

The Journal[£]

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The editor writes.....

I played for a funeral in June. The deceased was a well known lady from the village and the church was packed. Nobody asked me what my fee would be and the church office were surprised when they got my bill. I subsequently got into a lengthy discussion with the Vicar about value for money when it comes to organists. I am firmly of the opinion that a great many wedding couples and funeral families get short changed when it comes to the organ music.

Imagine a couple, planning their wedding, going to Tastebud Caterers and being told that they could do a three course plated meal for £25.62 per head. 'Fine', they say, and move on to Growtesque Florists, outline their requirements and receive a quotation for £1350. 'Fine', they say and move on to Flash Fotos and engage a photographer for £2000.87 (including vat). 'Fine', they say and go to plan the service with Revd Goodbody and agree all the necessary fees which include the bells and the organist.

Come the great day and the bouquets, sprays and the like arrive at the bride's home. They didn't have the carnations so substituted foxgloves from the florist's mother's garden and the greenery looked decidedly wilted. (The couple subsequently complained, not surprisingly).

And so to the church where during the service the hymns are played at funereal pace with the tune only vaguely recognisable. Someone a little disappointed with this raises the matter with the vicar. 'Ah well', he explains, 'our organist isn't really an organist but he/she does his/her best'.

And so to the reception where the soup is cold, the chicken leathery, and the sherry trifle noticeably short of sherry. The bridegroom points these deficiencies out to the head waiter who explains 'well our chef isn't really a chef, he is actually a bus driver who does catering as a sideline; nice little earner!'

Soon after the event the photographs arrive on a disc and the couple are quite disappointed with them. Some are not actually in focus and some of the guests, caught at awkward angles are, a bit like the hymn tunes, barely recognisable. The couple complain and are offered a partial refund but the opportunity for an attractive photographic record of their special day has been lost forever.

What a disaster; a florist with inadequate access to fresh flowers, an organist who struggles to play well known hymn tunes, food which is barely edible and most unappetising, and photographs with dubious focussing and lighting.

Of course all of the above is pure fiction – or is it!?

The organ may be The King of Instruments but in many ways it is the Cinderella of instruments as well. It features a lot less than it should on radio and TV and at village, and sometimes town level the playing is so poor and dreary that it is no wonder that congregations prefer pop groups and recorded music and totally miss out on the finer items in the organ repertoire engagingly played.

Addressing these misfortunes should perhaps be something an organists' body, (association, guild, call it what you will), should be about.

Young Organists' Platform Concert

Harry Macey

For several years our Association has presented performance opportunities for young organists, most recently to those in their 20s, inviting them to give a whole concert. This year the Events Committee decided to widen the scope and offer a platform to teenage organists. The event, which had been in the planning for about nine months, came to fruition on Saturday August 9th when four talented and intelligent lads (girls performed for us last year!) played a composite recital on the fine Collins at St Peter Mancroft. A wide range of music was chosen, giving an indication of the lads' current studies as can be seen from the following programme.

Luke Lindsey (Year 13, student of Julian Haggett)

Joie et Clarté (Les Corps Glorieux) ...
Olivier Messiaen

Trio Sonata No. 4 in E minor (i) BWV
528 ... JS Bach

Nun danket alle Gott (Marche
Triomphale) ... Sigfrid Karg-Elert

Harry Sullivan (Year 11; student of Julian Haggett)

Pasticcio ... Jean Langlais

Nun komm der heiden Heiland BWV 599
... JS Bach

Herzlich tut mich verlangen BWV 727 ...
JS Bach

Tuba Tune ... CS Lang

Sam Aldersey-Williams (Year 9; student
of Lawrence Tao)

Prelude in E major BWV 566 ...
JS Bach

Cortège from 24 pièces en style libre ...
Louis Vierne

In dir ist Freude BWV 615

...JS Bach

Fanfare ... William Mathias

George Jefford (Year 10; student of
Lawrence Tao)

Suite Gothique Op. 25 ... Léon
Boëllmann

I had invited each organist to write a paragraph about their current studies and ambitions and these were printed in the programme, enabling the audience to lend further encouragement. The playing order was determined by drawing names out of a hat! All performances were exciting, sensitive and stylistic and held the attention of the audience throughout. There was no 'boring' bit in the middle which can sometimes cause an audience to fidget on hard pews! The performers took a corporate bow at the conclusion of the concert and received ecstatic applause, which at one stage, with casual visitors to the church who stayed for two or three items, reached over 80 people. A wonderful climax to a superb event.

The organists were presented with St George's Music Shop tokens as a little thank you from the Association.

Special thanks are due to Julian Haggett, organist of St Peter Mancroft, for making the church and the Collins available. Thanks also to Lawrence Tao, organist at Gresham's, for preparing two students. We also thank the authorities of St Peter Mancroft for the use of the church.

I trust NOA will be able to provide further such opportunities for young people on a regular basis thus encouraging future generations.

Venturing to deepest Norfolk!

Michael Flatman

A goodly number of members ventured to deepest Norfolk to visit the beautiful home of Geoff Sankey in Deopham on the 28th June for that month's event. As we entered this serene village, the welcoming sign reminded us to *Drive You Steady*. Set amongst delightful and peaceful gardens one wasn't sure what to expect having driven up the driveway and parked the car. The house, some outbuildings including a barn could be seen, but who would have guessed what treasures lay within, for Geoff has a very interesting collection of organs.

Upon entering the barn there stood before us Geoff's latest completed project, a very decorative English organ case painted in cream which houses a German pipe organ (II/P 12). (See page 6).

A closer look behind the front of the case revealed spaciouly laid out ranks of pipework, all unenclosed, a real credit to Geoff's skills.
Specification

Manual 1

Principal 8'

Octave 4'

Octave 2'

Mixture II

Manual 2

Gedacht 8'

Rohr Flute 4'

Sesquialtera II

Octave 2'

Pedal (continental pedalboard)

Subbass 16'

Octave 4'

Pommer 8'

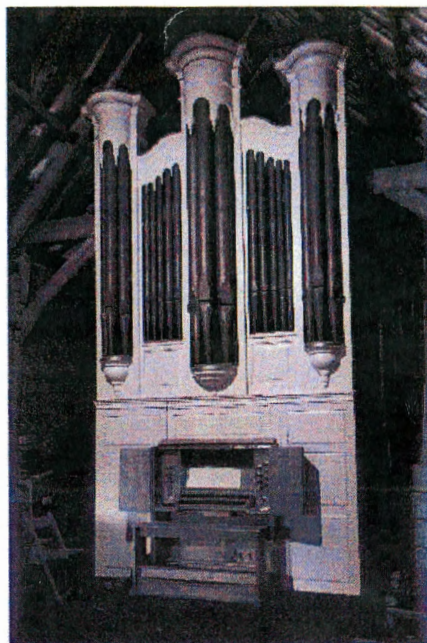
Trompete 8'

Couplers (operated from foot levers):-

M2 - M1

M2 - Ped

M1 - Ped



Geoff gave us a welcoming talk explaining how he had gone over to Germany to bring back this instrument and also about the other bits and pieces we could see lying around the barn which will form the basis of his next projects, these being the organs formerly in St John the Baptist Church, Capel, Surrey built in 1906 by Bryceson and rebuilt and enlarged by Gray & Davison in 1936, (for further details see www.npor.org.uk and from the home page search by index number N13421), and secondly, the former organ from Guildford Methodist Church, Surrey built by Mander in 1966 using parts of an old organ by Alfred

Hunter. (NPOR index number A00921).

Geoff then demonstrated the German organ by playing the *Passacaglia in D Minor* by Buxtehude during which we could hear the variety of colours of the organ speaking with great clarity and perfectly balanced. Geoff described it as an organ which was right and needed nothing more or less. He then described the other instruments available to us in the adjoining building and the churches at Deopham and Hackford.

And so to the building next door and yet more treasures to be found including not one but two harmoniums. Besides these, there is the delightful 4 stop organ by W Norman which is believed to be the first to be built by the Norman dynasty. The bellows operated by a foot pedal gave players ample exercise!

Open Diapason 8

Octave 4

Lieblich Gedact Bass

Lieblich Gedact treble

This sounded very sweet on 2 part pieces. Also in the same room is a 3 manual and pedal Norwich Digital Organ which has a comprehensive range of stops.

If those instruments mentioned weren't enough to satisfy the players, as previously mentioned, two more were also available to us. Next door to Geoff's house stands St Andrew's Church a fine building of the Perpendicular period, sadly rather overtaken internally by bats, which houses a single manual and pedals Nicholson organ of 1870 which was overhauled by Boggis in 2010.

Manual

Open Diapason 8

Violin Diapason 8

Stop Diapason Treble 8

Stop Diapason Bass 8

Viola da Gamba 8

Principal 4

Flute 4

Fifteenth 2

Pedal:

Bourdon 16



Yours truly at the console!

A pleasant walk or drive away stands St Mary's Church, Hackford, built in the 11th Century with alterations in the 14th and 15th Centuries which houses a small Mark Noble organ built in 1865 which was overhauled by W & A Boggis in 2013. The 20 note pedal board proved a challenge!

Manual

Open Diapason 8

Stop Diapason Bass 8

Stop Diapason Treble 8

Dulciana 8

Principal 4

Pedal:

Bourdon 16

Visually very attractive with its decorated pipes and wooden case this small organ sounded very good.

Our thanks go to Geoff and Liz for making us all so welcome, such a pleasant

way to spend a summer's day in the heart of Norfolk dodging the showers and enjoying the sunshine, music and good company with kindred spirits in between. Thanks also to Barry Gordon for supplying the photos.

A German Organ for a Norfolk Barn

Geoff Sankey

It was in 2009 that I came across an instrument advertised on the website of Andreas Ladach that looked interesting. Whilst I was still working on the barn that was being prepared to house an undefined pipe organ, the instrument which caught my eye merited a break in the barn restoration to investigate further. So, in early December, I took the Harwich ferry and drove across to a barn being rented by the organ builder Elmar Krawinkel in the beautiful German village of Trendelburg. Here I learned that the instrument, built by in 1978 by the Frerichs firm, had been removed from a church in Sieber, further to the East of Germany. It had been taken out except for its case to make way for a new and larger instrument. It had been reassembled and completely won me over when I came to play it. A temporary problem with poor light on my music was overcome by throwing open the barn doors. The light reflected off the snow was more than sufficient to see the staves, but rapidly froze feet and fingers.

Over the winter we came to an agreement over terms, and work to clear the Norfolk barn accelerated with a concrete pad being laid to take the new load.

In April 2010 I returned to Germany via Harwich, this time in a hired van. It

took two days to dismantle, pack and load the instrument with the assistance of one of Herr Krawinkel's staff. Unloading in Deopham was much quicker!

As spring advanced into summer, I continued the work on the barn, finding that much of the rotten featheredge cladding was supporting the stud work that should have been providing the building's structure. The renovation included the insertion of at least 50mm of insulation to all sides and the roof. As this work drew to a conclusion, I started to work on the new occupant. A number of the pedal trackers and action had been damaged during the initial extraction from the church in Sieber; these were remade using components from Laukhuff to match the originals.

By the end of 2010 I was starting to consider the need for a new case when Matthew Copley advertised a façade which looked ideal. A visit to his workshop in Walton-on-Thames confirmed this, so another van trip brought this new treasure back to Norfolk. John Norman has suggested a date of 1810 -1850 with possible organbuilders being G.P.England or Theodore Bates. Richard Bower, with the advantage of seeing it rather than being dependent on photos, believes it to be significantly older. Whilst it would originally have been finished with a mock mahogany and gilded pipes, it had been painted in cream and gold a number of years ago. Although this all had to be stripped since it was peeling badly, I felt that these colours were more suitable for its new home rather than trying to restore back to the dark colour. At the recent NOA visit, Mark Booth recognised the façade as being from a church in New Malden where it graced a Speechley instrument.

I had to make up a number of panels to fit below the façade and a new return for one side. This work took until the summer of 2012 when the hire of a powered scissor lift gave me the access to complete the assembly and painting of the case, as well as to lift into place the non-speaking pipes in the façade.

A final tuning was given by Rodney Briscoe followed by an opening recital given by Roger Rayner on Dec 2nd 2012 to an enthusiastic group of invited friends.

St Nicholas Dereham

Saturday 20th September at 7.30

Admission £5 - Interval Refreshments

The "Happiness Is"

Organ Anniversary Gala Recital

amidst the Flower Festival Flowers

given by

Richard Bower

Including some of the most loved and exciting music of all time

Air on a G string and Toccata & Fugue in D minor (Bach)

'Brideshead Revisited' theme music

'Hamburger' by Guy Bovet

"A Summer Field - The Crostwight

Suite" by James Kenelm Clarke

(dedicated to Richard Bower)

Movements I, IV & V from Widor's Fifth Symphony.

200 Years ago

From the Norfolk Chronicle dated 22nd October 1814 reproduced with the kind permission of the EDP.

Sent by Pauline Stratton

The lovers of music enjoyed a new and splendid treat on Thursday morning in the performance of Dr Samuel Wesley on the organ at St Peter's (Mancroft) church.



Of the extraordinary powers of the great musician we scarcely know how to convey an adequate opinion. As an organ player he has no rival: and we may safely assert of the extempore voluntaries, which he played, that nothing equal to them exist in the compositions of any English masters. They are only to be paralleled in the writings of Bach, Handel and a few other of the great German composers.

A duet was played by Mr Wesley and Mr Beckwith, which produced a most magnificent effect. The vocal part of the performance consisted of anthems selected from the works of some of the first church composers, among which may certainly rank Dr Beckwith's anthems *The Lord is very great* and *Sing Ye to the Lord*. The latter was finely sang by Mr C Smith of London. The Amateurs of this city cheerfully afforded their assistance, and powerfully contributed to the general effect of the performance."

Organ News

Geoff Sankey

Holmes & Swift have largely been working outside the Norfolk area, currently restoring the historic organ in Finedon parish church in Northamptonshire - which has apparently now been positively identified as by Father Smith. Earlier in the year they made further additions to the Kings Lynn Minster organ, including a new 'historic' trumpet on the great department, brand new keyboards, and all new stop knobs, as well as a Cimbelstern, and updated switching/memory system.

Richard Bower has carried out a 'mini overhaul' of the three stop organ at Iinstead, an organ overhauled in the 1970s. Richard tells me that he had previously attributed it to Holdich but now is less certain. Each stop has two non-adjacent sliders but a leathered table, with alternate notes on each. Richard says that both church and organ are charming. In July they revisited their new 28 stop organ at Soham to add some finishing touches after 3 months of use.

W&A Boggis have restored the Bourdon mechanical action on the Holdich instrument at Shotesham St Mary. In Suffolk, at a little church which is only accessible by a mile long footpath around fields, they cleaned the little Trustram (of Bedford) organ and put it on a new platform. They are also working on the re-leathering of a reservoir from a Mander instrument being reassembled in a certain Norfolk barn.

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@btconnect.com

Necton, Norfolk; Cambridge and Westleton, Suffolk

A commentary by Peter Bumstead, the organ builder, on the organ being built at Westleton.

In 1850, the church of All Saints, Necton, Norfolk, acquired a new organ. It was the gift of one Col. Mason, and was opened on 29th May of that year. A lengthy account in the *Norfolk Chronicle* tells us not only the physical size of the organ, its stop list and the compasses of keys and pedals, but also the fact that it was built by James Corps of Norwich. Corps was active in Norwich in the 1840s and 50s. His work is provincial enough to be a little old-fashioned by the standards of the time; not all that different from what was being done 30 or 40 years earlier, and a far cry from the more progressive 'factory' instruments which were beginning to appear in the mid 19th century.

The Necton organ was, for its time, quite a large instrument, especially for a rural parish church. The *Norfolk Chronicle* tells us it was 18ft high and 10ft 6in wide, and consisted of a 9 stop Great, a 4 stop tenor-C Swell, and an octave and a half of 'German Pedals' with large 16ft Double Diapason pipes. And so it remained, unaltered, until the early 1970s, when it was displaced by a more recent instrument, and was dismantled and taken in by Bishop & Son of Ipswich.

In 1978 Bishop & Son built a new organ for the church of St Mary the Less, Cambridge, which incorporated almost all of the pipework from Necton. The Bishop organ, which was mechanically new, was, once again, a 2 manual. The 7 stop Great contained all the Principal work and the

Stopped Diapason from the Necton Great, unaltered. The Swell was expanded to 7 stops and extended to full compass. From the original Swell stop list, the Stopped Diapason and Principal were joined by the 4ft Flute from the Necton Great, along with 3 new stops (a mild-toned Cone Gamba, copied from a contemporary example, a 2ft Gemshorn and a 2 rank mixture) and a mid 19th century Hautboy. At this time a 3 stop Pedal department was also developed, which incorporated pipes from the former Swell Open Diapason in its 8ft Principal.

The Bishop organ was all very ingeniously fitted into a new organ case, designed by Laurence Bond, on a swallow's nest gallery at Little St Mary's. To say it was a tight fit would be something of an understatement! The congestion, brought about largely by a reduction in the depth of the case after the stop list had been agreed, rendered the organ very difficult to maintain. And there were those at the time who expected the organ to do something rather different, musically. Bearing in mind that the neo-Baroque was still very much in vogue in Cambridge, as elsewhere, this organ was deeply unfashionable. It was, as far as I am aware, the first serious attempt in Cambridge to produce a classical *English* organ. The new work had been beautifully voiced to complement the existing Corps pipework, the character of which had been scrupulously preserved. So this rather mild-mannered organ contrasted sharply with contemporary offerings from both continental and English organ builders, and has been the subject of an extraordinary level of misunderstanding ever since, especially given the position of Cambridge in the academic world.

Being situated high up, near one end of a rather long, tall building, and speaking across it, did nothing, as it turns out to improve the organ's fortunes. There were those who, at the time, thought it should be re-voiced louder, or on higher wind-pressure. Some thought the mixtures were too low-pitched, and simply didn't make a big enough impression. One organist even went so far as to say that in any case (in his opinion), there could be no such thing as a classical English organ, because there was no significant literature for it!!

More recently, when Little St Mary's decided to replace this organ with a new instrument, an appeal leaflet was produced, in which it was stated that the organ had had its origins in Nacton, Suffolk, (wrong!) and that it was the work of Holdich (also wrong!). And when I enquired about purchasing the organ, I was told by one adviser, with some surprise, that the old pipework was really in very good condition – why wouldn't it be? – and by another that I should be very careful, because the organ was “frankly little more than a collection of bits and pieces”. The whole point of the organ would seem to have been comprehensively missed! The Little St Mary's organ became available for sale at the time when Westleton Church was considering proposals for the re-development of the west end, with the organ to be placed on a new gallery.

I felt that acquiring it for use at Westleton was an opportunity too good to miss, and I believe that the present scheme to incorporate it into the new organ will allow several significant objectives to be realised. Firstly it will provide Westleton with a resourceful organ, rather larger than was previously proposed, but without adding significantly

to the cost. This will not be at all inappropriate in so large a building, and the greater versatility it can offer will be of great benefit to a growing musical tradition, both for service and choral accompaniment, and in the performance of a great variety of organ music. Secondly, it will preserve a significant part of the organbuilding history of East Anglia: the work of both Corps of Norwich, 1850, and Bishop & Son of Ipswich, 1978, will remain largely intact, to be complemented by the anonymous early 19th century work from the previous Westleton organ. One can expect an organ to emerge of consistent musical character, with at its heart, one of the largest corpuses of early-mid 19th century pipework in the region. Thirdly, the generous acoustics of St Peter's, Westleton will greatly benefit the old pipework, and vice versa. I believe it will be an ideal match, musically: from its west gallery position the organ will speak directly along the main axis of the building. Organ and building will, I believe, be complementary, allowing the old pipework to do what it does best – to produce warm and rich, but essentially gentle sonorities, and to embody the 'singing' quality so much admired in English organs of the mid-19th century and earlier.

And fourthly, organ and gallery will be a focal point, visually, enlivening an otherwise rather plain west end, and reflecting, in the design of its case, some of the memorable architectural features of this uncomplicated but light and spacious building.

It is my earnest hope that with the construction of the new organ, the myths and misunderstandings which have grown up around it in the last 30 odd years can

be laid to rest, that the excellent work of previous organ builders can live on, and that Westleton can avail itself of a worthy musical asset for years to come.

Great

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Open Diapason (LSM) | 8 |
| Stopped Diapason(LSM) | 8 |
| Principal(LSM/W) | 4 |
| Twelfth(LSM) | 2 ² / ₃ |
| Fifteenth(LSM) | 2 |
| Tierce(LSM) | 1 ³ / ₅ |
| Mixture(LSM) | II |

Chair

| | |
|----------------------------|----|
| Stopped Diapason (W) | 8 |
| Dulciana(W) | 8 |
| Principal(LSM/W) | 4 |
| Flute(W) | 4 |
| Gemshorn(LSM) | 2 |
| Cornet (N) (MiddleC) 12 17 | II |

Swell

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Cone Gamba (LSM) | 8 |
| Stopped Diapason(LSM) | 8 |
| Principal (LSM) | 4 |
| Flute(LSM) | 4 |
| Fifteenth(W) | 2 |
| Mixture(LSM) | III |
| Hautboy(LSM) | 8 |

Pedal

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Bourdon(LSM) | 16 |
| Flute(W) | 8 |
| Principal(LSM/W) | 8 |
| Fifteenth(W) | 4 |
| Mixture(W/PB) | III |
| Trombone(W) | 16 |

Couplers

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Great to Pedal Swell to Pedal | |
| Chair to Pedal Swell to Great | |
| Chair to Great | |
| Balanced Swell Pedal | |
| Reversible pedal for Great to Pedal | |
| Reversible pedal to draw Trombone 16 | |
| Tremulant | |

The Westleton organ

Andrew Campbell

I began playing the organ at Westleton in 1989 and was soon warned: 'Never think of altering this organ!' I felt it would be best to enquire no further, but over the next ten years it became increasingly obvious that something needed to be done about the instrument. The opportunity arose when the church began to consider broadening its use by installing modern facilities: a kitchen and a toilet. The problem was that to increase the footprint of the building would have been prohibitively expensive, and because of the completeness of the mediaeval structure, the PCC would probably not have been able to gain permission to extend the building.

The organ at that time was crammed into the north west corner of the nave and being relatively small for the size of the building, it always felt as if it would speak with more authority from a central position on a gallery against the west wall. Only the roofed-over base of a tower remains at Westleton and this had always been used as a store cupboard, entered through a door beyond the low tower arch in the west wall. I suggested that if the store cupboard could be converted to a toilet, and the organ raised on a gallery, there would be room for a kitchen and storage space beneath the gallery. I was asked to investigate this possibility by the PCC. The font stands at the west end of the nave. It was stipulated that it should not be overtopped by the gallery.

Knowing that there was good early pipework in the organ I consulted Peter Bumstead about rebuilding it, and whether there would be sufficient room for the

instrument on what would be potentially a rather narrow gallery. Peter was enthused by the idea and with the say-so of the DAC, and the PCC's permission, the church's architect was asked to produce preliminary sketches. All was proceeding well, though it was recognised that there might be local resistance to the blocking of light from a small window in the west wall beyond the low tower arch and if a split organ case were to be incorporated in the design to accommodate this it would probably have been too expensive to contemplate. However it was established that the arch was not mediaeval. The west wall had been pierced to remove rubble from the fallen tower at the end of the nineteenth century, and the window was of even later date.

There was a drawback, since the church architect had to withdraw owing to the pressure of a large London contract. Nonetheless the go ahead to begin fund raising according to the original plan was given. Funds came in from many sources. There were remarkably generous donations. Gala concerts were organised in the wonderful acoustic that is St Peter's Westleton; gardens were opened and cream teas served. There were Sing-alongs at the Crown and barbecues, and organ pipes were sponsored, and a Silent Auction. In this way two thirds of the cost of the project came from local fund raising.

It was while fund raising was continuing that the opportunity to build a significant instrument emerged through the purchase of the organ from St Mary-the-Less in Cambridge. Very generously, Peter Bumstead quoted a total figure not much greater than the one he had previously suggested. The PCC took to the initiative without hesitation. However,

difficulties over the design of the screen to front the gallery now emerged, and it seemed that the architect appointed to design and project-manage this part of the scheme felt that he should have the task of designing the organ case, though this was not part of the remit.

The PCC had accepted the organ builder's design for the organ case, and eventually a new design for the screen and gallery was forthcoming. These designs were approved by the DAC. Soon afterwards an application was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding, and because the pipework of this organ was essentially mid-nineteenth-century, and also because the pipework which was being conserved from Westleton was of a similar or slightly earlier date, the Heritage Lottery Fund gave a grant of the remaining third of the costs.

Twelve years on from the initial idea the screen, gallery and organ case are complete. Built in oak finished with Danish oil the screen and gallery, and the double organ case as designed by Peter Bumstead with a scallop-shaped motif for its pipe shades, complement each other perfectly. The organ's feeder, coming from Little St Mary's fits into the space in the tower chamber behind the main case as if it were built for it. Two of the soundboards, façade pipes, keyboards and much of the action are already installed in this case. And even before a single note has become audible, viewing the organ with façade pipes all in place, one can hear the 'warm and rich, but essentially gentle sonorities' of this magnificent instrument.

Glory! The Return Tour to Groningen: 28th -31st July 2014 Part One

Martin J Cottam

Even before we'd completed our first tour to Groningen back in April 2012 (the Summer 2012 edition of The Journal contains a full report) we knew we would have to return. Two years was plenty long enough to wait. As before the services of the prodigiously gifted Sietze de Vries (www.sietzedevries.nl) were secured as our 'Organist and Guide' whilst Bert Veening of Groningen Orgelland (the Groningen equivalent of NOA) once again toiled hard behind the scenes on our behalf to book the various churches and organs we chose to delight in this time round.

Monday 28th July:

Rain greeted the arrival of our main party as our cars rolled off the overnight Stena Line ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland. We were determined not to let our spirits be dampened. Further on truly prodigious deluges of rain and the occasional unexplained traffic jam did their best to obstruct our progress north east. We refused to be deterred. As the miles ticked by the skies grew encouragingly brighter. By late afternoon we arrived at the Martini Hotel to be told by the ever friendly Miranda at the reception desk that it had been warm and sunny all day in Groningen. Hot and sunny was the weather that chose to accompany us for most of the rest of our tour.

Alas the day had not been entirely without casualties, Miranda informing me that one of our party, Peter Moss, had had

to make a last minute cancellation, victim (it later transpired) of all flights from Norwich to Schiphol airport being cancelled because the latter's runways were so awash thanks to the freak tropical storms.

For those of us who'd been on the 2012 tour our return to the Martini Hotel felt almost like a home-coming so agreeably were we greeted and served in its distinctively characterful surroundings. The newcomers to our group were swiftly won over as the Martini's engagingly cheerful restaurant staff delivered our three courses of quite excellent evening fare with just the right level of banter.

A bonus was that our first evening in Groningen coincided with a public recital in the Aa-kerk, the other large church in the city and, like the more well known Martinikerk, home to a large Arp Schnitger organ (III/P 41). Richly carved case in darkened wood topped by impressive statuary, the central figure being curiously suggestive of an angel in a tutu (not that I've ever seen one!). Built in 1702 and brought to the Aa-kerk in 1814 from its original home in Groningen's Academiekerk this instrument was the subject of a controversial restoration between 1997 and 2011. In contrast to the restoration of the Martinikerk organ no attempt was made to restore this instrument to something like its original form; rather, the 19th and 20th century modifications were largely retained along with the addition of some new stops to help complete the specification.

The main impression I got from Peter Westerbrink's recital of 17th century North German organ pieces was of an instrument possessed of a warm, reedy growl rich in bass sonority speaking into a

spacious acoustic. Decidedly not like a modern neo-classical organ, and quite a contrast to the seemingly more wide ranging tonal palette and brilliance of the Martinikerk organ. Not everyone in our party was convinced by either the instrument or the programme but I have to confess I very much enjoyed both.

Amazingly there was an open invitation afterwards for anyone to ascend to the organ gallery and inspect the console. We did. Tight squeeze between organ bench and Rugpositief. Back in the nave I asked Peter Westerbrink about the balance of Schnitger and later stops that he'd employed in his recital. Suddenly we found ourselves being invited back up to the console whereupon we were given a ten minute tour of the various stops and plenum combinations. Marvellous, but as Peter Westerbrink himself concluded, "it's a strange organ"; not enough old pipework to be a complete Schnitger, insufficient later pipework to do the romantic repertoire full justice. A historical equivalent of so many of the modern era's eclectic organs one might be tempted to say!

Tuesday 29th July: Groningen, Martinikerk

It's traditional to save the best till last but due to the pressure of bookings on the church we had to start rather than end the official part of our organ tour at the Martinikerk. Wonderful, indeed a privilege to reacquaint both with the glories of the organ there, and the talents and amiable personality of Sietze de Vries. He began with a trademark improvisation of variations on a melody from the Geneva Psalter in appropriately historical style that included fugal episodes tumbling forth as easily as if he

were tossing pancakes. As impressive, well structured, and inspired as we've come to expect from Sietze and a far, far cry from the all too familiar flashy but ultimately superficial, pseudo French Toccatà-style 'noise' employed by so many for their improvisations.

As a vehicle for taking you on a full tour of a baroque organ's tonal palette the chorale partita format could hardly be bettered. Sietze began with the Martinikerk organ's array of incomparable Flute stops; big, bold yet unforced shining Flutes of astonishing beauty, some dating back to the mid 16th century. The journey continued through the seemingly inexhaustible and exquisite range of colour possibilities, from reed consort combinations, through Sesquialtera (with gently shimmering Tremulant) and much more till resounding resolution on the fabulously rich, silvery, sparkling but warm, complex yet transparent tutti. Glory!

This organ (III/P 53) has pipework spanning six centuries including significant contributions by Arp Schnitger (1691-92) and his son, Frans Caspar Schnitger (1728-30), the whole melded together in an almost miraculous restoration carried out by Jürgen Ahrend between 1976 and 1984. Barry Gordon's wife, Fiona (not noted as an organ enthusiast) was so entranced and blown away by the sheer beauty of the sound she abandoned her original plans not to come to all the churches we were visiting. These organs all had to be heard!

The organists amongst us took their own turn to play. Our experiences here in 2012 meant we were not so thrown as then by the unfamiliar dimensions and awkwardness of the console and baroque pedalboard, a fact reflected (for the most

part!) in the more assured sounding playing that ensued this time round.

Our two hours at the Martinikerk were brought to a moving conclusion by Sietze's performance (at my request) of the great Bach Prelude & Fugue in a minor (BWV 543). Almost as an afterthought Sietze treated us to "Von Gott will ich niche lassen" (BWV 658) from 'The Eighteen' employing the Frans Caspar Schnitger 8ft 'Roerfluyt' on the Rugpositief. I suspect there are very, very few other examples of this stop around the world that could match the sublime beauty of this particular rank.

There was just time to digest all this wonder, along with equally wondrous cake and coffee at the superb café that so conveniently resides at the foot of the Martinikerk's great west tower before we took the short stroll to our next church and yet another Arp Schnitger creation.



A great mixture with nice furniture

Groningen, Pelstergasthuiskerk

Situated down a quiet side street from Groningen's Fish Market square and approached through a secluded courtyard. Elegantly appointed interior painted a restful combination of off-white and pale, greenish greys. The ornate silver, gold and matt black casework of the organ in the

west gallery makes for a striking and very pleasing contrast. Built in 1693 and 1712 by Arp Schnitger and employing earlier pipework dating back to 1627 this organ (II/P 20) has no independent pedal stops. The pedals are permanently coupled to the main manual, a common characteristic of the historic organs in and around Groningen and one we were to encounter on the rest of the organs we played in the province.

Sietze's improvisation revealed an organ of bold, clear, forthright voice, maybe a little too loud for the room but blessed with some very agreeable colours. I particularly liked the breathy 'chiffiness' of the 16ft Quintadena. Though we only had an hour or so at this church we had sufficient time to enjoy our own explorations of the colour possibilities on this very fine instrument.

Oostwold, Hervormde Kerk

Greek cross in plan, the 18th century Hervormde Kerk sits almost hidden amongst big trees in a quiet village about 34 kilometres east of Groningen and just shy of the German border. Plain white walls inside contrasting with a full complement of furnishings in wood of a dark golden tan colour including box pews and a huge carved pulpit dominating the central space. All just as an unaltered Wren church interior might once have looked. Organ (II/P 18) built by Heinrich Hermann Freytag in 1811, the youngest we played on our tour. Freytag was well versed in the Schnitger tradition (as evidenced by his exemplary work on the Schnitger organ at Noordbroek) but this organ, with its less dominant upperwork and less raucous reeds fits more into the transition from the late classical to the

early romantic eras, a fact duly reflected in Sietze's improvised demonstration.

Again we took our turn but with its high, narrow bench this organ proved surprisingly awkward to play. Sense of teetering on the brink! Sietze departed early to check the tuning of the reeds at our next church. Free to play as we pleased Michael Flatman and John Stephens eventually combined their talents to deliver a duet characterised by a level of musical vulgarity that might not have been chanced if Sietze were still there to hear it. Great fun!

John displayed a further dimension to his talents later when, after another magnificent evening meal back at the Martini Hotel, he regaled staff and diners alike on the restaurant grand with a mellifluous and extended medley of jazz standards. Very mellow. The perfect end to a perfect day.

To be continued

*The Association's recent trip to Groningen was a great success. The fact that this event occurred and was so enjoyable was largely due to the hard work and worry invested by Martin Cottam so we would like to use this opportunity to record our thanks for everything he did, mostly behind the scenes, but also in oozing enthusiasm and knowledge throughout our trip. Well done Martin.
Geoff and Liz Sankey*

Forthcoming Association Events

Please note there is no NOA event in September this year, but we have two in October.

Saturday 4th October 2014, St. Peter's, Westleton, Suffolk at 11am:

Organ Visit to Westleton, Snape, and Framlingham; Andrew Campbell is the organist at St. Peter's and is keen for us to come and inspect the new west gallery organ (II/P 26) currently being completed by Peter Bumstead in the English Classical style incorporating mid-19th century pipework by James Corps of Norwich from the organ at Little St. Mary's Church, Cambridge. We hope to have Peter Bumstead himself present to tell us about the work.

After lunch (pub!) we shall proceed to Snape church to inspect the organ Peter built there in 1999/2000 (II/P 17) and which inspired Andrew's choice of Peter for the work at Westleton. We then travel to the church of St. Michael, Framlingham where, from 3pm, Sandra Cartwright will meet us and give access to the organ there (II/P 20). Built originally by Thomas Thamar in 1674 for Pembroke College, Cambridge the beautiful case still contains a good deal of pipework from the 17th and 18th centuries. This is an organ of national importance.

Saturday 25th October 2014, St. Thomas's Church, Earlham Road, Norwich at 2pm:

The Development of the Organ and its Music; We are privileged indeed to have Richard Townend, long time organist at the Wren church of St. Margaret Lothbury in the City of London come and give us this talk on a fascinating and wide-ranging topic. Refreshments will be available afterwards.

Wednesday 19th November 2014, Norwich Cathedral at 5.30pm:

Choral Evensong followed by the opportunity to visit the organ loft, courtesy of David Dunnett.

Saturday 10th January 2015, Holy Trinity Church, Essex Street, Norwich at 7pm:

Quiz & Chips; Ron and Isabel Watson have very kindly agreed to be our quiz-masters once again for our traditional curtain-raiser to the New Year. £6 per head.

Saturday 7th February 2015, The Song School, Norwich Cathedral Cloisters at 2pm:

Desert Island Discs; Ashley Grote, Master of the Music at the Cathedral has graciously agreed once again to be our castaway on the mythical island.

Saturday 21st March 2015, The Old Meeting House, Colegate, Norwich at 11.30am:

AGM, Buffet Lunch, Recital; Following the familiar format of recent years our business meeting will be followed by a buffet lunch (£6 per head) after which Philip Luke will give a recital on the OMH organ (II/P 12) now skilfully brought back to life by the efforts of our own John Plunkett.

Saturday 25th April 2015, St. Thomas's Church, Earlham Road, Norwich at 2pm:

The Preludes & Fugues of JS Bach; Harry Macey turns his attention to Bach's preludes and fugues in this lecture/recital.

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.

*St Andrew's Hall
LunchStop Organ Concerts 2014
Mondays from 1.10 to 2 pm*

Tickets £5 on the door

You are invited to bring your lunch to eat during the concert

September

1st Philip Luke

8th David Dunnett

Cromer Parish Church 129th season of summer organ recitals

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

September

2nd Alan Morris (Antingham) & **Zaira Palumbo** – organ & soprano

9th David & Carol Shippey (Cromer) – organ, piano & soprano

16th John Dillistone (St Mary's Huntingdon)

23rd Adrian Richards (Kings Lynn Minster)

30th David Shippey (Cromer) - organ & piano

Aylsham Parish Church

Saturday September 6th at 7. 30 pm

Admission by programme £8 on the door in aid of the Aylsham Organ Restoration Fund

King Henry's Band

'Past-tyme with goode companye'

Robert Fitzgerald and his (absent) friends play deliciously tuneful and cheerful popular music from 13th - 16th centuries on a variety of fascinating early instruments Described by happy punters as 'great fun', 'unforgettable', 'astounding', 'absolutely tremendous'

As part of the Heritage Open Days event, **Anne Page** will give a recital on the historic organ of The Old Meeting House, Colegate, Norwich on **Friday 12th September** at 4pm. Free admission, retiring collection, church open from 10am.