

BRADFORD ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

Founded 1910

Reg. Charity 700225

Newsletter August 2013

President's letter

Well, another (academic) year starts. The past year seems to have flown by. It was a good year though for the BOA and worth briefly reviewing.

We had a very interesting talk by our own Edward Scott on *Choosing Music for Christmas*; we were honoured by the presence of the Bishop of Bradford as our guest speaker at the Annual Dinner; we had a fascinating illustrated talk by Colin R Brownlee on *A Century of Recorded English Church Music*; Alex Woodrow of Bradford Cathedral ran a most informative masterclass for us (many thanks also to the intrepid performers); we learnt much about the art and skills of teamwork from an open conversation between Archdeacon Paul Ferguson and organist Paul Dewhurst followed by active participation from the members present; our then President Jim Mitchell gave a most entertaining illustrated talk on how music had impacted on his life; we enjoyed an excellent Junior Members recital culminating in a particularly energetic piano and organ arrangement of a Spanish Dance; and the DIY meeting in May featured five members who contributed talks or music all of which were informative and/or entertaining and very well worth hearing.

The Annual Outing was pronounced highly successful by the participating members and is reported on more fully elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

The coming year promises to be equally good and includes a talk on the evolution of the hymn tune by Philip Tordoff and a lecture/demonstration on improvisation by Jonathan Eyre of Bradford Cathedral. All meetings and events are listed in the new Syllabus which is included in this month's mailing.

I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the 2013/14 meetings and would like to thank all Members of Council and particularly the Secretary and Assistant Secretary who have worked tirelessly in organising the year's events.

JAE

Meetings Reports

18th May, DIY meeting at Baildon

This was a most enjoyable and entertaining evening. Several members said that the title didn't give them any idea what to expect. The title should have been DIO – Do It Ourselves and it should have been advertised more clearly. Apologies from your secretary who will try to do better in future.

Contributors had been asked to restrict their offering to ten minutes with the exception of John Chapman who could not have condensed his talk.

The programme was started by Robert Savage, who is the organist at St. John's Baildon. He gave a short history of the organ and played a jolly piece – Sortie by Lefebure-Wely – which set the tone for the meeting.

Judith Blezzard followed with a talk about how two German tunes had evolved. How things have changed! Choristers would have great difficulty nowadays if they were presented with one line of music. Most informative.

John Hammond entertained us with church jokes and reminiscences of his early days as a chorister and young organist. We enjoyed the humour.

Jim Mitchell's talk about his time as an apprentice organ builder was both entertaining and enlightening. It could have been headed 'What builders get up to' and incidentally showed how vicars differ in their approach to people working for them!

John Chapman talked to us about his wife Marina's autobiographical book written by their daughter, but ghost written for publication. Many of you will have been aware that this project was being undertaken and will, like me, have been eagerly awaiting its publication. I am sure that you will have been overcome with admiration as to how Marina survived her experiences. I first heard about Marina's kidnap when I asked her about her family. I was, as we say in Yorkshire, 'gobsmacked'. We await with bated breath the outcome of the film crew's latest effort to find Marina's relatives.

I am sure that no-one was put out by John having 'license to take more than his allotted time. We wonder how the Chapman family are keeping going with all the publicity, interviews, reports etc.

Edward Scott rounded off the evening by playing the Cantilena from Sonata 11 by Rheinberger. What he said in his commentary is a blank to me as he asked me to go and put the kettle on!! I wonder why?

SS

June Outing

Thirsk and Felixkirk

Twenty members went on the outing this year. Nineteen set off from Bradford and

were joined by Andrew Harrison when we reached Thirsk, which was the first stop. We were very pleased to welcome Andrew who can't usually join us for events as he lives in Cleveland.

St. Mary's is a perpendicular Gothic building with an eighty foot tower and is known as 'The Cathedral of North Yorkshire' because of its size. We were met by the organist, Alan Morton, who gave us a talk about the history of the organ. The organ is a three manual. It needs a lot of work which is being done in stages by Geoffrey Coffin. The choir organ is unenclosed and is to be seen on the north wall of the chancel. Several members were able to play the instrument before we continued our journey to Felixkirk.

Felixkirk is a hamlet with an inn, but no shops. The church is small, but delightful with several unusual features including a very interesting rounded apse. There has been a church here since the twelfth century and signs of this early church can still be found. We were welcomed by the organist who introduced the organ, but didn't want to demonstrate it himself. The organ, built in 1890, is of historic interest. It is a two manual Walcker, a German builder. It has a detached console and a straight pedal board and the player sits with his/her back to the organ facing east.

The organ was once operated by a water engine positioned below the organ floor. Members were able to play the instrument before leaving for Sutton-under-Whitstonecliffe for lunch at the Whitstonecliffe Inn.

Visit to Coxwold.



Externally, a charming medieval church with an unusual octagonal tower; internally, very much a protestant rectangular preaching house with royal and local supporting armorials where the "Doom" wall painting would have been, plus a wonderful example of a double-decker pulpit.

What appeared to be the chancel/sanctuary was in gallery to the local combined with a of a most individual Cranmer's 1552 rubricks communion table to be set chancel, the priest to the the people gathered (even seated) round as if for a meal: Coxwold's rail



fact a memorial manorial family communion rail design. ordered the east-west in the north side and

Coxwold's rail

allowed this gathering, but kneeling, with the priest able to move between the communicants.



The organ was a joy. Sited on a west-end gallery which probably used to house the 18th/19th century gallery singers and band and, later, the 21 stop Denman of York pipe organ in its “unusual case of very old oak with a good deal of bold and rough carving”, it had room to speak – and room to accommodate those eager to play its dark natural and white sharps!

The organist has a fine collection of Cartoons and printouts blutack-ed to the case[out of sight of the congregation!], including the well-known Hoffnung, but my favourite was “ . . . playing of Organs, wherin I have consumed vainly the

greatest part of my life. John Merbecke. Preface to Concordance 1550.

The delight of the visit was most of a Bach Trio Sonata played from memory on this 8,4,III; 8,4,4,II; 16, tracker action, cedar of Lebanon cased masterpiece of the organ builder’s art.

RF

Osmotherly

We arrived late in the afternoon at Osmotherly and were welcomed by the organist and his wife with a lovely spread of cakes and tea – most appreciated.

The organ is a Conacher and has been transferred here from a Methodist church and rebuilt by Peter Wood of Harrogate.

The organist, Mike Hunter, is working very hard to build up a musical tradition. He has arranged a bursary for an organ scholar at the church and this appears to be a great success. Anthony and Richard met the organ scholar during our break for refreshments. Regular recitals are held and musicians are encouraged to go and stay in the village.

We were all impressed by Mikes enthusiasm and wish him success in all his ventures.

Profiles

Your president has suggested that you, yes you, write a short profile about

yourself. As your secretary I have taken first spot, mainly because I don't expect a rush of offers.

Here goes!

What qualifications do I have, as a non-player, to be your secretary? The answer is 'none'.

My first introduction to the organ was when our church had a new (to us) organ installed. I think it was at the start of the war as I recollect that the organ had come from a city centre church. I think I was probably at the opening recital because my mother wouldn't have dreamed of leaving me 'home alone'. I know I was bored until the deep pedal stop was used and I felt the vibrations through the floor.

The previous organ had been hand blown and this one was very 'upmarket' as it had a blower in the caretaker's house. The family didn't really appreciate having the blower as the sound dominated conversation when anyone was practising and that usually occurred when the children were going to bed!

I heard the organ every week, but thought little of it until we got a new organist who practised after evensong. One evening I had to go and ask him to stop as we couldn't hear our speaker at the youth club meeting in the vestry.

I know that he wasn't too pleased, but later that year asked me out on a date – to the Ascension Day Evensong at St. Barnabas' Church in Heaton. That set the pattern for our courtship – “come to church, I'll leave the side door open for you and we will go for a walk when you arrive” – yes, probably over an hour after I arrived. As his practice was done at Sir Titus's church at Saltaire it was quite pleasant sitting and listening and then walking along the canal to Bingley or Riddlesden. We were fit in those days!

It is still difficult to get him off the organ bench, but at least it is in the front room now and I can always come up here to the computer and while away the time writing things for the newsletter ---

SS

News from 'Down under'

Some of you will remember Bill Slessor who recently moved to Australia. I received an email from him and share some of his news with you.

He is living in Manly, near Sydney and is playing the organ at St. Matthews' Anglican Church.

'The organ is a large three manual, but in need of considerable attention. (Some of your members will envy the tuning contract of every two months).

Despite the use of a band for the other services there is strong support for the organ which has a very good reputation around Sydney. Large organs are rather rare in parish churches around here and some of those that exist even in Cathedrals and Town Halls, are of doubtful quality.'

He ends by inviting anyone visiting Sydney to contact him and he will arrange for them to play the organ!

I don't think Bibbys run trips to Sydney.

SS

Subscriptions

Please consider completing the Standing Order Form. It will help some of us who forget when our subscriptions are due!

Gift Aid

Everyone who wishes to Gift Aid their subscriptions needs to complete the enclosed form. The wording on this form differs slightly from that on previous forms. Our treasurer, Mark Naylor, urges you to fill in this form which complies with new HMRC regulations. Previous declarations are no longer valid.

Secretary's Notes

Important notice.

The September meeting at St. John's Great Horton is the Members' Recital.

Please let me know if you are going to play and I will send you a specification of the organ which is a three manual.

I am very sorry that this mailing is so late. I offer my sincere apologies and hope that you haven't been too inconvenienced by this.

Included in this mailing – Newsletter, Syllabus, Directory, Subscription Form, Standing Order Form, Organists' Review flyer, Cathedral Recital leaflet and Lunch booking form.