing the Metzler organ in Grossmünster Zurich. He was blown away by the sound of the organ and the foot-tapping pulse of Bach's music.

Being 'A Child of the Sixties', Martin was naturally interested in the emerging scene in rock and pop music and this led us to his third piece, '*How Many More Times?*' The final track from *Led Zeppelin's* first eponymous album.

Between 1975 and 1978 Martin studied Illustration at Harrow School of Art and found lodging in the family home of the famous cinema organist Louis Mordish, who, incidentally was also the Musical Director for the comedian Dickie Henderson. Martin had the opportunity of watching Louis play on occasions including a practice session for a recording on the organ at BBC Broadcasting House. This led us to our fourth disc which was a version of *J.S.*

Bach: 'Prelude and Fugue in A minor BWV 543' played by Michel Chapuis.

Martin mainly spent his weekends while at college in London and visited many art galleries, museums and churches. One of his favourite haunts was St Paul's Cathedral where he would often go on a Sunday to hear what he described as "the loudest organ he had ever heard" and also the choir singing. He described how he loved the swirling acoustic in the cathedral with its long echo. It was appropriate therefore that for his fifth piece Martin chose *Thomas Weelkes: 'Hosanna to the Son of David'* performed by the *Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral*.

In 1978 after completing his college course Martin moved back home to Tunbridge Wells and began working as a freelance illustrator and artist. After a few years, he decided that he would like to teach and so he went to Leicester Polytechnic to gain a PGCE in Art and Design. He got a part time job at York College of Art and Technology teaching illustration in 1987.

Martin's discovery of Bach continued and he was interested in the various genres of music that had interpreted his works, including those by the Jazz musician Jacques Loussier. "It always seems to work" said Martin. It was fitting therefore for his sixth piece that he should choose *J.S. Bach: 'Presto from Brandenburg Concerto no 4'* as realised by *Walter (who later became Wendy) Carlos* on the Moog Synthesizer. The recording had to be built up line by line on different tracks and this served to pinpoint the counterpoint perfectly.

Martin, although continuing his studies on the organ, was missing that experience of playing as part of a group of musicians and so in 1991 he started to

play the tenor saxophone. He was able to join friends in York and play.

In 1994 his teaching appointment came to an end due to college cutbacks and in 2003 Martin decided to move to Norfolk. As an artist he had always admired the broad landscapes and big skies of East Anglia. So it was that he settled in Norwich and returned to working as a freelance illustrator which he continues to do to this day.

Martin has listened to organs in many different countries, but it is during his visits to France and hearing those wonderful instruments built by makers such as Cavallé-Coll and Clicquot which have really excited him with their wonderful raspy reed stops and the ethereal Flûte Harmonique and Voix Céleste! He concluded therefore with two pieces from the French repertoire. His seventh choice being *Louis Vierne: 'Stèle Pour Un Enfant Défunt'* and eighth, *Charles-Marie Widor: 'Allegro from the Symphonie no. 6'*, both pieces played by Ben Van Oosten.

Martin was asked how he would cope on a desert island and replied that he thought he would be alright with cooking and coping with survival. His book, besides The Bible and the Complete Works of Shakespeare would be a book on art which contained mainly pictures to inspire him. For his one luxury item, Martin twisted the rules slightly and asked whether he might be allowed a witty and warm hearted masseuse!

Ron thanked Martin for giving us such an entertaining afternoon and at such short notice. He also thanked Tim Patient for providing the audio equipment and acting as our Disc Jockey for the afternoon. It was a thoroughly enjoyable and very well attended event.

Visit to Lowestoft

Harry Macey

After one of the wettest droughts for years, a fine day dawned as eighteen members of the Association ventured to the deep south to explore and enjoy St Margaret's Church, Lowestoft. The church is, of course, in Suffolk but in the Diocese of Norwich. We received a warm welcome from the organist and choir director, David Bunkell, our immediate Past-President. David spoke briefly about the church and organ after which members had plenty of time to explore the musical resources of the instrument.

The Forster and Andrews organ of 1871 was substantially rebuilt in 1937 by Hill, Norman & Beard and is now a three manual and pedal organ in the south chancel with attached console. The chamber has space between the top of the pipework and the ceiling; there is no choir screen so the organ speaks well into the long, majestic nave. Visually, the centrepiece of the pipe-rack case is the gilded fascia pipes with rollers on their mouths.

I had the chance to play before most people arrived and I was curious about the action as it felt tubular pneumatic but then, predictably, our learned John Plunkett was soon inside the bowels of the instrument and established that it is electro-pneumatic. (The choir organ is now unenclosed although a choir swell pedal remains; the NPOR is wrong.)

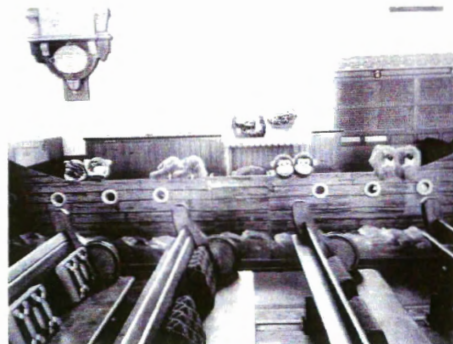
Whilst some members enjoyed looking round the church and enjoying refreshments, we were treated to an informal programme of music which demonstrated a range of tone colours from the Swell oboe to the delicate mutations and a splendid full organ. Prue Goldsmith

played Jongen's contemplative *Petite Prélude*, Ginny Plunkett played the rarely heard *Theme and Variations* by Hendrik Andriessen plus Ron Watson's lovely *Meditation on East Acklam*; Brent Palmer played the *Prelude & Fugue in E minor BWV 533*.

This was a most pleasant way to spend a few hours. Thank you to David Bunkell and Martin Cottam for planning the event and to Ray Bedwell for keeping us supplied with refreshments.



Ginny Plunkett



Should we leave the ark and join the Norfolk Organists' Association?

Beyond Our Highest Expectations: The NOA Tour to Groningen 9-13 April, 2012

Martin J Cottam

On the evening of Easter Monday our tour group of thirteen successfully gathered in a cafeteria on the overnight Stena Line ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland and our great adventure was underway.

Our crossing was both comfortable and remarkably untroubled, especially given the weather forecast. Suitably fortified by the limitless buffet breakfast we rolled off the ferry at 7.45am in our four cars onto the wholly other world that is the Netherlands. Immediate impressions of neatness and order, of a road infrastructure decidedly superior to our own. Smooth surfaces, well-thought through layouts designed to ensure free flow of traffic and an absence of rage or frenzy. In the Netherlands the cyclist is king, a hierarchy that would seem to be instilled from birth. At no time did I see a single driver fail to give priority to a cyclist (and cyclists have their own traffic lights, don't you know?).

The Dutch would seem to reside either in apartment blocks or detached houses. Very few semi-detached properties to be seen. Windows the size of front doors are the norm for dwellings of all eras. Light deprivation, which British property developers seem determined to inflict upon our own hapless population, is unlikely ever to be a source of social problems for the Dutch.

The town of Kampen was the chosen lunch stop for three of our cars, John Plunkett's party preferring to traverse the monumental Afsluitdijk separating the freshwater IJsselmeer from the salty

Waddenzee. Kampen's Bovenkerk contains a fabulous organ of 1741 by Albertus Anthoni Hinsz but the church doors were locked. A doorbell enticingly marked 'Organist' brought forth two elderly women, well-groomed and lacking a command of English. But they were friendly and Michael Flatman's limited Dutch extracted the information that the organist was 'far away'. They offered to supply us with his phone number but we declined, choosing to while away our remaining time by strolling round Kampen's extremely pleasant historic streets.

And so to Groningen where our two star hotel was found to be clean, comfortable, characterful, and friendly. Some amongst us grew decidedly fidgety, even annoyed at the leisurely pace with which our first three course evening meal there was delivered. But the quality of the food when it arrived exceeded expectations and swiftly salved any grumblings. By the second evening we were all seasoned continental diners, content to spend the whole evening properly savouring our food and each other's company and recollections of the day's delights at a more appropriate pace than that all too often encouraged by our own, increasingly 'fast' food culture.

John Stephens managed to convince the Reception staff that, yes, he could play the piano properly and duly obtained permission to regale guests in the hotel's bar with some improvised light music delights on the grand piano there before we all turned in for the night. One good night's sleep later we were more than ready to embark upon the main course of our adventure.

*Wednesday 11 April: Zuidbroek,
Petruskerk*

Small, neat, ribbon village bisected by the main highway from Groningen to nearby Germany. At the northern end, the Petruskerk. Tall, sombre, gothic structure in red brick. Rather austere in the manner of many a medieval brick church gracing the expansive plains of Groningen and northern Germany. Detached bell tower, a common feature in the province. Stocky looking. Apparently churches with detached towers are known locally as 'John the Baptist' churches.

Chill, misty grey cloud overlay a churchyard embraced by tall, bare trees dusted acid green and inhabited by rooks that constantly wheeled and cawed overhead. Highly atmospheric. "English weather," proclaimed Sietze de Vries who met us at the gate and immediately revealed himself to be thoroughly engaging and humorous as well as fluent in English (but of course!).

The interior was typical of most we were to encounter: whitewashed plastered walls, gothic vaults above decorated with delicately painted filigree patterns. At floor level, a sea of stately box pews overseen by a huge central pulpit guarding an almost insignificant altar table upon which lay a hefty, open Bible guarded by fine brass candlesticks. The ostentatious pews of the wealthy are the only challengers to the pulpit's dominance - apart, that is, from the organ treasure to be found in the west gallery (but of course!).

Establishing a pattern to be repeated at succeeding churches, Sietze de Vries delivered a potted history of the organ before proceeding to the organ loft to regale us with an extended improvisation designed to show off the full range of the

instrument's tonal capabilities and in a style appropriate to its era.

The organ at Zuidbroek (II/P 28) was the youngest we encountered on our tour, built in 1795 by Heinrich Hermann Freytag (1759-1811) and Frans Caspar S(ch)nitger Jnr (1724-1799), largely to a specification drawn up by Hinsz ten years earlier. Essentially in the Arp Schnitger tradition of a century earlier it nevertheless reflects the beginning of the shift from Baroque to Romantic; less emphasis in the upperwork, less raucous reeds. Especially notable are the beautiful flutes and the presence of a 3 rank Cornet stop. Remarkably for the date the pedal department still includes a 4ft Cornet reed stop for sounding a cantus firmus line. Sietze's improvisation here was in the 'galant', classical style, opening with a dramatic dialogue in the minor key between contrasting loud and soft choruses before proceeding through a number of affecting variations. Wonderful creativity, prowess, and musicianship.

Euphoria and sunshine in the ascendant, the organ players amongst us braved the stairs to the loft for our own turn at the console. Immediate realisation the historic pedalboards were to be a severe challenge to our established techniques! We never properly conquered them. Such frustrations apart it was a joy and a privilege to take our turns at playing under Sietze's watchful but benign and supportive presence. Splendid views from the organ loft. Our booked two hours at the church passed all too quickly.

Noordbroek, Protestantse Kerk

Just a couple of miles to the north, the church at Noordbroek is an architectural sister to Zuidbroek complete with detached bell tower. Absence of rook

caw. Inside, a superb array of medieval paintings on walls and vaults; filigree patterns again but joined this time by Biblical characters and scenes alongside the occasional quirky beast. The church walls and organ case pipes possess a peeling patina, the increasingly celebrated Arp Schnitger organ epitomising a romantic notion of 'antique' for many. But Sietze was quick to point out the master himself would be horrified to see such visible signs of apparent decay. No noticeable problems with the action or sound though.

Built originally by Arp Schnitger (1648-1719) in 1696, the organ (II/P 24) was enlarged by Hinsz in 1768, and Freytag in 1809, the latter's handiwork betraying an exemplary understanding of and sympathy with Schnitger's tonal ideals. The sound is a wonder, the acoustic generous.

True to the instrument's pedigree, Sietze's improvisation of an extended series of variations built on one of the traditional Dutch psalm tunes evoked the spirit of Buxtehude and his contemporaries. More formal contrapuntal explorations (sometimes built over a foundation of the cantus firmus picked out on the high pedal reed) were interspersed with 'stylus phantasticus' episodes replete with archetypal and vigorous pedal solos, all building to a resounding conclusion that seemed to grow as it launched into the vaulted spaces. Marvellous. Again we took our turns at playing. Again we struggled with our thorough unfamiliarity with the dimensions and layout of an authentic Baroque console and pedalboard. Again we delighted in the array of tonal colours at our disposal and the sheer beauty of the voicing. Again our

two booked hours proved to be insufficient.

Menkemaborg Castle

Menkemaborg is not so much a castle, more a posh, moated farmhouse dating from the 14th century and remodelled circa 1700 with a façade of classic Dutch understatement and great aesthetic distinction. It was here we took a late lunch, many of us choosing the tasty local speciality of Mustard soup plentifully infused with little bits of bacon. Crusty warm bread.

Sietze meanwhile had gone on ahead of us to the next church to make any necessary tuning adjustments to the reeds, inviting us to join him when we'd finished lunch. I'd expressed my concern we'd have to hurry lunch if we were to enjoy our full two hours at the church. "It's not a problem. I will give you the keys to the church and the organ and you can stay for as long as you like." Sadly none of us had thought to bring any soft wax tablets with which to make an opportune impression of the precious articles.

Uithuizen, Jacobikerk

The church lies about 10 minutes walk from Menkemaborg Castle. Smaller and lower than our previous churches it embraces a more traditional west tower. Interior stuffed with woodwork richly carved in the late 17th century by one Jan de Rijk. The wealth of the local patrons is conspicuously illustrated by the sumptuousness and dominance of their family pew which sits atop the chancel screen and looks back down the nave to the organ on its west gallery.

The organ at Uithuizen (II/P 28) is a true treasure among treasures. Completed by Arp Schnitger in 1701 it can be

regarded as one his least altered instruments. All but 5 of the stops contain ranks of pipes by the master, 17 of them complete. The more famous Schnitger at Cappel is the only one of his organs to retain their original façade pipes, but unlike Cappel the Uithuizen instrument remains in its original home, its case just as Schnitger left it 300 years ago.

Expertly restored by Bernhardt Edskes in 1987 and 2001, the organ speaks rather less harshly into the dry acoustic than I'd anticipated from recordings. Once again Sietze took us on a full tour of the instrument's tonal capabilities with his improvisations on another Dutch psalm tune, this time informing us at the start of each variation details of the registrations he was about to employ. Some of us were seen to be open-mouthed or shaking our heads in sheer disbelief at Sietze's mesmerising concluding variation; an extended and astonishing virtuoso pedal solo employing much double pedalling (surely he must be using a hand or two?) was followed by a richly textured plenum fugue with wholly consistent entries of the main theme (sometimes in augmentation) and a countersubject. Mind-boggling skills and musicianship! A man truly inspired by his instrument.

Our own efforts could never reach such heights but the thrill of playing an authentic Arp Schnitger, however falteringly, brings its own rewards. For some, including one or two of our non-players, this organ was the highlight of their tour, the one to be taken home. Alas, with our evening meal booked for 7pm back in Groningen, we could not extend the treat for as long as our possession of the keys allowed. Handing them back next morning was not without a tinge of regret.

Thursday 12 April: Leens, Petruskerk

The early morning skies were grey and scaffolding cloaked the lower half of the church's west tower. A fairly ordinary looking church in a rather unassuming looking village near the coast. Inside, quite low early gothic vaulting, dirty white in colour. Take a few steps down the nave and look back. Confronting you, richly carved, thoroughly splendid, and certainly too big for the building is a veritable wall of organ. Wonderful, and quite unlike anything you will ever find in Britain.

The organ (II/P 27) was built in 1734 by Albertus Anthoni Hinsz (1704-1785) with a specification very much in the North German style. Sietze was uncertain how the organ would sound. The presence of the workmen in the tower had led to dirt and problems (tidying up some weeks earlier they'd cleared away the stones acting as essential weights on the bellows, a fact only revealed when Sietze had tried to demonstrate the organ to another party and failed to raise sufficient wind!). The organ hadn't been tuned for a while and the weather had been cold. Sietze's opening improvisation quickly revealed the reeds were best avoided.

This was not the best sounding organ we heard or played on the tour (it was last restored some forty four years ago) but it was still frankly marvellous compared with so much of what we have in Britain. A bonus was the presence of a delightful little chamber organ of 1982 by Mense Ruiter in the chancel on which Sietze gave a charming and witty improvisation in the 'galant' style to conclude our visit.

Zeerijp, Jacobuskerk

Another neat, rather pretty ribbon of a village sporting a high, brick church

similar in form to Zuidbroek and Noordbroek. Churchyard ringed by narrow drainage channels giving the impression of a moat. Tall, detached bell tower set at an angle to the church. A nice touch. Sunshine now in the ascendent.

Inside, an all-pervading sense of warm, terracotta coloured brickwork. It was something of a surprise to learn this is an illusion, every single 'brick' having been painted on to plastered walls. The organ case at Zeerijp is one of the very few in the province to retain protective doors. High on the west wall with the doors open the organ rests like some large, exotic moth with wings unfurled. Having languished for decades under a layer of black paint, the exquisite case has been beautifully restored and gilded.

The organ (II/P 19) was built by Theodorus Faber in 1651 and illustrates the transition from the Renaissance to the Baroque. Though the case and the pedal Bardon 16ft are original, the instrument is essentially a superb reconstruction based on the original specification and completed in 1979 by Bernhardt Edskes. The organ's Principal chorus speaks with the slightly darker, more 'vocal' quality of the early Baroque era, the pipework having a higher lead content than that of the Schnitger era.

As ever, Sietze's improvised variations were in perfect accord with the style of the instrument and included, by request, delightful use of the chirruping Nightingale stop at one point. Those that braved the fearful steps to the cramped loft afterwards were rewarded with the double whammy of short Renaissance style keys (you don't really expect to use your thumbs, do you?) and the dreaded 'short octave' on both manuals and pedals. Our attempts to overcome these as

well as the usual difficulties may have largely fallen short of the mark, but the view alone into the glowing church would have been reward enough for the treacherous climb. A peach of a church. A gilded peach of an organ.

Groningen, Martinikerk

The drive back to Groningen was bathed in sunshine, the entry into the outskirts battered by a belter of a hailstorm, tarmac swiftly replaced by a remarkably thick layer of ice and slush. All had melted away by the time we made the short walk from our hotel to the Martinikerk and the resounding climax of our organ adventure. No time for lunch.



Group at the Martinikerk, Groningen

The pipework in the Martinikerk organ (III/P 53) spans six centuries, some ranks dating back to the mid-fifteenth century! Arp Schnitger's contributions were installed in 1691-92 and the Rugpositief of 1728-30 is the handiwork of his son, Frans Caspar Schnitger (1693-1729) with the assistance of Hinsz. It is the largest surviving historic Rugpositief in the Netherlands.

Despite its glorious pedigree, the organ fell victim to the all too inevitable tonal desecrations of the nineteenth and

twentieth centuries, even suffering the indignities of a quite grotesque detached console. Mercifully, enough of the original voice could be detected and reclaimed to enable a masterly restoration between 1976 and 1984 by Jürgen Ahrend and Cor Edskes which returned the instrument to something like the state in which it might have been found in 1740 (though some later stops have been retained). The skill with which Ahrend has melded this disparate collection of voices into an ensemble of such breathtaking beauty and possibility can not be properly quantified.

I was somewhat alarmed on our entry to the church's generous gothic spaces to find black carpet-like matting had been secured to much of the nave floor in preparation for a beer festival starting that evening! Thankfully the acoustic was not adversely affected, and the noise of festival preparations minimal.

Sietze believes this organ to be the best anywhere for Bach and on hearing his thoroughly persuasive performance of the *Toccatà, Adagio and Fugue in C Major* (BWV 564) it would be hard not to agree. Oh my, what sounds, all underpinned by the globe's only surviving examples of Arp Schnitger 32ft Praestant pedal pipes. They possess a remarkably discreet voice but like unseen but essential undergarments they would be instantly missed if not there! They are quiet enough to support soft chorale registrations yet weighty enough to lend real presence and gravitas in the plenum. Amazing.

In the *Adagio*, Sietze chose to employ the 8ft Praestant on the Bovenwerk for the solo voice. Dating back to 1542(!) this stop has three pipes per note in the treble imparting the most

irresistible vocal quality to Bach's sublime musical line.

As if Bach were not sufficient glory enough, Sietze proceeded to embark on another extended series of improvised variations, this time basing his efforts on the Dutch Psalm tune we know better in Britain as 'The Old Hundredth'. Words can not adequately describe the aural journey we were taken on, the range of exquisite colours we were treated to. By the end layer upon layer of colour coalesced into the most extraordinary sound wall of ravishing, silvery glory I think I've ever heard, each component part clearly discernible yet massing into the most perfectly harmonious whole, no one element dominating. A thing of wonder. Eye moistening moments.

Security measures demanded that we had to visit the organ console in two separate groups, the door to the loft being locked behind whichever group was making its way up the spiral stone stairs. I remained in the nave while the first group of players had their go and found myself treated to a majestic performance by Tim Patient of the longer Prelude in e minor by Nicolaus Bruhns. Of all of us, I think Tim came closest to mastering the technical difficulties presented by the Baroque pedalboards. He progressed to a heart-rending performance of Bach's *Orgelbüchlein* composition, *O Mensch, bewein dein Sünde groß* (BWV 622), the solo line making use of one of the reeds in combination with other stops including the Tremulant. Sietze added the Bovenwerk Vox Humana at a particularly emotive point in the musical line and, my goodness, to what effect! Extraordinarily lovely.

It is a daunting thing to be faced with the opportunity of playing one of the

world's very finest organs, the now familiar difficulties making the prospect no less formidable. Knowing my limitations I settled on playing Bach's 'manualiter' chorale, *Erbarm dich mien, o Herre Gott* (BWV 721). I still made frustrating nervous errors but hey, it's not every day you get to play Bach on a Flute stop whose pipes were made in 1564! With Tremulant, of course. Love these old Tremulants!



Martin Campbell at the Martinikerk console

We each took our turn and did our best but once again our time was up all too soon though we actually had at least half an hour more than our booked two hours. I couldn't resist asking Sietze to give us one last pedal solo and barely pausing for thought he launched into a remarkable improvisation on 'Rule, Britannia!', one foot occasionally picking out the tune while the other supplied the harmonies, all at speed and off the top of his head. Just how many brains does this man have?!

It was hard indeed not only to have to say goodbye to this wondrous organ and its historic neighbours, but to Sietze himself who we had all so warmed to over the two days of our brief tour. A form of

solace was found by some in the excellent coffee and cakes available in the smart café hard by the base of the Martinikerk's soaring tower (I can thoroughly recommend the Advocaat Gebak!). A golden sun fittingly illuminated our final evening in this lovely city, and our last evening meal resounded to fond and dreamy recollections of the various emotional and musical highlights of the week.

Friday the Thirteenth

Unlucky for some, our only misfortune was to be heading home from our all too brief exploration of Groningen and its organ treasures. There is so very much more to see and hear and another tour will surely be undertaken sooner rather than later.

The delightful city of Delft made for a perfect stopping point on the way back to the Hook of Holland. As we entered the suburbs, Tim Patient was somewhat amazed to realise he hadn't had to make use of the clutch pedal at all since our departure from Groningen some 140 miles back. Testament indeed to the quality of the Dutch road system!

Our afternoon crossing was made on a sun-blasted, flat calm sea and our evening arrival in Harwich was graced appropriately by a rainbow and a radiant, orange sunset. As darkness fell we all too swiftly reacquainted with potholes and selfish, speeding drivers. The prospect of returning to the world of woolly Diapasons, boring Bourdons, and inaudible Dulcianas was not entirely inspiring, but no-one makes a Tuba Mirabilis quite like the Brits. And we do have hills over here... even in Norfolk!

Organ News

Geoff Sankey

Holmes & Swift report that their work on the organ rebuild for Oulton Broad is drawing to its conclusion. They are also doing a partial renovation on the small Bevington/Cousans organ in Swaton church, Lincolnshire, and also restoration of the 1863 Hill organ in Northwold church. Up on the north Norfolk coast, they have been re-leathering the bellows in the Norman & Beard organ at Mundesley.

Richard Bower and company are continuing the workshop building of a 28 stop, two manual, tracker organ for a Cambridgeshire church, which will continue throughout much of this year. The casework is well advanced and the soundboards are under-way.

There has been no interest within the county, much to Richard's disappointment, for the fine N & B organ from Dereham Baptist church, mentioned last time. Richard believes it may now find a home further afield. Richard tells me that they will be launching a new web site at the beginning of June – see www.bowerorgans.co.uk

William Johnson is working on the hybrid instrument at East Harling. The organist, Tom Hilton, tells me that William is replacing all the electronics for the key and stop action and the combination system - i.e. key contacts, drawstop units, pistons & toe studs, pipe magnets, slider solenoids, combination system, control circuit boards, and all internal wiring. As it has been necessary to remove all the manual pipework and most of the pedal, the organ has also been thoroughly cleaned, the pipework has had some minor re-voicing, all pipes have

been cleaned and bat debris removed, a major problem at East Harling.

Additionally, new console lighting and maintenance lights have been fitted, mains electrics have all been replaced/re-wired, the four digital pedal stops have been put on drawstops so they can now be controlled with the combination system (which was not previously possible as they were on independent tab switches), minor improvements to the way the swell reeds can be transferred to pedal or great, swell super and sub now act on the reeds as well as the flues (these are two separate chests & boxes), and a swell Tremulant has been fitted. Also, as part of the new combination system, they now have reversible toe studs to 32' and 16' pedal trombones and couplers, and there are eight channels of combinations, each with eight generals and eight sets of divisionals (up from six previously).

The work is expected to be finished in time for the Jubilee celebration on 3rd June, and the restored organ will be officially inaugurated by Carlo Curley on Saturday 21st July at 7.30pm - tickets £10 in advance from Dorothy Jubb on 01953 717128, or £12 on the door.

W & A Boggis continue to find that there is a niche for their services in South Wales, which is good for their business but does not help me to write an article giving news of Norfolk organ works.

For your diary

Why not remove this sheet and keep it somewhere for easy reference

Forthcoming Association Events

Saturday 23rd June:

Outing to Kings Lynn: From 11am we shall be gathering in the church of **St. Nicholas** to explore and play the highly regarded organ of 1900 by Henry Willis & Sons (II/P 21). After lunch (own arrangements) we shall regather in the Minster church of **St. Margaret** from 2.15pm. The resident organist, Adrian Richards will be on hand to introduce us to the organ (III/P 44). There will then be ample opportunity for members to play this celebrated instrument which contains a number of ranks by Snetzler.

Saturday 21st July, Park Farm Hotel, Hethersett at 7.30pm:

President's Dinner: We are returning to Park Farm for our President's Dinner where our Guest of Honour and after-dinner speaker will be Carl Jackson, Organist of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Hampton Court. He will be speaking about the work of the Chapels Royal. Cost: £30 per head. Dress: Black Tie (by special request!). A letter of invitation and a menu choice reply slip have been made available (the latter to be returned to Harry Macey by Saturday 7th July). Please contact Harry Macey if you need replacements: president@norfolkorganists.org.uk

Saturday 11th August, St Nicholas, North Walsham at 2pm:

Young Organist's Recital: Our recitalist this year is Ben Miller, a PhD Biochemistry student at the John Innes Centre who is currently one of the organ scholars at St. Peter Mancroft in Norwich. Organ (III/P 40) by Hill Norman & Beard with recent additions by Richard Bower. Admission is free, and tea and cakes will be available afterwards (£1).

Saturday 29th September, the Church Room, Brooke Church at 2pm:

Louis Vierne; A Celebration of his Life and Works: 2012 marks the 75th anniversary of Vierne's untimely death in the organ loft at Notre Dame, Paris. Martin Cottam presents a talk on the life and work of this important musician. He will play a rich selection of recordings to illustrate Vierne's highly individual compositional voice, giving as much weight to the unjustly neglected works for instruments other than the organ as to those for the organ itself.

Date, venue and time still to be officially rubber-stamped but almost certainly as detailed above.

Tuesday 23rd October, Norwich Cathedral at 5.30pm:

Choral Evensong: NOA Members are invited to attend evensong as a group. The Cathedral choir will be singing prior to their half term break. Members may like to meet for tea/coffee in the Refectory beforehand.

November:

Desert Island Discs: Following his unavoidable need to cancel his spell on the island back in April, Rev. Canon Jeremy Haselock, Precentor of Norwich Cathedral, has kindly agreed to return to face Ron Watson's questions and share his personal choice of discs. Date, venue, and time to be confirmed.

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.

St Andrew's Hall
Lunchstop series 2012
Mondays at 1.10pm – Admission £5

<i>June</i>	25th	Paul Dewhurst
<i>July</i>	9th	Henry Macey,
	16th	Andrew Parnell,
	23rd	Tim Patient,
	30th	Peter O'Connor
<i>August</i>	6th	Kris Thomsett,
	Tues 14th	David Ivory,
	Tues 21th	Adrian Richards,
<i>September</i>	Tues 4th	Philip Luke,
	Mon 10th	David Dunnett

St. Andrew's Church, Norwich

Organ recitals – Tuesdays at 1 pm
 5th June "Music on a Royal theme" Prue Goldsmith
 10th July "In praise of the Trinity" Ben Miller
 7th August "Giving thanks for Creation" David Ballard

Admission free- refreshments provided.

Holy Trinity Church West Runton

Wednesday Lunchtime Concerts 12.30pm – 1.30pm
Admission Free – retiring collection
Bring your lunch and enjoy a tea or coffee with us
Car park at Rectory adjoining

<i>4th July</i>	John Farmer - organ and piano
<i>11th July</i>	Alan Morris - organ Zaira Palumbo - soprano
<i>18th July</i>	Harry Macey - organ
<i>25th July</i>	Jonathan Hill (Stoke Minster) - organ
<i>1st August</i>	James Lilwall - organ
<i>8th August</i>	David Ballard - organ
<i>15th August</i>	Tim Patient - organ
<i>22nd August</i>	John Stevens (Gt Yarmouth Minster) - organ
<i>29th August</i>	Richard Walker St Chad's Shrewsbury - organ
<i>5th September</i>	Bryan Ellum - organ
<i>12th September</i>	Matthew Bond (Diocesan Organ Scholar) - organ

St Peter Mancroft
Summer Recitals 2012
Saturdays at 1 pm – admission free

June 2nd Vicky McCardel flute & Mark Jones piano – light summer music

June 16th Bach and the Hamburg Connection

Douglas Hollick – organ

Music by Scheidemann, Weckmann & Reinken

Bach's Dorian Toccata & Fugue

June 30th 'Celebrate' Julian Haggett organ

Popular works by Walton, Elgar and others marking the Queen's Diamond Jubilee

July 7th Musica Missouri (Chamber Choir)

Philip Barnes director & Matthew Chapman piano

Choral music from Missouri and piano music by Scott Joplin

Cromer Parish Church 127th season of summer organ recitals

Organ recitals on Tuesdays at 8pm (free admission/collection) unless otherwise indicated.

5 th June	David Ballard (North Walsham)
12 th June	David Shippey (Cromer)
19 th June	Dr. Martin Neary (London)
26 th June	Adrian Richards (Kings Lynn)
3 rd July	Tim Patient (Norwich)
10 th July	Gordon Dodson (Cromer) & Brian Ellum (North Elmham) – organ & piano
12 th July	Nigel Ogden (BBC) – 7.30pm - tickets at door (Rotary Club)
17 th July	David & Carol Shippey (Cromer) – organ, piano & soprano
24 th July	Bryan Ellum (North Elmham) & James Laird (Holt) – organ solos & duets
31 st July	David Saint (Birmingham)
7 th Aug	David Boarder (Hertford)
21 st Aug	Gordon Dodson (Cromer) & Pam Draper (Cromer) – organ & flute
28 th Aug	Richard Walker (Shropshire)
4 th Sept	Henry Macey (Aylsham)
11 th Sept	Richard Bower (East Dereham)
18 th Sept	John Dillistone (Godmanchester)
25 th Sept	David Shippey (organ & piano)

St Nicholas Church Dereham

Friday June 1st 2012 at 7.30pm

“Fit for a Queen”

A Jubilee Organ Recital of Music for Weddings and Royal Occasions

performed by Richard Bower

Including music by Jeremiah Clarke, Handel, Bach, Widor, Elgar and Walton.

Admission free with retiring collection.

The Parish Church of St Mary and St Margaret Sprowston, Norwich

Saturday June 2nd 2012 at 7.30pm

Treasures and Trinkets

Choral Masterpieces and Light Summer Music

by

The Girls and Gentlemen of Norwich Cathedral Choir

Tickets £9.00 including light refreshments

from Sue Ellingham – 20 St Clements Hill, Norwich NR3 4BQ tel 01603 416144

Prue Goldsmith – 01603 219437 or 077660 23233prue@talktalk.net

Tom Primrose – tprimrose@cathedral.org.uk

Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Norwich

Saturday 30th June at 8 pm

Escorial Choir (Norwich) & Musica Missouri (St Louis)

Old World – New World

a concert of choral music from Europe and the USA

Music by Morley, Byrd, Lobo, Thomson, Lauridsen, Gjeilo and Erb

Tickets £8