

The Journal

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Association

The editor writes.....:.....

Thanks to the visit of a French choir to Norwich City College in 1970 I have had a very good friend in Rouen who is still, approaching 80, directing a very good chamber choir. We visited them at the start of October and enjoyed a concert dedicated entirely to Gluck – well almost. This choir love the English repertoire and their name, Oriana, which is sometimes a reference to Queen Elizabeth I, is no coincidence. They had, the previous week given a concert made up largely of English music from Morley to Britten and had ended that concert with the first performance in France of my setting of *Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost*. Had we been able to, we would have attended that concert but were already committed elsewhere. However, as we had indicated that we could attend the second concert, my friend opened the concert with my piece which they sang very nicely indeed.



Having crossed the channel we took advantage of a few extra days to peregrinate around Paris. On the Sunday morning we went to Mass at St Etienne du Mont where Duruflé was titulaire for so many years and where the current holder of the post is Thierry Escaich (pronounced eskesh). Some may recall that he played in the Proms this year.

It was wall to wall improvisation beginning at 10.50 am and reaching a

climax as the celebrant and his procession reached the altar. The sung parts of the service were led by a young woman who acted as cantor and brought in the congregation when it was their turn. There was another improvisation at the Offertory and I had hoped for something recognisable as a final voluntary but that was not to be. The final improvised *Sortie* was, of course, breathtaking as the congregation departed under the organ through the west doors into the warm sunshine. Some remained inside and applauded when the music stopped.

This church is well worth a visit, probably not on everyone's itinerary alongside St Sulpice, La Madeleine and Notre Dame, but it should be. Tucked away to the rear and side of Le Pantheon the interior is quite remarkable and the church contains the remains of St Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris.

The next musical treat was a concert on Monday evening at the Salle Pleyel with Nelson Freire playing Chopin's 2nd piano concerto under the baton of Marin Alsop. Alsop is a very energetic conductor and exhibits characteristics of Leonard Bernstein whose protégée she was. She conducted Mahler's first symphony without a score and was in every moment of the music. The concert hall is probably the best concert venue in Paris in which each seat has a good view of the whole orchestra and the acoustics are terrific. Freire was pressed to an encore and the orchestra, the Sao Paulo State Symphony Orchestra, was pressed to two! The audience loved it and so did we. And the beautifully produced programme was free!

Also on our list of things to do was a visit to the Musée de la Vie Romantique which is a house which once belonged to

the artist Ary Scheffer. What took us there was that we had read that on display there was a collection of memorabilia which had belonged to George Sand who had an eight year affair with Chopin.

I always find it eerie to walk through rooms where great artists, particularly musicians, walked. Liszt, Rossini and of course Chopin had all visited this house and there was on display a cast of Chopin's left hand. Quite spellbinding.

We always find cemeteries fascinating; we had visited the Père Lachaise on an earlier occasion and seen Chopin's grave. This time we went to the cemetery at Montparnasse where, amongst others we found the grave of Saint-Saens which resembles a stone sentry box with a white metal door that remains open. Inside is a small ledge on which are vases and a picture of Saint-Saens and a few words about him alongside a plea not to dump things inside; sad. On our way back to our hotel in one of the Metro passages was a busker playing Bach's *Wachet Auf* (Schübler) on a saxophone. I almost wished him Happy Birthday but suspect that the only conclusion he would draw from that gesture would be that the local lunatic asylum were having a day out.

What better end to a short sojourn in Paris than to enjoy a portion of escargots as only the French can serve them, to background music of Charles Trénet singing, amongst other things, the French song I find the most evocative, *La Mer*.

And so, homeward bound. Paris to London on Eurostar, 2hrs 25 minutes; London to Norwich 1hr 47 minutes; Norwich to Mattishall 1hr 30 minutes. 'The longest mile is the last mile home', as they say, and so it proved.

Incidentally, what a nice touch it is to have on the concourse of St Pancras station a piano for anyone to sit down and play. Each time we have passed through there has been someone having a go. Brilliant!



As members of the association will be aware, we are affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists. Through the IAO, public liability insurance for all events is provided as well as other benefits such as a reduction in the subscription rate to 'Organists' Review'. This is achieved through a charge the IAO makes for each member, known as capitation. The IAO has reluctantly had to increase the capitation rates for this year and so, with this and other increased costs, the NOA committee has had no alternative but to increase subscriptions for 2014. The subscription rates for 2014 will be £20 for individual membership; £30 for joint membership and £10 for full-time student members. With the range of events and high quality of 'The Journal', this still provides excellent value for money.

Mrs Thing comes to a NOA event

Harry Macey

Some twenty-five members and guests assembled at Brooke Church Hall on September 21st to hear Ron Watson give a roughly chronological account of his composing life so far, accompanied by recorded excerpts and musical examples on the piano.

Ron began by outlining the huge changes in music publishing since the 1980s. Prior to that music had to be engraved and publishers kept stocks on the shelves. Nowadays almost everything is printed to order and composers submit Sibelius-completed scores electronically. This makes more music readily available as little need go out-of-print; unfortunately the days of browsing through the shelves of individual West End publishers are long gone. Ron showed us some old *Letraset* transfer sheets with which he had written out some of his earliest published pieces. This brought back memories for some of us. Thank goodness for Sibelius!

The majority of Ron's compositions are for organ or church choir. Ron's first major published piece was his *Toccata* (1980) for organ featured by Kevin Bowyer in his article in the IAO Millennium Book and later recorded by him in Holbrook School Chapel.⁽¹⁾

Last May, Ron enabled us to meet Dr June Nixon who gave a most amusing account of her life and work at Melbourne Cathedral over forty years. In 1998, June recorded an album of Ron's compositions on the superb T C Lewis at Melbourne Cathedral.⁽²⁾ Ron went on to describe his *Elegy in Memoriam Herbert Howells* (1992), a colourful work of solemnity

which weaves in Howells' hymn-tune *Michael*. The CD also includes *The Piper*, a strangely haunting work, although perhaps slightly too long for the listener. It was inspired initially by a funeral cortège in Corby.

Ron then moved to choral music. *Gracious Spirit, Holy Ghost* ⁽³⁾ was written for a choir brought to a Norfolk & Norwich Festival concert from Novi Sad, Serbia, one of Norwich's twin cities. Here is Ron in more romantic mood with some Howellsian dissonance. We enjoyed a recording by the Novi Sad choir who sang in commendably good English. A second choral piece was *Voces angelorum* (Angel voices ever singing), a choral fantasia on Monk's hymn tune.⁽⁴⁾ This is a substantial anthem with an obbligato treble solo part, a splendid organ part on three staves and some fine choral writing for SATB with divisions. After rising to a chromatic climax, the anthem ends quietly evoking eternal praise to God. The piece was written for Gordon Barker's 70th birthday and must have sounded glorious at its first performance in Canterbury cathedral. Of use to village choirs, Ron has also published a number of three-part anthems for S, A and Men.

Jubiläum, a splendid tour-de-force, appeared in 1997 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Norfolk Organists' Association (then known as the Norfolk Guild of Organists).⁽⁵⁾ Rhythmically rooted in 5/8 time, with other nifty references to 50, Ron was privileged to have the piece first performed by his dear friend Dr Francis Jackson. (Why isn't he Sir Francis Jackson?).

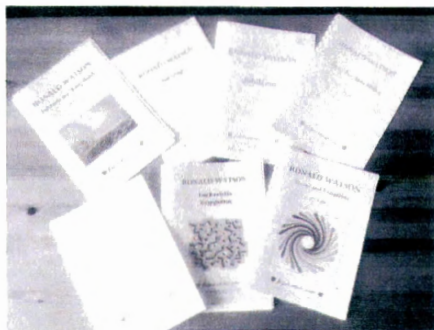
On the lighter side, *Badinage* ⁽⁶⁾ is a great recital piece, again so well-written for the organ with some fun harmonies and not too difficult. Ron explained that

its original inspiration was a television programme featuring Chinese acrobats!

We then moved to a dancing mode. The *Minuet à Trois* from Ron's *Suite for Leeds* and *Dances* were played on CD by Pilar Cabrera at the Auditorio Alfredo Kraus, Las Palmas with fiery Spanish reeds and mixtures much in evidence.⁽⁷⁾ This was followed by a recording of *Concert Piece* (1999).⁽⁸⁾ It was written for, and is dedicated to David Dunnett who requested it and gave it its first performance in Norwich Cathedral.

Of Norfolk interest was Ron's *Sonatina* (2008), commissioned by NOA member Bryan Ellum and first performed by him at Cromer Parish Church. The piece began life as a fanfare for a brass ensemble which featured in a Roman Pageant in Mattishall. Plenty of joyful trumpet fanfares! The three movements are Toccata, Aria and Capriccio, linked by bridge passages.⁽⁹⁾

Finally we were introduced to a verse-by-verse *Meditation on Kum Ba'yah*, commissioned by Nicky Dunnett to support Norwich Cathedral Choir's 2006 tour of the USA - a result of an Auction of Promises. This piece is featured on the DVD from Norwich Cathedral released in November.



Amongst items not mentioned during the afternoon were Ron's best-known piece, *Happy Birthday Herr Bach*, an amusing re-working of *Wachet auf!* BWV 645 with *Happy Birthday to You* as the 'chorale'. Also available are the popular *Suite for Mrs Thing* and *Mrs Thing puts her feet up*, manuals only, of course, (complete with professional illustrations by Martin Cottam), also *Mrs Thing's Christmas Stocking* and *Mrs Thing's Easter Egg* all being suitable for those reluctant organists who do so much to keep organ music alive in our small villages.

On a personal note, I have enjoyed learning a number of Ron's organ works, especially *Eucharistia* (2008), a splendidly sparkling piece with a hauntingly beautiful central section. Also *Theme and Variations* (2013) which opens with a carol-like melody in the Aeolian mode followed by eleven short 'classical' variations, ending with a triumphant pæan of joy, and all in the space of eight minutes. I gave its first main performance at King's Lynn Minster in September and I am honoured that Ron has dedicated the piece to me.

Ron's sense of craftsmanship is evident in all his music. Textures are always lucid, a quality not prevalent in all contemporary organ music; careful thought goes into the spacing of chords with no unnecessary doubling of notes; the music is technically and musically accessible, even if sometimes challenging; layout of the music and recommendations for registration are always practical. Above all, Ron's music is highly original albeit within an essentially tonal harmonic language rooted in classical harmony. Effective dissonance enables 'tension and relaxation' to move the music on. Being

an organist himself, Ron writes for the instrument exceedingly well, thus enabling performance on a range of organs and bringing true reward to the player learning the music.

Most of Ron's works are published by Fagus Music in Aberdeenshire or by Chris and Anne Duarte's Escorial Edition at St George's Music Shop, Norwich.

The event was tinged with some sadness as it replaced one to mark the centenaries of Howells, Britten and Norman Cocker, planned by the late Brent Palmer.

The President expressed our thanks to Ron for another enjoyable NOA event. Appreciation was also paid to Gwyneth, David and Tim Watson for providing a refreshing cup of tea before we all left for home.

ORGANIST WANTED – at St Andrew's Church, Eaton (behind Waitrose).

He/she will work with the Music Director to develop the worship of the Church, especially at 10 am services (alternating Common Worship Holy Communion and Morning Worship). We use Hymns Old & New at present (though we are looking at alternatives) plus our own Worship Book of current worship songs. There is a small but keen choir and the opportunity for other instrumentalists to use their gifts of music.

The organ is a 2-manual Rodgers 520/530 classical electric organ. Above all, we are seeking someone who will enjoy working in the music team, who will share in the life of the church – oh, and who has a sense of humour!

For further details please contact Margaret Smith, tel. 01603 453010 or email: margarethsmith@btinternet.com

Return Tour to Groningen July 2014

Sietze de Vries has been booked to be our Organist/Guide once again. We shall be travelling to Groningen by car via the overnight ferry from Harwich on the evening of Sunday 27th July. The organ part of the tour will occupy the whole of Tuesday 29th and Wednesday 30th of July with an additional morning booked for Thursday 31st. The return to Norfolk will be via overnight ferry later that evening.

Those members on the NOA emailing list will receive full details of the tour and costs etc via email when they become available. If you wish to be added to this mailing list or to receive details of the tour via other means please contact Martin Cottam.

- 1 IAO Millennium Book (2000)
p.120 and Kevin Bowyer Holbrook
School Chapel Dambusters! Organ
Xplosion 2 FRC8104
- 2 June Nixon at Melbourne
Cathedral Jubiläum SPC 1098
- 3 Choir of St George's Cathedral
Novi Sad directed by Bogdan
Djakovic
- 4 NEH 336
- 5 Francis Jackson York Minster PHI
CD 179 Amphion
- 6 Ignace Michiels St Saviours
Cathedral Bruges Organ Visions
Delta Music Productions
- 7 Pilar Cabrera Organo Blancafort
Auditorio Alfredo Kraus Gran
Canaria
- 8 Paul Derrett SS Peter and Paul
Wisbech Benchmarks Volume IV
- 9 David Dunnett Norwich Cathedral
Regent Records [REGCD175]
(English Cathedral Series Vol.VII)

Organ News

Geoff Sankey

Holmes & Swift are currently installing the rebuilt organ for St Mark's Oulton Broad. This is a historic instrument originally by Walker which they have expanded with a full-compass swell department and independent two stop pedal organ - all on tracker action.

Richard Bower is working flat out on the instrument for Soham. This ambitious project includes the addition of 12 new stops as well as a sophisticated console management system. The opening recital will be on Saturday 23rd with Andrew Lumsden, who is organist at Winchester Cathedral.

Our president tells me that Robert Ince has recently completed a refurbishment of the Rothwell organ at Holy Trinity, Essex St, Norwich. This has included the re-leathering of some wind chests, the fitting of a second wind blower to restore correct wind pressure, cleaning, and the repair and re-instatement of the previously removed patent Rothwell Swell Pedal. Richard Cockaday, the resident organist, says the instrument is now sounding and playing better than it has for several decades. This is apparently the only example of a Rothwell organ in East Anglia and now one of only a handful in the whole country to retain its original Rothwell console with his patent 'inter manual' stop tabs (i.e. in the position where many of us would expect to find thumb pistons).

W&A Boggis have revitalised the little Mark Noble instrument at the delightful Hackford church. Not only are there ivories on all the keys and an electric blower (for the first time in its

life), but the pipes are clean and well-spoken. The action has also been attended to.

At St Martin's, New Buckenham, they have worked on the keyboard of the unremarkable Samuel & Twyford to reduce the clatter. Further afield, at Coddendam Parish Church, in Suffolk, they have cleaned the Norman & Beard two manual organ and restored the pneumatic bourdon action.

Elsewhere, an instrument which the author has known both in its original form as a nineteenth century Hunter as well as in its 1976 form as a Mander electric action tribute to the times, has been moved to a Norfolk barn where it awaits updating of the action and reassembly.

If any members are aware of work that I've missed which is being carried out on Norfolk organs, please let me know on GPSankey@aol.com.

St Peter Mancroft

7th December

Girls' Choir & Choral Scholars

'Preparing for Christmas'

Julian Haggitt organ Rhian Hanson harp

Director Jody Butler

The season's good wishes to
you all



DVD: *The Grand Organ of Norwich Cathedral played by David Dunnett. Priory.*

Several Christmas present problems solved at a stroke! David Dunnett plays a varied programme of accessible music on our cathedral organ which won't be as it is for very much longer. The sleeve booklet notes by David himself include a comprehensive résumé of the instrument we are all familiar with and how it came to be what it is today which is dealt with more fully on the DVD itself.

The music shows off the instrument to perfection as it does the virtuosity of the player and Priory use as backdrops a range of local views and features of the city and county with several from within the cathedral building itself to great effect.

Each musical item is a master class as we would expect from an organist who, after eighteen years at this console, knows the organ like the back of his hand.

There are four transcriptions which all work perfectly, in particular that by Sir Herbert Brewer of *The Angel's Farewell* from Elgar's *Dream of Gerontius*. This poignantly accompanies images of Edith Cavell and her memorial. There are two transcriptions of Bach and one of Handel (from the Water Music) with shots of Norfolk's waterways.

There is a performance of Statham's *Rhapsody on a Ground* which is an appropriate tribute to one of David's predecessors and someone who some of us remember.

Other pieces are by Saint-Saens, *Fantaisie in E^b*, Alain *Le Jardin Suspensu*, Guilment *March on a Theme of Handel*, and from these shores Walond, *Voluntary in G*, Watson *Kum Ba'Yah*, Whitlock *Folk Tune*, Percy Fletcher

Festival Toccata and the final 'don't try this at home' piece *Live Wire* by Iain Farrington. In this very exciting virtuoso piece we see David Dunnett sailing through with seemingly the same ease as he played Whitlock's *Folk Tune* – astonishing!

In addition to the playing there are three other sections on the DVD. In a tour of the instrument David starts in the north triforium outlining the history of the organ and the layout, moving to the console to give a comprehensive explanation of the stops.

In another section he talks about the items in the programme and the reasons for choosing the various pieces whilst a third section is devoted to the Angel's Farewell in which David explains how he manages the changes in registration using the stepper system, actually talking us through the numerous changes in registration as he plays. There is also a demonstration of how the play-back system allows an organist to play duets with him/herself with David doing precisely this in the opening of Bach's *Toccata in D minor*. (I remember walking through the cathedral one morning and seeing Neil Taylor sitting in the front row of the nave listening to the organ. 'Who's playing?' I enquired. 'Me' came the reply).

This is a comprehensive DVD with content which will appeal to that wide spectrum of people who are, for various reasons, interested in the organ.

What you get for your money is a DVD, a CD and a Blue Ray and a wealth of visual and musical delights.
RW

Visit to St Edmund Church, Downham Market

Pamela Flatman

On Saturday 19th October, a group of eight members visited St Edmund's Church in Downham Market. We were warmly welcomed by Father James Mather who gave us a talk about the history of the church and organ.

Standing on a crest of a hill, St. Edmund's Church commands a fine view of the town and the fenland landscape beyond. This site was chosen for the church long before the present building, when the very best site in the neighbourhood could be selected.

St Edmund's Church is both Downham Market's oldest building and only Grade One Listed Building. The nave is roofed with lead. The church was rebuilt in the 13th century and extensively altered in the 15th and 16th centuries. The chancel roof is now tiled, but was originally thatched.



The organ was originally a one manual Victorian organ by Walker, which was rebuilt and enlarged to become a two manual neo-classical style instrument in 1977 by EJ Johnson of Cambridge.

It is hoped that at some point the organ might be relocated to the very fine west gallery. This would give it much more space to speak than in its present position.

Members enjoyed the opportunity to play this interesting organ and a wide range of music was performed.

Father James kindly arranged for us to have some very welcome refreshments in the church hall before we concluded our visit and went our various ways.

For sale Compton Edwards 'Minuet' Electronic Organ

2-manual organ in light oak veneer 30-note radial concave pedal board.

Pedal organ: Contrabass 16', Bourdon 16', Octave 8', Trumpet 8'.

Great organ: Double Diapason 16', Open Diapason 8', Stopped Diapason 8', Principal 4', Flute 4', Fifteenth 2', Twenty Second 1'.

Swell organ: Diapason 8', Lieblich Gedeckt 8', Rohr Flute 4', Piccolo 2', Trumpet 8', Clarion 4'.

Reverberation (adjustable) effect.

Headphone jack for silent practice. Built in damp-chaser heater.

Recently serviced. In good condition and complete with removable stool.

Can be moved with two (strong) people and a van. Pedal section is removable and console then fits through a standard width door.

This will make a nice practice organ for someone. Please call Richard on 01379 644544 for more details.

Forthcoming Association Events

Saturday 11th January 2014, Holy Trinity Church, Essex St, Norwich at 7pm:

Quiz & Chips: Ron and Isabel Watson have very kindly offered to tickle our brains as quizmasters for our traditional and much loved curtain-raiser to a new year of events. Fish & Chips will be available at £6 per head. Please let Harry Macey (01692 501023 or events@norfolkorganists.org.uk) know by **Saturday 4th January at the latest** if you require them.

Saturday 1st February 2014, Brooke Church Rooms at 2pm :

Desert Island Discs: Ashley Grote, our new Master of Music at Norwich Cathedral has kindly agreed to share with us his choice of discs for the mythical island.

Saturday 15th March 2014, St. Nicholas, Dereham at 11.30am:

AGM, Buffet Lunch, and Recital: Proceedings begin with our business meeting in the Church Hall followed by a buffet lunch (£6 per head). Our meeting will conclude in the church itself where Tim Patient will regale us with a recital on the organ there (III/P 30). Originally rebuilt in 1874 by Hill & Son and restored in 1964 by Hill, Norman & Beard the current instrument was extensively rebuilt by Richard Bower in 1995 with a new Chaire organ containing pipework by Father Smith. Please let Harry Macey know by **Saturday 8th March** if you require the Buffet Lunch.

April 2014:

Organ Visit to the Royal Hospital School, Holbrook: William Saunders, the current President of the Suffolk Organists' Association is Head of Academic Music at the Royal Hospital School and we are in the process of arranging a visit to hear him demonstrate the mammoth Hill, Norman & Beard organ (IV/P 64) there after which NOA Members will be free to fill the enormously resonant chapel acoustic with their own efforts at music making. Saturday 26th April has been provisionally booked subject to confirmation.

May 2014:

The French Classical Organ and its Repertoire: Following his recent attendance at a summer school centred on the unaltered François Henri Clicquot organ of 1783 at Souvigny, France, Julian Hagggett (organist at St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich) is keen to share his passion for this music in a presentation/demonstration/masterclass on the 1984 Peter Collins organ at St. Peter's -one of the very few organs in East Anglia that can do proper justice to this distinctive and rewarding repertoire. Date and full details to come.

June 2014:

A Barn Full of Organs: Some NOA Members may recall a most pleasant visit to the home of fellow member, Geoff Sankey some years ago. A recent addition to his organ collection housed in his adjoining barn is a German pipe organ now reconstructed within a historic English organ case. Geoff has very kindly agreed to welcome us once more to his abode and enjoy his collection. We hope to include a food element and a visit to Deopham church next door which houses a rather delightful little Nicholson organ of c.1870 (I/P 9). Date and full details to come.

N.B. All events are free for NOA members (unless stated otherwise). There is an admission charge of **£5 per head per event for non-members**. Please don't hesitate to contact Harry Macey (01692 501023 or events@norfolkorganists.org.uk) if you have any queries or require further details of any of our events.