

BRADFORD ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

Founded 1910

Reg. Charity no. 700225

**A Musical Fellowship
Newsletter May 2017**

President's letter

Hello all you organ lovers!

As your new president, I find it somewhat daunting writing this letter since I have not written anything of length for many years. (Except my shopping list!)

I well remember John Chapman ringing me up asking me to consider becoming President Elect. I was sitting in the conservatory wondering if I was the right choice: after all I had only been a member for five years at that point. I thought there must be many members who were more eligible than me simply by length of membership. However it is with great pleasure and some trepidation that I have accepted the role.

At this point, on behalf of the members, I would like to thank John for all his work as President during the last two years. On my own behalf I would like to thank John for his encouragement and help during my time as President Elect.

Firstly can I make a heartfelt plea for more members and other interested people that you may know to join us on a jolly jaunt to Cambridge this June? This may be your chance to experience fully the acoustics of Kings' College Chapel and hear the famous organ which we know has recently been completely refurbished. You may have seen a description of this recently in The Organists' Review.

You all know that we have two 'home-grown' organ scholars at Cambridge, who were nurtured by us the BOA. Edward Scott, of course, gave them organ lessons and set them on the path to great things. What other association can boast of having two scholars at Cambridge?

Some of you have been members for many years. My joining in 2010 makes me a relative newcomer or 'offcumden' as we say in Yorkshire!

My own interest in the organ was sparked by two things: being in my local church choir (St James Chapelthorpe, Wakefield) and being taken aged eleven, by my father to a recital by Fernando Germani at Leeds Parish Church (as it was then). After the recital my father purchased an LP of Germani playing the organ of St Lawrence Alkmaar. The sound of this organ made a deep impression on me, hence my preference for the Dutch and North German schools. Reading through the specification, I noted that it only had one 16ft flue stop on the pedals of such a large instrument.

I realise that this kind of instrument would not do justice to the English Choral tradition having evolved through the Oxford Movement in the mid 19th century.

In this time of diminishing congregations, it would be interesting to know how many of us are teaching young people the organ and whether these scholars would be willing to take up the challenge of playing for Sunday service in local churches. At times I fear that the 'guitar strumming fraternity' will take over!

..... and finally I share with you a musical quotation: Prokofiev declared on hearing the music of Stravinsky:

'Bach on the wrong notes'

David Kirk

Congratulations to Edward Scott on being made an Hon. ARSCM.

Meeting reports

February 18th “The Rise and Fall and Rise Again of the Cinema Organ”



14 members foregathered in Haworth Road Methodist Church where we could see a screen and enough computers, speakers and projectors to service the needs of the average school classroom or even the desires of Charismatic Worship groups. However, once fired up, I for one marvelled at the magic involved in producing, from a speaker box small enough to put in a briefcase, the depth of Bass sound that one associates with very large woofers!

David Lowe (ex choirboy and former organist at St Peter’s Church, Shipley), with his friend and colleague from the Saltaire Wurlitzer Organ group, began by describing his good fortune in having, as organist & choirmaster, Frank Greenwood, who played St Peter’s Brindley & Foster on a Sunday and the Wurlitzer in the New Victoria at other times – once David had experienced the delights of the Cinema Organ he was hooked.

The history began in the world of the cinema where pianos and orchestras were used to accompany silent films – but orchestras were expensive and needed scores to be prepared. Organs in public halls and concert halls were already popular in the nineteenth century and it was realised that an organ and an organist was more flexible – and cheaper than an orchestra.

As movies became more popular, entrepreneurs looked for spaces where large numbers could watch their films. Local town halls were an obvious resource – and most of them had organs: the first audiences at ‘silent films’ with organ music were hearing the sort of instrument they would have heard in St George’s Hall, Liverpool, or St George’s Hall, Bradford (ironic that at one period Bradford’s St George’s Hall was a cinema!). The natural progression from showing films in large halls with an organ was that, when purpose-built Kinemas/Cinemas/Movie Theatres were financed, an organ was a *sine qua non*!

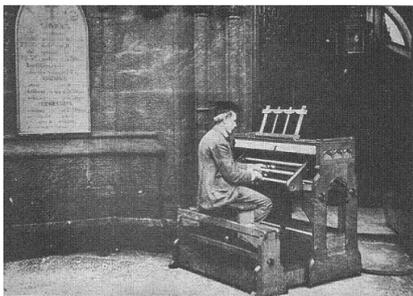
From this point we had the benefit of high quality images on the screen from one computer and superb sound from the other – and one could understand why two people were needed for this presentation.

The development of the Cinema Organ was made possible by the influence of one man – an Englishman called Robert Hope-Jones. Often referred to as “Hopeless-Jones” by the generation which

followed him, he was in fact at the cutting edge of organ action as well as the sound palette an organ could produce. He believed that an organ should be more orchestral. The problem with “cutting edge” is that success is dependent on refinement and development, but as Dr Colin Pykett states: *“In the space of the mere fourteen years or so during which he was active in Britain*

Robert Hope-Jones changed the face of organ building across the globe for ever.”

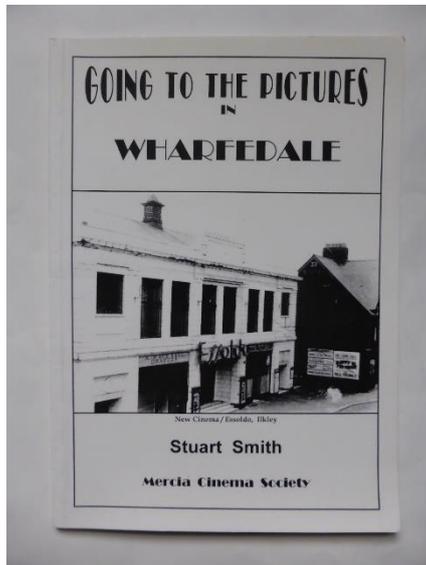
And *“the 1889 organ at Birkenhead contained all of the action, switching and circuit techniques which were immediately taken up and applied in electric actions worldwide. They were not displaced until electronics began to appear in organ building in the 1960s, and even today organs*



are still built or rebuilt with electromechanical actions and components which are functionally identical to those invented by Hope-Jones. That remains the measure of his legacy and achievements.” His sudden emigration to the USA in 1903 put him where his ideas and techniques were appreciated – not only his integrated electric actions and “second touch”, but his use of units of pipes rather than discrete ranks; his development of the Diaphone, Tibia Clausa and tuned Foghorns for his “orchestral voices”; his use of stop keys. By 1911 his company employed 112 workers at its peak, producing 246 organs. But shortly after merging his organ business with Wurlitzer, he committed suicide in 1914 in Rochester, New York, frustrated by his new association with the Wurlitzer company, it is said. Never the less, their insistence on the best not only made them expensive, but meant that Hope-Jones’s inventions were refined and perfected.

In a talk packed with information we learned that Wurlitzer, from Saxony, were established in 1853 as importers of instruments, and that their organs were intended for “Bars”, not cinemas. They built 2340 instruments – more organs than the rest of the builders combined. The first to be exported to the UK was 1st December 1924 and was opened in The Picture House, Walsall, in late January 1925. It is now in the Congregational Church in Beer, Devon, where regular concert and shows are hosted on the Beer Wurlitzer. The largest Wurlitzer was the four-[manual](#)/58-rank dual console instrument at [Radio City Music Hall](#) in New York City. Both consoles can be played at the same time.

As early as 1920 Saltaire’s newly opened Picture House had a Reed Organ and Orchestra and Shipley’s Prince’s Hall had a pipe organ. Only three cinemas in the Bradford and Shipley area had reed organs – the other two being the Regent in Manningham Lane and the Carlton in Manchester Road. The Theatre Royal, Manningham Lane, had a pipe organ by W. Andrews, who enlarged it in the 1930s and boasted 2 octaves of tubular bells!



Huddersfield's firm of Conacher was active in the cinema organ world as was Leeds's Abbott & Smith (the Coliseum, Leeds), and Fitton & Haley who provided an organ for Ilkley's Essoldo Cinema, and were noted for their stop tabbed, colour-coded consoles. The specifications of these organs, however, appear to be no different to a church organ.

As the 20s moved on to the 30s the "movies" became the "talkies" and even the smallest cinemas converted to sound-track speakers, yet the cinema organ survived although its original purpose no longer existed: it was, by now, an institution and provided entertainment before the screening and after it had finished – and the organist was a star and a showman! The rise and fall of the console was but one of the glitzy bits of stagemanship.

David spoke of his own links to Frank Greenwood and his playing of the New Vic Wurlitzer and the one at Hampsthwaite. He gave us descriptions, as well as soundtracks, of the stars of the cinema organ – of Reginald Foort an early broadcaster on the BBC's Theatre Organ but more famous for his

massive 5 manual 27 rank J. P. Möller touring organ; of Sandy Macpherson, Reginald Dixon (who founded the Lancaster School of Music), Henry Murtagh, of Robinson Cleaver and not forgetting Norman Briggs and Arnold Loxam.

But by the 1960s, cinemas as well as organs found a shrinking audience – the impact of television saw the demise of the "local" cinemas: tastes changed; maintenance costs increased. This was the period when cinema organ aficionados formed groups to preserve organs facing the scrapper's yard after "redundancy" from Cinemas, Rollerinas, Ice Rinks, Ballrooms, Hotels and Bars, Schools, Pizza Restaurants, etc. It is thanks to the C.O.T. that we can take a trip to Saltaire's Victoria Hall and listen to a Wurlitzer organ in superb condition every 4 weeks.

My apologies for not being able to include everything we learned!

Ron Fletcher

March 18th Organists I have known – Rev. Andrew Clarke

It was very interesting to hear how organists have been an influence in the life of our speaker.

Andrew illustrated his talk with pictures and recordings which had significance for him.

At eight years old Rev. Andrew Clarke's brother took him to join the church choir thereby earning himself a bonus! That was the start of a lifetime's involvement with the church, leading him from chorister in Streatham, to priest in Bingley.

A fire in 1966 destroyed the organ, the choir robes and the RSCM Certificate signed by Sir Sydney Nicholson. The latter was the only thing that couldn't be replaced! The 2-manual Walker organ was rebuilt with tracker action and replaced in a gallery at the west end of the church. The organist, Tom McLelland - Young influenced Andrew's appreciation of music.

He was not successful with his application to be a Choral Scholar at Cambridge, but was accepted as a student at Edinburgh where he became a Lay Clerk at St. Mary's Cathedral. The organist, Dennis Townhill, was a perfectionist who had a lasting influence on Andrew.

After Theological College Andrew was appointed curate at Christ Church, Harrogate where Derek Bolton was organist. Later he went as curate to St. Margaret's Thornbury before his appointment to the parish of Holy Trinity, Bingley in 1993. Robert Sudall and Keith Thompson have been his organists.

It was good to hear Andrew say that he felt that he had been blessed in his relationships with the organists he had met and worked with. He expressed the opinion that a choir provided a good basic education for children.

Thank you Andrew for showing us how organists and choirmasters can influence the lives they touch.

April 22nd Organs in Bradford 1922 – 1938 – Ron Fletcher

Ron Fletcher and Edward Scott met as choristers at Horsforth Parish Church under the tutelage of E.C. Swinburne Garrett.

At one time the Scott garage groaned under the piles of music (complete sets of anthems, canticles etc.) given into Edward's keeping by ECSG who was sure that they would be very useful.

Ron inherited ECSG's books and papers relating to the organ. This inheritance was the basis of Ron's talk.

SG had collected organ specifications from near and far. He recorded every detail meticulously Ron showed us pages and pages of handwritten specifications saying that he had wondered what to do with them. However, he felt that so much time and effort had gone into producing them that he was obliged to continue the work in some form or other.

Ron started cataloguing the work, but soon found that though he had barely started he had enough 'L' pages (London!!) to make a book. He realised that he needed to restrict his research to one area – Bradford and its environs..

This has turned Ron into an amateur detective. Over the years Churches and organs have disappeared and then reappeared in other places. I wonder where this research will lead Ron. He has discovered an amazing amount of fascinating background details.

Will there be a reference book where students can research for organs built by "Walkers", "Rushworth and Dreaper", "Harrisons" or another of the 200 organ builders that Ron has found during this interesting tour.

Not being an organist my use for organ specifications was as an alternative to counting sheep when unable to sleep. I was amazed to find Ron's talk so interesting and I look forward to the next instalment.

Sheila Scott