

BOA NEWSLETTER

***BRADFORD ORGANISTS'
ASSOCIATION***

November 2013

President's Letter

Dear Friends

I am writing this letter whilst enjoying a sunny weekend break in the beautiful Northumbrian countryside where the colours of the autumn leaves at this time of year are a sight to behold and where the responsibilities of the daily round and common task can be laid aside if only for a few days – except of course when the deadline for the President's letter looms!

Members present at our meeting at Bingley last week enjoyed a really excellent, informative and amusing talk by Jonathan Bielby MBE, illustrated by items played on the organ and also, in the case of one of his choral works, by CD. A report on this meeting appears elsewhere in this issue of the Newsletter.

What a pity though that only 15 members turned up to listen (out of a total membership of about 100). Admittedly it was a dark wet windy inhospitable night and I can understand that some members would have been deterred from turning out by this. But regrettably a turnout of between 15 to 25 percent of the membership seems to be the norm. Your Council and in particular your Secretary spend much time and effort arranging interesting meetings and obtaining the services in many instances of leaders within the profession. It is disappointing both to the Council and indeed to the Speakers that so few members turn up.

Of course, there are many perfectly good reasons why members cannot attend from time to time (illness, family gatherings etc) but our turnouts contrast greatly with, for example, certain U3A groups whose membership is not dissimilar from ours and who regularly obtain attendances of over 90%

Hence I am forced to wonder if, despite our best endeavours, we are doing something wrong. Would members prefer afternoon meetings perhaps? Would members prefer different subjects to be covered? Would you prefer a change of date from the third Saturday of the month?

I would be very glad if members would approach me at the forthcoming annual lunch, with any ideas they may have – or email me at jae@embsay-kirk.com.

The Annual Lunch this year is on Saturday 16th November at Oakwood Hall Bingley at 12.30 for 1pm. The Guest Speaker is Kevin Riley, the newly appointed Head of Bradford Grammar School, previously Head of the Harrow International School in Bangkok, and before that Head of Bristol Cathedral School. He has been involved extensively in charitable work, is an avid theatre-goer, a keen rugby fan and referee and enjoys participating in school plays. Truly a versatile and capable person.

Do please come to the annual dinner to hear him. Bring a guest too, and enjoy the convivial company and the excellent food served at Oakwood Hall.

Tony Edwards

Obituary - Michael Fletcher 1940 – 2013

I was deeply saddened by the recent death of Michael Fletcher aged seventy three who was a member of the Association for a number of years. He was a well-known organ tuner and builder and looked after many organs in the Bradford area as well as organs in many parts of the country. During his lifetime he held several organist and choirmaster posts in the Bradford area.

I first knew Michael when Ken Fell was organist and choirmaster at Saltaire U.R.C.

In 1991 Michael rebuilt the organ at Saltaire and with assistance from Ken the organ was enlarged. Over the years we have had many Members' Recitals at Saltaire.

Michael took over from Ken as organist and choirmaster when Ken moved to the north-east and was still organist at his death.

After the death of his wife he purchased a brown Labrador puppy which he called Mabel after a lady in Saltaire choir whose husband, Donald Goldthorpe, was a former organist and choirmaster at Saltaire.

Michael will be greatly missed by the choir and congregation at Saltaire where he was an Elder. He was always ready to help and gave his time generously to the church.

The funeral was well attended and included several BOA members.

Robert Moorby

Meetings

September 21st Members' Recital

Despite the poor attendance of only thirteen members, including the recitalists, this was a very pleasant evening weatherwise and very enjoyable musically.

The organ is a 3 manual Driver and Haigh.

John Chapman began the recital with Grand Chorus, Opus 84 by Felix Alexandre Guilmant. This was full of stirring chords and evoked a sense of great occasion and splendour. (According to my Junior Companion to Music, Guilmant was awarded an Honorary D.Mus. by the University of Manchester during one of his visits to Britain.)

Next David Kirk played Saraband by Herbert Howells which to me portrayed sadness/dispiritedness as if the composer was conveying a dance by someone deeply disquieted.

Nun Danket Alle Gott then for Karg –Elert!! His piece which followed was a welcome contrast, cheerful and lively and I warmly remember hearing it played many times during my years at St. Columba's, Horton, Bradford BD7.

Following this Edward Scott played three pieces in more reflective mood. The first, a piece by Alan Grey (from the Little Organ Book), was gentle and tranquil; the second was Fidelis by Percy Whitlock and showed different tone colours; and thirdly Jesu Dulcis Memoria by Walford Davies which was quietly uplifting.

Finally Jonathan Eyre played an improvisation on the hymn tune "Grosser Gott" – Holy God, We Praise Thy Name. This was a very nice impromptu 'Theme and Variations'. He then played the Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C, BWV 564, by J.S. Bach. This was splendid, exhilarating and a brilliant finale to the programme.

Many thanks to all four of our members for giving us such a musical treat, and also to Sheila for the scrumptious baking which accompanied the tea/coffee afterwards.

Alison Kimber

Bingley Parish Church 19th October

“Talk on Composing” by Jonathan Bielby.

After Jonathan was introduced by President Tony, Jonathan told us that in fact his talk would be based on “Let the mighty organ roar” and roar it did as he played his Carillon de Wakefield which was based on the chimes of the bells of Wakefield Cathedral and ended with the full use of the cymbalstern.

Why was he a composer? He asked. Well, he began when he was 11 years old when he composed a fugue, which he proceeded to play. It was very much a beginner’s piece, but it was a start and we were delighted to hear it. He loved his music and things just lead on from there.

Jonathan then played his 2 Hymn Preludes - Marlborough Gate and Dun Aluinn which employed the Krumhorn and sounded well.

His next compositions were 5 of his Nine Variations on a well known tune. He set us a quiz as to which composer each was based on. We were lucky he did not enquire from each of us what we had thought - several members gave correct answers. I did not do well!!!!

Jonathan then went onto his Choral Pieces.

A CD of his “Let the roaring organ loudly play” plus fugue for “Woods” was enjoyed.

He told us that he felt that compositions should start where we are now, musically speaking and not venture off into serial or other off beat styles and should at times bring a smile to the hearers face. I believe that we all agreed with this.

We then heard the finale from his major work, “This Precious Earth”, which is 40 minutes in length. One feature of this work which was inspired by the thoughts of climate change, was where at one point a loud organ chord was held at the same time as the blower was switched off. This proved to be very effective as it indicated the world’s end. The work ended with the children’s choir singing All things bright and Beautiful, very evocative. Another feature of

the work was the inclusion of a didgeridoo. Very effective and certainly different. Another smile brought to our faces.

We were introduced to his wife, Jane, a very stylish lady, who he asked to sing his Mass of St Piran (Cornish), Jonathan to accompany. Unfortunately she commenced singing the Gloria whilst he started with the Kyries. Problems!!!! Eventually, after some amusement, all was sorted out. We were impressed with this work which was composed with simplicity in mind.

We were then invited to sing his hymn “Carharrack” (a village in Cornwall). We all stood to sing, we sang loud and well. It was a lovely tune and easy to pick up.

Time was passing quickly and he wondered if he should stop so that we could have our tea and buns, but as we were enjoying his talk so much we asked him to carry on.

Jonathan then played “Pratty Flowers” composed for the wedding of John Scott in New York and then went on to his “Francis Fandango” composed in honour of Francis Jackson’s 90th birthday. This made an excellent end to his Talk/Lecture which ended at 9pm. We all retired to the Church hall for our refreshments organised by Val and Sheila – thanks.

Those of us who were there (all 15) found the event most interesting and entertaining as Jonathan made an excellent speaker and of course, player.

John Hammond

Profile by Philip Tordoff

Although I was taught the piano by my father from the age of five, I had no interest whatsoever in organs. I attended St. Barnabas Church, Hightown, Liversedge at the time, and I remember telling my parents that ‘The organist must be a good player, ‘cos he can play two keyboards at once!’ Yet this same organist would not allow me to play the organ there.

It was only in my first year at Whitcliffe Mount Grammar School, Cleckheaton, and a shy twelve year old, that my father suddenly announced that he thought it would be a good idea if I were to learn the organ. I accepted this without enthusiasm, finding out that it was because if I became a church organist, I could earn ONE GUINEA if I played for a wedding, an amount which rose dramatically over the next half century.

Once I had acquired the necessary interest, it rapidly became an obsession, taking over valuable time that should have been spent on other subjects. During physics and other lessons at school, I was designing organ specifications under the desk – each one having something like a Contra Bourdon 32ft or even a Contra Dulciana, 32ft. However, at the age of thirteen I spent nearly a year as organist of Broomfield Methodist Church, Cleckheaton, followed by two years at St. Andrew's, Oakenshaw and then a further eighteen months at St. John's, Bierley, Bradford, before taking up the Organ Scholarship at Downing College, Cambridge.

The rest, as they say, is History.

Thank you Philip for sending your profile. I was just getting ready to try 'twisting arms' when it dropped through the letterbox.

It would be good if I could have several profiles ready for the next newsletter. S.

AN INVITATION from Paul Fisher, who invites you to his 70th Birthday Recital at Bradford Cathedral on 22nd November at 7pm.

The programme will include music by Bach, Vierne, Karg Elert, Dupre, Noel Rawsthorne, Paul Fisher and others.

His poster says, "for £8 you can enjoy lovely music and wine during the interval".

Paul altered the date of his recital as it originally clashed with our meeting. I am sure that we will all be offering him our congratulations and joining him if we are able. He is hoping to raise some money towards the cathedral organ fund.

Secretary's notes

Please add or amend your Directory

Change of addresses

Rev. G. Atherton, 113a, Stocks Bank Road, Mirfield WF14 0EU
01924 650225

Mr. & Mrs. P. Barnes, 'Newhaven', Sunnyhill Grove, Keighley BD21 1RU
01535 959047

Welcome to new junior member

Sebastian Brandon Blake Storey, Tarn Grange, 10 Esholt Lane, Esholt,
Shipley BD17 7RN 01274 593545

Recital and Concert List

Friday, November 1st at 12.30pm
St. Margaret's, Ilkley Christopher Rathbone
Organ Recital marking bicentenary of Henry Smart

Saturday, November 23rd at 7.30pm
"Ye Sons of Britain" Cantores Olicanae
Conductor – Jonathan Brigg Organist – Christopher Rathbone

Holy Ascension Parish Church, Settle
Thursday, 7th November at 12.30pm
Organ Recital – Paul Fisher

Saturday, 23rd November at 7.30pm
Organ Recital Music from 1950s – Edward Scott