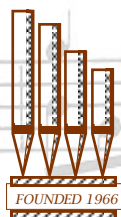


# **THE NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANIST**

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THE NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANIST

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## WELCOME

It's hard to imagine that it's getting on for three years when the idea of an annual publication was first mentioned. We knew that some of our members aren't able to get to all the events in our Programme but we thought they might be interested to read about some broader aspects of NHOA and the wider organ world.

Of course, in the last couple of years our activities have been severely skewed by the pandemic but as with most dark clouds there are silver linings. Our friends and colleagues have continued to explore all kinds of aspects of the king of instruments reinforcing the notion that 'the organ is for everyone'. Whether you love to listen, are tempted to tinker or play for pleasure, we have been delighted to see and hear about your enthusiasm for music and the organ.

In this THIRD edition of The North Hampshire Organist members from far and near tell us about how they regard favourite pieces of music; Gillian Lloyd gives insights in teaching the organ to young students, and Martin Barnes and I spill the beans about the video we made for the Royal College of Organists' "Organ Show". You can read a review of the recently published memoirs of Roy Massey, organist and master of choristers at Hereford Cathedral and get a glimpse of the goings-on during last summer's tour in Kent.

With many thanks to John Mansfield for editing another excellent edition of TNHO, we hope you enjoy it and look forward to seeing and hearing more tidings from your organ world!

*Geoff Willis*

## MY FAVOURITE ORGAN COMPOSER

Organists are often asked what is their favourite hymn. My answer is “none”. Having been involved in the choice of hymns for services for over 50 years, I consciously avoid ones I particularly like, and include some that I don’t in fairness to those of other tastes. I have chosen three of my favourites for my funeral; *Michael, Coe Fen* and the choral version of *Corverdale* at New English Praise 700.

Similarly, I don’t always choose music I like for use as a voluntary. Early in my playing days I found myself choosing from a small pool of pieces and too often repeating them. I then started keeping records of the music I played at the end of the service to avoid repetition. *Sunday by Sunday* is a useful resource for seeking out ‘new’ music, and I have a notebook listing the pieces I have based on hymn tunes.

More importantly, my wife has two favourites: the *Trumpet Tune* from John Stanley’s *Suite in D* and *Prière à Notre Dame* from *Suite Gothique*.

My organ teacher often played the Mendelssohn sonatas before weddings, and these impressed me as a choirboy and I was pleased when he taught me to play some of them, and I dip into them from time to time. I also became hooked on romantic French music, which plays well on my organ at St. Chad’s. I gained several volumes of Guilman’s *Pièces dans différents styles* and Dubois’ *Douze Pièces pour Orgue* from the widow of a deceased organist. I actually recorded the *Grand Choeur* from the latter for BBC Radio York by accident one day, when the producer suddenly asked for something to fill up the time at the end of a service we made for them, and that was all I had readily to hand. More recently, I was asked to play some light non-liturgical music prior to a memorial service and found the book *The Organ Music of Malcolm Archer* ideal for the occasion; tuneful and varied pieces and easily accessible. I have also recently been taken by the music of Denis Bédard, which is quite refreshingly different. Then there are all those glorious chorale preludes of Walther.

But no, I don’t have one composer I could call a favourite.

*Bob Batchelor*

## My favourite composer

Asking me to choose a favourite composer is a hard one, as I don't have one, but tend to have phases. The most recent phase was finding free downloads of Max Reger's Chorale Preludes – the ones I chose were mostly of the *langsam* variety. I love the crunchy harmonies and series of suspensions that are always resolved eventually. C H Trevor was responsible for this having included a few in his collections.

Before that, following a prompt from my brother, I dug out my 1969 copy of George Thalben-Ball's 113 Interludes. The pages were getting soft and hard to turn; also I found some of the two-stave pedal arrangements rather cramped and hard to follow. So I went through the book, choosing the ones I could, or wanted, to play, (maybe I shouldn't be saying this, but GTB has been long gone), scanned them into Sibelius, produced three-stave versions and printed them on to thin card. Both these and the Reger pieces are fine for preludes, postludes, and filling in during communion.

The Reger downloads were obtained from the IMSLIP site. Having enjoyed playing Karg-Elert's *Freu dich sehr, o meine Seele*, and *Es ist ein' Ros' entsprungen*, from various sources, I had a look to see if there were more similar ones I could play, found the Chorale Improvisations and selected the more gentle ones. Then I found his *14 Interludes in Various Keys*, which, although short, I enjoyed the variety of styles, and the modulations – some of the 'various keys' were in the same piece.

Over a year ago I went through Bach's *Orgelbüchlein*, and made a similar selection that tasked my limited technique enough to need working at.

If you had asked the same question in the 1960s I would probably have gone for 18th Century English music, having found some delightful tracker-action organs that could make the most of the pieces. They don't have the same impact on the electronic organs I have access to – 1987 Norwich Sprowston B, and Omegan 7100, also probably 1980s.

*Chris Ingram*

My favourite organ composer: Jehan Alain

My admiration for the organ works of Jehan Alain started when I was just a young student. One winter's evening, I went with some friends to an organ recital at New College, Oxford. The instrument there is splendid and the atmosphere slightly unnerving, with lamps only lighting up the choir stalls and most of the chapel in darkness. *Trois Danses* was the last piece. Having played mostly Bach and a bit of Mendelssohn, I was startled to hear such strange rhythms, weird harmonies, moments in which Shostakovich, jazz and plainchant were all intertwined. It is quite a long piece, but the audience were clearly spellbound. The organ worked up to a crescendo in the last section of *Luttes*. The final Bb chords - everyone in the chapel leapt in the air in wild applause - I have never seen enthusiasm like it at any other concert. (I once had an old lady leap from her seat, but she had to be escorted out for a rest. I had drawn the tuba magna rather than the salicional for the priest to get his note during some particularly quite and soporific prayers). As soon as I could I bought a copy of Alain's organ works Volume 1, making quite a hole in my grant at eight pounds thirty pence!

Since then I have loved many of Alain's organ works, though I must confess there are some I don't like and others are rather difficult. In concerts I have played *Le jardin suspendu*, which is normally well received. People love the *Deux Danses a Agni Yavishta*. My wife and I both adore the *Litanies*, which I often play on Christmas day. The *Postlude pour l'office de complies* is a work of genius and simply beautiful. The bell harmonics overplayed with chanting monks is most original. I love it; strangely it always gets a mixed reception. The *Choral Cistercien* is also a miniature gem. I was fortunate enough to hear Marie Claire Alain perform her brother's works in London about thirty years ago. She certainly performed with life and rhythm. The *Fantaisies* are strange and the *Lamento* is so very tragic, I hardly ever play it. The *Variations sur un Theme de Clement Jannequin* start well, but soon lose my interest.

During lockdown I acquired some of Alain's piano works. They are interesting. For me *Ecce Ancilla Domini* is a lovely piece I think everyone would enjoy. He gives his piano pieces creative titles. I like "*Il pleuvra toute la journée*" (it will rain all day - should be the motto of Sheffield where I live). Another one is "*Heureusement la bonne fée sa marraine y mit bon ordre*" (Happily fairy godmother put everything right) written for his sister Marie-Claire when she was five. The piano works are miniatures, some religious, some humorous, many with the unmistakable Alain harmonies. If you can cope with the accidentals, most are worth playing.

I don't know enough about his choral works. One day I would like to do the *Chanson à bouche fermée* (Hummed song) with a choir and there is another amazing piece in which the choir imitate raindrops.

Having looked through the list of his complete works, it would seem that much is still unpublished. It may be that there are some hidden gems to be discovered. It would also be nice to have some slightly more affordable editions, as the ones I have are rather expensive and not terribly well printed, particularly the piano music.

I hope you have enjoyed my thought on Jehan Alain. Put on the kettle, get some hot buttered toast and settle down to the *Trois Danses*.

David Pering, Longley, Sheffield

### My favourite composer

There's an old saying "it's better to keep your mouth shut and seem a fool than to open it and remove all doubt". I fear I'm about to remove all doubt as I hesitate to accept the premise implicit in the title as:

i) many composers have written just one or two pieces that have stood the test of time. You can't be a favourite composer with just a one-hit wonder to your credit. However I could name 50 or more such pieces high on my list of favourites by composers such as Grison, Zipoli, Balakirev, Mulet, Dohnanyi etc

ii) there's music I don't properly understand as I haven't given it enough depth. There's nothing like an exam and a good teacher to make one appreciate Messiaen and Alain. I fear several composers could possibly be a favourite if I had delved into the details of their music

iii) I like some Mozart, some Schumann, some Schubert etc but not all Mozart, Schumann and Schubert and the proportion of the greatest composers' outputs that I enjoy is not sufficiently large for me to crown them my favourite. At the risk of inviting controversy I love every movement of all Beethoven's piano concertos but I flinch at the heaviness of some of the downbeats in his symphonies and if anyone mentions *Für Elise* I reach for the gin bottle.

iv) the pleasure that I derive from some compositions has waned over the years. Sticking to Beethoven I'm still uplifted by his Waldstein Sonata but I've heard the first movement of the Moonlight enough times for several lifespans. If my criteria were defined by which composer still has the same impact as when I first heard his music it would be Chopin. Whilst I admire the perfection of form in Bach's keyboard/instrumental music what makes Chopin retain my interest is a) what he does with a melody - the theme from his 3rd Ballade is a masterclass in developing a modest melody into a grand finale without constantly repeating the melody in the same style as many classical and baroque composers do b) his breadth of variety and sensitivity: sticking just with his etudes, what a contrast between Winter Wind and Tristesse c) constant new motifs so that I sometimes forget the main subject!

Chopin's 1st Ballade is the most recorded piece of piano music on Youtube. I guess some players would switch to the 3rd Sonata if it weren't so difficult. There are over 100 of his pieces which I still enjoy. Chopin would be my favourite if it weren't for one-hit wonders: music I haven't tried to understand.....

*James West*

My favourite music type is probably variations on hymn tunes, by people like Buxtehude, Bach, Brahms, Peeters. Bux prob the top of those, since he was such an inventor and explorer, helped along by nobody before him.

I suppose you could therefore characterise my early musical life as an attempt to replace the saccharine of Sunday School with something more adult and rational.

Looking around for other material - I can't bear fugues much - I discovered Mendelssohn's 6 Sonatas. Free-form stuff, and incredibly musical throughout. I gather he was commissioned to write them, and utterly overwhelmed the recipient with his generosity. Over 100 pages when about 10 were expected. Each one is pages long. Very romantic, but with an inescapable grasp of form.

Perhaps my favourite is No 6, and inside that, the last 2 pages feel particularly treasurable. They remind me of a version of "Oh trust in the Lord ...", but of course Mendelssohn is never imitative. The form and structure is so ingestible that, in the last 2 bars from the end, you can still feel the entire romantic thing even though all you are playing is a single note in the RH. A very feely gentleman.

Finger arthritis - and the fact my left leg doesn't know whether it's in Surrey or Hampshire - mean I now struggle to play this, and some of my gruesome disharmonies are very painful. Wouldn't dream of exposing my repeated errors in public. I guess part of maturity is about knowing when to give up!

*Jo Huddleston*



**How do you teach the organ to young students? Gillian Lloyd gives us her insight in an interview with Geoff Willis**

*Geoff:*

*I know many of our members are interested in getting younger people involved with the organ. You have mentioned you're teaching young students at the moment. What ages are they?*

*Gillian:*

My four current students are Charlotte, who is 11; her brother Alfred, 14, our young member Amelia, 17, and our minister's son, Taylor, who is 18.

*Geoff:*

*What do they say about why they are attracted to the organ and do they already have some keyboard skills?*

*Gillian:*

All four of my students have some keyboard skills ranging from around Grade 5 through to diploma level. Charlotte is particularly interested in the various sounds that she can make: Alfred, already a diploma-level pianist, responds to the technical challenge of adding feet to the keyboard mix, and is excited by playing Bach well: Taylor is determined to conquer 'the' Toccata and Fugue in D minor, but also wants to learn 'Jesu, joy' and a lively Offertoire by Batiste: Amelia is keen to broaden her musical skills and experience.

*Geoff:*

*How do you introduce them to the instrument? Do you go straight into the technicalities or encourage them to explore?*

*Gillian:*

I generally begin by asking what is different about the organ as opposed to the piano, and where the sound comes from. At Guildford

URC we have a detached console, which makes for interesting discussion. (Alfred and Charlotte - and their parents - were dead keen to look inside the chamber, and had lots of questions about what they saw. This family went away and came back the next week having bought an organ for their home!) This starts the ball rolling so I then talk a bit about the four divisions (we have three manuals and pedals), the basic families of stops and the mysterious numbers on the stop-knobs. This leads to lots of pulling and pushing of knobs, squeaks and growls from the different manuals, rude noises from the pedal Trombone, and the strange effects you can get from playing the Mixture on its own. If I can calm them down sufficiently, we find a simple piece with a very elementary pedal part (Corinne Hepburn's 'Silent Night' fits the bill perfectly) and they are sent away with instructions to get their hands and feet around it, and find some sounds that they think work for this piece. This provides plenty of scope for Lesson 2.

*Geoff:*

*Do you find you are teaching 'music' as well as how to play the organ?*

Gillian:

I most certainly do teach 'music'; there's no point in playing the organ unless you're making music on it! With the current students, we can talk about how the choice of sounds, combined with attention to touch and articulation, brings the piece to life. Sometimes it's as simple as saying, 'What happens if you play that pom-pom pedal line staccato instead of legato?' or 'Which line is the tune? OK, so you need to play it on a separate manual from the accompaniment, and with a distinct and louder sound.' With Alfred, who is the most advanced, we spend time analysing how the counterpoint works in his Bach piece: how the lines have their own 'life', and how they could be played by individual instruments.

*Geoff:*

*What sort of thing do you start them playing and how do you motivate them to sort out how to manage a complicated console?*

*Gillian:*

Teaching material and repertoire depends on the student's capability and inclination. I try always to find something that they enjoy: that can be one of the Short Eight, or a hymn-tune, or just a jolly piece which appeals to them. If it throws up some technical challenges, so much the better; we tackle them and learn! I do set the younger ones some short exercises from my C.H. Trevor book. They love the showy pedal solos! Not so keen on the tricky trios, which need correct fingering and footing (not popular...).

*Geoff:*

*Do all your students have somewhere to practise between lessons? If they don't have an instrument at home, how easy has it been to arrange?*

*Gillian:*

Practice is always a problem for organists. Alfred and Charlotte were exceptionally lucky in that their parents rose to the challenge and bought them a home instrument: but that is very unusual in the early stages. Amelia has booked herself a regular slot at her local church: but because of her time constraints and theirs, it can be only once a week, which is not adequate. However, she knows how to practise most of her organ music on the piano, and so, I think, does Taylor, who, of course, also has access to the URC instrument when time permits.

*Geoff:*

*What sort of goals do you set? Do you encourage exams or perhaps playing before a church service?*

*Gillian:*

For my oldest two, both busy sixth-formers heading for university, actually getting to the instrument at all is sufficient challenge!

They will soldier on as best they can, and, I hope, enjoy themselves along the way. The other two have both played at a church service, and are due to do so again before Christmas. The parents are keen that Alfred should work for Grade 8 and take it when he's ready. He'll get there eventually, but he is also enormously busy with schoolwork, so we're aiming to study some other pieces that take his fancy in order to build up his skills. Charlotte, in the throes of Common Entrance, is concentrating for now on learning pieces that she likes.

*Geoff:*

*Do you do much demonstrating of technique yourself or do you try to get the student to work things out from your explanations?*

Gillian:

I'm a great believer in demonstrating - even if I don't always get it right! Having been such a late starter myself, I like to 'get the feel' of what might work for a student by trying it out. It would be all too easy to say, 'Use this fingering, or that footing', when the student might simply be the wrong physical shape to do that.

*Geoff:*

*The organ is difficult to play ... how do you keep the students motivated?*

Gillian:

You're right: it is difficult to play. I find it difficult, so understand very well when a student feels discouraged. Sometimes it's a question of, 'Well, I think you've got as far as you can with that at the moment. Let's go on to something else, and come back to this in a few weeks, when you'll probably wonder why you found it so hard.' Unlike some of my piano students, my organists don't seem to suffer too badly from musical dyslexia, or, thank goodness, from crippling co-ordination problems. That would be a major, and possibly terminal, discouragement; although one must never underestimate a student's determination...!

*Geoff:*

*Do you always teach 1 to 1 or do you have any groups?*

*Gillian:*

I'm allergic to teaching in groups, having had to do it for many years as a 'cello peri', finding it totally counter-productive (one pupil can count, one can hold the bow properly, one can play in tune - put them all together and they cancel each other out). However, I think it could work on the organ, at least in the early stages. The students would need to be of similar ages and abilities, though; and how often do you get a group of youngsters wanting to play the organ at the same time?

*Geoff:*

*When students have learnt to play at some level, do their ambitions change from when they started?*

*Gillian:*

I don't really have any experience of this. Tim Stewart, and before him Eleanor Carter, started off with the intention of getting as far as they could with the instrument. My adults wanted to see how well they could manage. The present group, with the possible exception of Alfred, are in it for the fun of doing it. Achievement will come as a bonus!

*Geoff:*

*It sounds like you are all having fun and that must be a central part of good music-making! Thank you for sharing your experiences and ideas with us!*

## Making the RCO video

Many readers will know that YouTube™ has become a major media channel and, fortunately, a place where organists from all over the world are



popularising the organ with a wide variety of music. The Royal College of Organists (RCO) have been taking advantage of this and in April 2020 they broadcast a week long “Organ Show” on their channel. (A channel is a website where a library of videos can be viewed).

A few weeks earlier, Chris Morris contacted Geoff to ask if NHOA could make a video about the Hauptwerk organ we made for our Schools Project. Chris is on the Council of the IAO and RCO and one of the producers of “The Organ Show”. The video would be in a part of the programme highlighting the work of regional associations.

What an opportunity to raise the profile of our education project ... but where to start?! Martin and Geoff, who came up with the Schools Project idea, had never made a video. The RCO guidelines were to make it short, to the point and around five minutes long!



We decided on the message: take an organ into schools to demonstrate it and its wide range of music to young people; the instrument was designed to be portable, sound spectacular and be affordable. Martin suggested interviewing Geoff as a way of explaining how it was all done. Pictures and short video clips could be added to make it visually interesting.

In March 2020, the country was in lockdown due to Covid so a face-to-face interview was out of the question. Zoom was considered but the audio quality wasn't reliable. They decided to use the cameras in their phones. They wrote a script to make sure all the important points were covered and the explanations were as clear as possible.

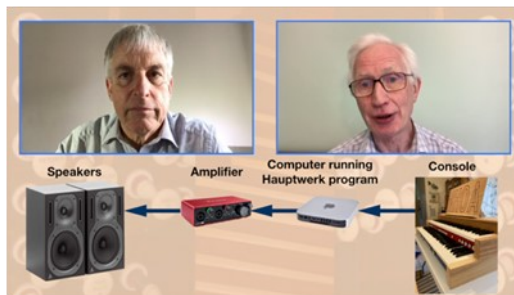
Martin recorded his questions at his home using his phone. He had to include enough video after each one so he looked like he was listening to Geoff's answers. Geoff recorded the explanations on his phone at his home and put the first cut together using the iMovie video editor on his Apple computer. YouTube™ came into its own here as it has many tutorials about video editing! Also, Ann Stebbing, NHOA Webmaster's wife, gave a great piece of advice about videos that capture attention: shots should change in some way every five to ten seconds. That meant adding a lot of photos, illustrations and short video clips.

Viewers of this kind of video just view for a few seconds before moving on



so it was important to grab attention right at the start. This was done with a simple, colourful map of NHOA's geographic region accompanied by a fiery fanfare... played on the Hauptwerk organ of course!

A simple screen layout was used for most of the presentation to provide consistency. It has two windows in the upper half of the screen: one where Martin appears and the other for Geoff. They look out to the viewer and

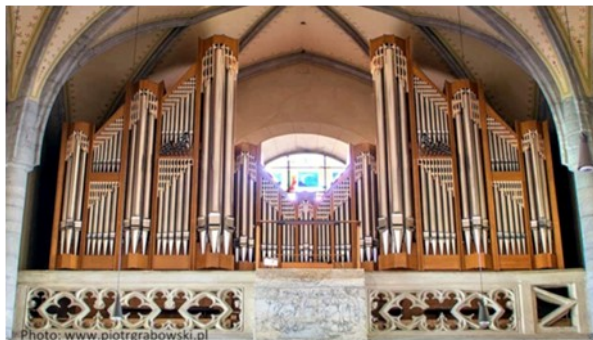


occasionally down to the lower half of the screen where photos and other information help to bring the explanations to life and add visual interest.

They experimented with backgrounds and some light coloured and shaded images of the stop jambs on Martin's church organ were chosen. Where more complex photos were used, arrows and text were added to draw the viewer's eye.

Geoff asked various family members for their reaction to the first cut. All were polite and encouraging but it was his daughter who was very honest when she asked why Geoff spoke like a robot! This was one of the consequences of an interview made in pieces: Geoff had recorded his explanations facing a blank wall which, of course, encouraged a blank voice! "Take 2" (or in reality, 22) had Rikki sitting on the far side of the camera making silent gesticulations to encourage Geoff to modulate his voice.

During the editing, it was discovered that the pauses that Martin had recorded after each question, were not always long enough. Some judicious "copy and pasting" kept Martin on the screen for some more seconds. The trick here was to find periods where Martin was fairly still so that the inserted copied clips didn't make him appear to jump!



An important aspect of making a video for public viewing is getting permission to use other people's material. The owners of the images used readily gave permission as long as acknowledgements were

shown (It's at the bottom of the picture).

Geoff and Martin didn't record the amount of time (lots!) taken to make this video but Rikki can confirm that it can be a very immersive and absorbing activity for the creative team! However, it was great fun to make and every-



one was highly delighted with the RCO's enthusiastic and encouraging response. They continue to show great interest in our Schools Project and are planning to come to our first demonstration.

The video is still on the RCO's YouTube™ channel and has had a nearly 40% more views than the other Organists' Associations' videos. Please do take a look... type RCO in the YouTube™ search box; click on their logo and then scroll down where you will see Martin and Geoff looking out of their little windows!



Here you can see the meaning of the word "portable" ...!

Geoff Willis and Martin Barnes

## NHOA visit to organs in Kent

NHOA is famous for its residential visits where members have an opportunity of sampling organs in a local area but since the start of the coronavirus such visits have had to be cancelled. Until 2021, that is, when our friend Mike Keays arranged for us to visit his home county of Kent in August 2021. Mike has been part of Brown's of Canterbury for some years and we were all delighted when Brown's acquired Mander Organs in October 2020 after Mander's ceased trading.

Mike recommended a stay at The House of Agnes, a Canterbury inn dating back to the 15th Century, from which we visited other parts of the county.

The following report has been written by three members (23 August James West, 24, 26 and 27 August Gillian Lloyd, 25 August Frances Whewell) and we are very grateful to all three of them.



### Monday 23rd August

#### St Mildred's

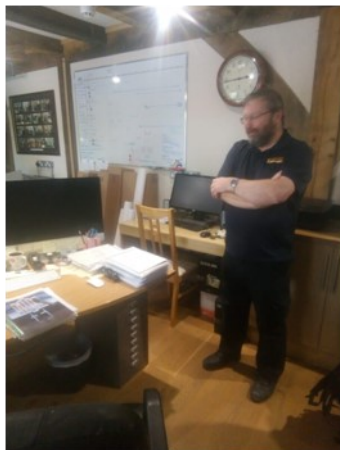
According to NPOR there are 43 churches in Canterbury. Allowing for churches that have upgraded to digital organs and are not therefore listed on NPOR, there are c.60 mainly ancient churches in Canterbury. With a population of just 43k Canterbury was a pious city! NHOA's visit started at St Mildred's church. St Mildred was the daughter of a King of Mercia and a Princess of Kent and this church is the only surviving pre-Norman church within the City walls, being *partly* Anglo-Saxon. Our host was one of 5 organists who serve 3 churches in the benefice. He couldn't have been more helpful or courteous. He outlined the history of the organ. Briefly this is a 1906 Browne, originally IIP 6 but after 6 restorations / rebuilds / extensions is now IIP 24. It's adequate for a medium sized church

and produces a fine sound. It's situated in the SW corner of the nave. The manuals were easy to play but one of us found the spacing of the pedals to be slightly different to more modern organs. Members played music by Demessieux, Rowley, Small, Elgar, Bach, Goldfinch and Lloyd, the last two not yet published!

### **Cathedral**

When we moved to the Cathedral precinct we were greeted by the breath-taking sight of wonderful British scaffolding! Canterbury Cathedral is a World Heritage Site and if your daily dose of visual culture is Woking town centre then surely this Cathedral deserves an even higher accolade. The Cathedral Choir and organist were on holiday. Choral Evensong was sung by the visiting choir, *Sine nomine*. The singing was excellent although the sopranos sometimes eclipsed the lower parts. However the sopranos mastered some really high notes with lovely clarity (but why are sopranos unfailingly positioned in the front row when they outnumber and often out-volume other parts?). The organist prefaced the service with Whitlock and concluded with a Flor Peeters chorale prelude which demonstrated well a gentle reed (? oboe or clarinet). The organ has recently undergone a substantial £4.3m rebuild by H & H, incorporating some original Samuel Green and Willis pipes. It would be embarrassing to attempt an amateurish review when a professional one is available in *Organists' Review*. There are some impressive photos on The Cathedral web-site.

**Tuesday** began very well with a visit to Mander's works. Mike Keays gave us a detailed tour of the purpose-built workshop which was finished just before Christmas 2019, introduced us to members of the small and closely-knit team, and told us about some of the many projects currently on the books. These include St. James, Sussex Gardens, Good Shepherd, Tadworth and Wimborne Minster, as well as St. John the Evangelist, Mongeham and St. Edmund's School, Canterbury, which were to be our next ports of call.



We started in the office, then moved into the workshop, taking a look at a new soundboard:



and the important business of building wind-trunking (something that we organists perhaps overlook - but this is a high-quality piece of kit). The firm also makes its own wooden pipes, but buys in its metal ones from Terry Shires.



An unexpected find was the Browne/Mander archive (not yet indexed!), which is housed in a container in the car-park.



Mike then led us on to St. John the Evangelist, Mongeham, a rather Italianate Roman Catholic Church, built in the 1930s as a combined church and social centre serving the new mining community of Upper Deal. The organ, a new build by Browne's in 2018, is



modest in size, but comprehensive, with both a Mixture and a Sesquialtera on the Great, and a Double Diapason and two reeds on the Swell. Well-placed on a west end gallery, it produces a robust sound in

the body of the church.



Then it was back to Canterbury, firstly to St. Edmund's School Chapel, where we were met by Spencer Payne, the school's Director of Music. The two-man./ped. organ in the west gallery is a Mander new build from 2020 (the first from the new workshop) including front pipes from the previous Willis organ. The school has around 550 pupils, both day and

boarding, many of the latter being from overseas. Canterbury Cathedral's choristers have their lessons here (academic and musical), and Spencer stressed the importance of the 'real' organ experience, as opposed to the electronic version, for his organ students. One of these narrowly avoided catastrophe when he left the organ on after a practice session - just before the school's half term holiday! Fortunately, the instrument did *not* catch fire, but it was apparently red-hot ten days later, and the electricity bill...



Our Tuesday visits concluded at St. Stephen's Church, a 900-year-old building originally conceived as the 'new' Cathedral's College of Secular Canons. It has an unusually rich history, and contains the tomb of Sir Roger Manwood, Chancellor to Queen Elizabeth



I. Browne's finished work on the organ, one of their own instruments from 1903, in 2014. It is a fair-sized three-manual, with a small Solo division and a substantial Pedal department.

The programme for **Wednesday** looked formidable as we were scheduled for a 10am arrival at Salomon's Estate, just outside Royal Tunbridge Wells, 50 miles/80 minutes from Canterbury. But with special breakfast arrangements to assist an early start, and a non-motorway drive on quiet rural roads through beautiful Kent countryside, we made it on time at this extraordinary place hidden away in the High Weald.

With all the facilities of a Conference Centre we were quickly ushered through Reception and directed upstairs to the Science Theatre, with seating for 230 guests. A false ceiling of Christmas l.e.d. lights lends the theatre a party atmosphere. Above it is a triforium with electrically operated blackout screens.

Sir David Salomon's Science Theatre is an outstanding example of a private Victorian theatre, still having many



of the original direct current switches and controls fitted in the stage wings. And at the back of the stage is the famous German Welte Organ, a wonder of science itself, made

expressly for the theatre. It was built in 1914, and replaced two previous, smaller, Welte organs.

We were greeted by Kenneth Pont, Organist in Residence at Salomon's

since 2000, and the Estate's Museum Curator. With

enormous enthusiasm he had covered many trestle tables with historical information about the house, and then described the building of this instrument – the only surviving Welte organ in the world.

All the organ action is relayed by vacuum pipes, original-

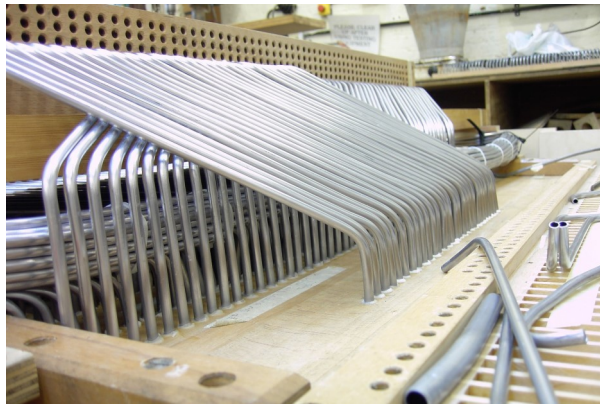




ly developed for piano rolls.

The organ can play two different styles of music, one being termed *Orchestral* with many percussive effects, but limited range of registration. The second is termed *Philharmonic*, and reproduces the full organ action, as if it was being

played from the console. Salomon's houses an archive of over 300 paper music roll recordings, many made by fa-



amous composers and performers of late Victorian times and the early decades of the 20th century.

Kenneth then asked the specialist Engineer, Matt, to set the first roll rolling, and we were treated to 'The Washington Post March' and 'The High School Cadets' by John Philip Sousa, played on the *Orchestral Organ*, followed by Eugene Gigout's 'Grand Choeur Dialogué', played, to our surprise and excitement, by the composer.

To cap it all, Kenneth sat at the console and played his own four minute transcription of Saint-Saëns' *Organ Symphony*. This had been composed for one of the many weddings held in this magnificent venue.

Kenneth then handed over to Mike Keays, who managed the restoration of the organ in 2003 with the help

of a Lottery Grant. Mike explained that the vacuum pipes made the restoration doubly difficult because nothing worked in the usual way. In contrast to a normal organ, there is a wind chest held open with springs, that supplies the vacuum that activates the pipes that are however blown in the usual way.

At this time, music rolls were the only way of reproducing good quality musical sounds, and were widely used to record the composers' own music and that of others. It is extraordinary that this instrument, built at Salomon's, survived almost unchanged and has now been restored to its original glory.

During the planning of this trip John Mansfield noticed Salomon's proximity to the village of Tudeley, and per-



suaded Jeff to include it in the itinerary. Tudeley's parish church, All Saints, is the only church in the world with stained glass win-



suaded Jeff to include it in the itinerary. Tudeley's parish church, All Saints, is the only church in the world with stained glass win-

dows all designed by the great Russian Jewish artist, Marc Chagall 1887-1985. They are memorial windows, sacred to the memory of Sarah Venetia d'Avigdor Goldsmid, daughter of a local aristocratic family, who tragically died at sea in 1963, aged 21.

So perhaps this church is a Mecca for art lovers rather than organists. The Martin Cross one manual organ was hand built in a gallery in the style of Father Smith. The carved casing features Kentish hops and acorns. But it's a tight squeeze in that organ loft, with poor lighting, making the organ difficult to play. The great consolation is the view of the windows, and, on the day we were there, blue and yellow light flooding the stone floor.

The final treat of the day was a visit to the Sissinghurst Gardens, created in the 1930's by that famous literary pair, Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicholson. We wandered through the old walled gardens, with their riot of colour co-ordinated flowerbeds around original Tudor architecture, and enjoyed an ice-cream in the sun. This was our favourite day of the trip.



On **Thursday** we made a considerable journey south-westwards to the very unusual town of Winchelsea. The current town was founded in 1288 by a royal charter from King Edward I, replacing the earlier community of Old Winchelsea, which had been of great strategic



and commercial importance until 1287, when it was destroyed by a flood of biblical proportions. The new town was constructed on a grid plan (a sort of medieval Milton Keynes), and amongst its many interesting features is a large collection of wine-cellars, one of only four in the country of comparable size. The present church of St. Thomas the Martyr consists of the chancel and side chapels of what should have been a much larger cruciform building.



Our host was Ben Chishick, who spoke to us about the 1931 Walker organ, on which Browne's had completed a major refurbishment in 2019, including the restoration of the (movable) console and

the addition of 100 channels of memory, a new Swell Mixture and a Cymbelstern.

Rye Methodist Church proved a challenge to access, as it was difficult to find parking at the top of the town's very steep main street. The church itself was a bit of a bittersweet experience. Our host Anne Whiteman told us that, sadly, the church would be closing at the end of September, and that the organ, unfortunately now in poor condition, built by former organist Clifford Foster, would need to find a new home. However, the story of the organ itself was inspiring. Clifford Foster, a printer



by trade, caught the organ bug at an early age, and in 1960 acquired the 1881 Forster and Andrews organ of St. John's Church, St. Leonards. He installed and refurbished it in Rye Methodist Church, and continued to play and maintain it until his death in 2020. It wasn't all that easy to play the organ, as quite a lot was missing, in the random way that this happens

with organs, but it was well worth the effort. We wish

the congregation the very best as they look for new places for themselves and their rather special instrument.

And in the evening, we enjoyed a *most* convivial dinner in honour of Mike Keays and his wife Anita. It was a pity that some of us had already had to leave, but the rest of the group ate, drank, talked and generally made merry until management had to suggest, very gently, that the staff needed to go home...

Next day, the remainder of the party also had to go home; but not before visiting a small 2007 Robin Jen-



nings organ at St. Nicholas, Pluckley, and Mike Keays' home church at Aylesford, one of the oldest villages in England, with links to Hengist and Horsa, and to the railway magnate Thomas Brassey, whose second son, Henry, was a great benefactor of the village and the church. The first organ was a barrel organ with twelve tunes, installed in 1838. This was replaced in 1865 by the present Forster and Andrews

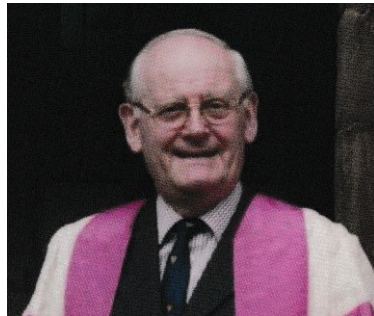
instrument, donated by a Mrs. Abbott at the cost of £270. Work was done on the organ at various times, and in 2015, Browne's overhauled re-electrified the instrument, giving it a mobile console, restoring the Great Mixture, completing the Swell Mixture, and adding a Trombone and Clarion (these joined the Trumpet, which

had arrived in 1947 from a Wren church in London which had been destroyed in the war). Mike is the latest in a series of long-serving organists, and it was good to hear him putting 'his' instrument through its paces before we left for home, with many thanks to Mike for arranging such a varied and interesting trip for us.



## **An Organist Remembers: Memories of a life in cathedral music, Roy Massey, RSCM, £18.95**

In March 2020 when, as he put it, the whole world was in the grip of the Covid-29 Coronavirus pandemic, Roy Massey felt that he had unaccustomed time on his hands and thought that he might use a little of it “by writing a few reminiscences of my life for my own amusement” and the result is this book.



Massey first heard Martin in the Bull Birmingham, at the time when he was singing service by his remembers being

the rumblings and vibrations of the lower notes. Later, his primary school headmistress, recognising that he had a good voice, suggested that he should audition for the choir at that church. It was at another, smaller, Birmingham church that he first became interested in the organ (the organ there was smaller, too); but another teacher took him to his first concert at Birmingham Town Hall, where the organ could certainly not be described as small, and he was hooked.

Having passed the eleven-plus (remember that?) he attended Moseley Grammar School, where he claimed no academic distinction, being interested only in music, which at first was poorly taught by a part-time visiting teacher. But everything changed with the coming of a lively, friendly, energetic new music master, Stanley Adams. Adams persuaded the Headmaster to allow Massey and one or two others to take music as a subject in School Certificate.

Things got better from now on. Adams was accompanist to the City of Birmingham Choir, of which the director was none other than David Willcocks and Adams asked Willcocks to hear Massey play the organ at St Martins in the Bull Ring, which he did, and he also made him improvise, modulate to any key he called out, transpose a hymn tune and gave him some fiendish ear tests, all of which seemed to go well except the ear tests. After a few kind words he said he would give him a few lessons in the autumn.

Willcocks was clearly a rigorous, no-nonsense teacher and encouraged his pupil to sit for the ARCO in the following July. When he learnt that his

hands and might use a little few reminiscences of my life ment” and the

an organ in St Ring in his native age of about seven taken to a morning grandmother. He very thrilled by



pupil had gained the qualification, together with the Limpus prize for the highest marks in the practical part of the examination “he was gently pleased, but made more of the fact that I hadn’t achieved full marks in the ear tests”.

“All this time,” wrote Massey, “Willcocks had never mentioned payment and I eventually asked what I owed him. His reply was that I could look after him when he was old and ‘on the parish’ and the matter was never mentioned again – so I have never paid a penny for an organ lesson in my life. I later discovered that Ernest Bullock at Westminster Abbey had taught Willcocks free of charge when he was a boy, so he was generously doing the same for me. In due course, I was to do the same for others.”

In spite of claiming no academic distinction, Massey obtained his B.Mus at Birmingham University in 1956 as well as a diploma in education, which allowed him to combine school teaching with playing the organ. Further posts followed in Birmingham churches and schools until one day Dr Gerald Knight offered him the post of Warden at Addington Palace, at that time the headquarters of the Royal School of Church Music. It was the first position he had held outside Birmingham, and he was faced with a steep learning curve; but he had a very happy time there with some excellent colleagues. His time with the RSCM went much further than that: he was frequently called upon to run summer schools and other residential courses in many places at home and abroad for the RSCM.

Then came the call back to Birmingham, to become the Organist of St Philip’s Cathedral, Birmingham. He said that he owed a great debt of gratitude to Birmingham Cathedral for giving him his chance to enter the world of cathedral music, but they surely ought to be grateful to him, for he found that music at the cathedral was in great need of reform when he first arrived.

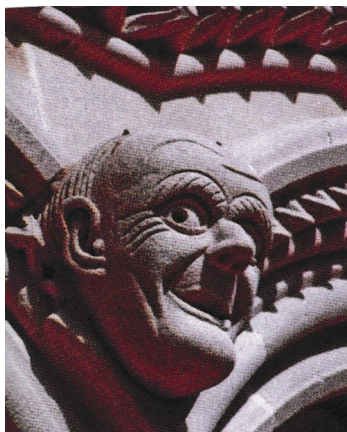
Late in 1973 Dr Conrad Eden retired after many years at Durham Cathedral, where Richard Lloyd succeeded him, so Hereford “came on the market”, as he put it. First Christopher Robinson from Worcester rang Massey, hoping he had applied for Hereford, as his name was being mentioned in Three Choirs circles; and the next day John Sanders rang from Gloucester saying exactly the same thing, so he put his name forward and was duly appointed to a job which gave him immense happiness and enormous opportunities for the next twenty-seven years.

Not everything went perfectly, of course. His first acquaintance with the organ loft turned out to be memorable. He had been generally looking round outside when the time of Evensong drew near. He asked the genial

Robert Green, the acting organist, if he might sit with him for the service, to which he readily agreed. Soon after he started to play, smoke started to issue from beneath the right-hand end of the bottom row of keys. He continued to play, with the remark that “it doesn’t usually do this” and valiantly carried on with the service. Half way through the Psalm, the Dean’s verger appeared with a big red fire extinguisher with the words “you might need this, sir” without telling the organists how to use it and by the end of the service there was a pall of black smoke in the vaulting together with a noxious smell. The Dean and a Canon or two appeared in the loft immediately afterwards wondering what had happened and Massey said to the Dean that he thought the organ needed rebuilding.

Massey has always been in great demand as a recitalist. He states that he has never sought or canvassed as a recitalist. Invitations to play have always come to him uninvited, and he devotes a chapter of his book to the many memorable recitals he has given, from the 1950s to the present day.

During his time at Hereford he made friends with many people, of course, including the men in the stonemasons’ yard, and they did him the honour of carving his head in stone. He goes to some length to emphasise that it is not a gargoyle, but a “head stop” and you can see it in the restored east front of the Lady Chapel. It is surely a great honour to be remembered like this. (I’ll have to drop a hint to the people at my own church.)



*John Mansfield*

- END OF VOLUME -