

# Derby & District Organists' Registered Charity No. 510567 Association



## *An Organist's Life in Rural France* David Warner-Howard

We moved to France in 2003 and live just outside the medieval village of Monflanquin in Lot et Garonne, southwest France. For the benefit of those not too familiar with this area, find Bordeaux and Toulouse on a map and we are virtually at the mid-point between these two cities.

Having played the organ for more than 50 years in many towns and villages in the UK, the opportunity of playing in France was looked on as a welcome challenge. In our area there are two large churches within the parish, both of which have pipe organs. The remainder of the 47 churches that our parish priest has responsibility for have nothing at all, or at best a small electronic keyboard.

The organ in Monflanquin (pictured above) was described in a previous edition of the Newsletter. To recap, it is a small two manual, the upper Swell manual of 37 note

more limited pedal board of 18 notes, permanently coupled to the Great manual, with no pedal stops. The composition is typically 19th Century French with four reed stops, including a very nasal Trompette and Clarion on the Great. It is located on a gallery at the west end; fine for concerts, but a bit too remote in this very large church for the weekly mass.

Normally I tend to use an elderly 3 manual analogue electronic 'Harmoniphone', located in the chancel, and although a bit of a beast that is not in the best state of health, at least it is close to the action.

Ten kilometres away, the organ at Villereal is a very pleasant single manual instrument (54 notes) with a 20 note pedal board. There is a 16ft pedal Bourdon, 8ft Flute, 8ft Bourdon, 4ft Octave and a 2ft Aeoline on the manual, plus a M/P coupler. It was built in Strasbourg in the 19th Century

## *DDOA Events 2010*

### **NB Change of date:**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April**

Visit to St John's, Bridge Street, to hear and play the rebuilt Willis/Adkins/Johnson organ. 7.30pm

**Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May**

Visit to Malvern: Nicholson Organs and Worcester Cathedral 8.00am

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> June**

Annual Dinner – Alison House, Intake Lane, Cromford, Matlock

**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> July**

Visit to Swarkestone and Stanton-by-Bridge 7.30pm

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September**

English organ music of the 18<sup>th</sup> century – presentation by Rodney Tomkins, St Peter's, Belper. 7.30pm

**Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> October**

Chairman's Event – St. James, Riddings. 7.30pm

**Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November**

AGM, Duffield Methodist Church

---

## *Concerts & Recitals*

**Monday 1<sup>st</sup> March**

Symphony Hall, Birmingham  
Thomas Trotter. 1.00pm

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> March**

Belper Singers at Hazelwood Parish Church, conductor Chris Dixon. 7.30pm £6

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March**

Birmingham Town Hall  
Thomas Trotter, Choir of Leeds Parish Church. 1.00pm

**Monday 15<sup>th</sup> March**

Birmingham Town Hall, Benjamin Saunders. 1.00pm

**Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> March**

Birmingham Town Hall  
Paul Hale. 1.00pm

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April**

St George's Tide Brass Band & Organ Concert – Blidford Welfare Band and David Redfern organ.



*The console at Monflanquin*

by Charles WETZEL and relocated to Villereal in 2007. It reflects much more a Germanic style and sound. It is located in a south transept at the east end of the nave and is ideally situated for both concerts and the mass.

Playing for the mass is another challenge. Each week a team of people meet to decide on the various pieces of music, readings and prayers, and who will lead. (Leading is by the use of a microphone). After this the organist is presented with a list of items, many of which will only have a melody line and for which a spot harmonisation is required. Not infrequently the music can't be found and then the 'tune' is sung to me while I try to write it down on manuscript and hope for the best.

Sometimes, on the day, the cantor, (who was probably absent from the weekly meeting), does not know the music and asks for something else. I always do my best to oblige (even with gritted teeth, but smiling). It should be noted that music is not generally taught in French schools and the majority of people cannot read music; they learn by rote, and sometimes incorrectly. Trying to play 'your' version against a formidable, amplified voice singing a slightly different version, with indifferent rhythms, becomes a tour de force, though usually we get it right, which is very satisfying.

Occasionally, there will be weddings and funerals, (the only events, other than concerts, where a fee can be sought) although I have to take along a keyboard in case the church in particular does not have an instrument.

Last summer I had the pleasure of playing for the French Cathedral Singers during their week's holiday in Carcassonne. Several Organs in good health and with interesting specifications were at my disposal for the week. At the end of the holiday the choir sang for the mass at the Cathedral. I shared the playing of a very nice three manual Cavallé-Coll along with the resident organist. This was an occasion where the organ played discretely throughout almost the entire service. Frequently the music was quite dark and soft in character and I was most grateful to have the opportunity to observe the manner in which everything fell into place, the majority being by way of improvisation.

So what, do you ask, do these challenges offer for an organist brought up on an English repertoire? Well, one of the tasks for an organist is to provide music to fill in the gaps. For example, to continue playing when a hymn is ended but a procession, or the collection, has not quite concluded. This is something that can cause concern to players, as there is nothing printed in front of them.

(Continued on page 4, column 3.)



*Organ at Villereal*

*Harmoniphone at Monflanquin*





*A Taste of Worcester*  
*Andy Storer*

Members will know from this year's and has a lovely, warm, English programme of events that in May we sound, with good, full-sounding reeds. have the chance to visit the new organ It is covered by two magnificent new in Worcester Cathedral. By way of cases which make a wonderful visual encouragement to go on this outing, addition to the cathedral interior.

Frankie and I spent the weekend in Worcester in February half-term and attended Choral Evensong on the Sunday; the organ is well worth visiting.

The previous organ in the Cathedral had evolved over the years from two when the scheme is finished. These instruments, one in the Quire and one stops are all prepared for on the quire in the South Transept, behind Scott's console.

monumental 32' case. It contained work by Hill, Hope-Jones, Harrison and Wood-Wordsworth. The result was an instrument that did not really hang together, with the manual divisions at floor level on either side of the quire, and the Solo and Pedal divisions in the transept case. It had been failing for many years and eventually it was decided to replace it with a brand new instrument by Kenneth Tickell in 2008.

This organ now sits at triforium level and play the organ. However, time on either side of the Quire and is constraints have made it necessary to basically a complete four manual of 54 omit the visit to Malvern Priory. We speaking stops. It now speaks out shall, however, have more time in clearly into the body of the cathedral Worcester either to shop or to

The plan is for a new two manual section to be placed in the transept case to be used for accompanying the choir when they are at the head of the nave. This case still contains the two

32' flue stops which will be reinstated when the scheme is finished. These instruments, one in the Quire and one stops are all prepared for on the quire in the South Transept, behind Scott's console. I do urge members to take the opportunity in May to join this outing and see and hear this lovely new organ.

The visit to Malvern and Worcester is on Saturday, 15<sup>th</sup> May. It was hoped that we would be able to visit the Nicholson factory, Malvern Priory, and attend Worcester cathedral to hear

attend the presentation by Andrew Lucas, play the new Tickell organ and, to finish the day, hear Evensong in the cathedral.

Our visit to Liverpool last year was a great success, and the first financially viable visit the Association had made in some years. This was due to a number of non-members taking advantage of cheap transport to Liverpool.

If you know of someone who would like to join us for the day in May, please mention the date to them. Further details will appear in the April edition of the *Newsletter*.

TW

---

**AS St John's, Bridge Street**

Work on the Willis/Adkins/Johnson organ in St John's is almost complete. I can promise members that they are in for a treat as the sound in the generous acoustic of St John's is really quite stunning.

The work done by Ed Stow and his band of helpers has, without doubt, made the organ one of the best in the county. (Cont: page 4, column 3.)

## Danish Organ Music David Butterworth

Members were treated to a humorous and well-balanced presentation of the forces that have driven the development of Danish organ music and organs during the last four hundred years. David's admiration and respect for Danish musicianship and craftsmanship became clear as he revealed the country's rich musical heritage and the influence it has exerted on other countries.

As resident organist of St Mary's, Nottingham, David lives with a fine Marcussen organ – an association begun in the late 1960s when he arrived in Nottingham and set about replacing the failing instrument he inherited, an instrument that did not represent the best of English organ building. His decision to invite a foreign firm to build the replacement instrument was visionary and, one has to say, very courageous for the organist of a provincial parish church at that time. Having played the Froebenius organ in Queen's College, Oxford, and heard Marcussen organs on the continent David seems to have had little doubt about the way forward, a decision that time has shown to be fully justified.

The starting point of David's presentation was the accession to the Danish throne of Christian IV, a sixteenth century monarch with cosmopolitan aspirations, who invited musicians from Europe to work in Denmark and who encouraged the arts. The 1554-55 Dutch renaissance organ built by Hermann Raphaëlis in Roskilde Cathedral, the burial place of the Danish kings, would have been familiar to Christian; the rebuild that produced the Baroque masterpiece a century later retained the elaborate case which can still be seen.

An unusual feature of the Roskilde organ was that the metal flue pipes had screw tops for tuning (what a good idea). The scaling of some ranks was 'misguided' and, following several rebuilds during the succeeding centuries, the organ was treated to a sympathetic restoration by Marcussen in 1991, during which a number of inconsistencies and weaknesses were addressed. The treatment of the organ during that rebuild was the subject of some controversy amongst

purists who maintained that the restoration should have returned the organ to its 1654 state; more recently, opinion has moved to approval of the Marcussen work.

Several recordings were heard during the evening, the first of which was Buxtehude played on the Roskilde organ. The very generous acoustic of the cathedral wrapped the beautiful voicing of the pipes in a warm ambience, though one sensed that the four hundred year old pipes would have sounded well in almost any acoustic.

The most startling recording of the evening was of the ancient clock in the cathedral which, like many on the continent, has moving figures. This particular tableau depicts St George slaying the dragon; on the hour, every hour, as St George slays the dragon it bellows with a spectacular, thunderous roar which rolls around the cathedral, presumably to remind the sinful of the fate of Satan's creatures.

Other recordings included: the Marcussen in St Mary's, Nottingham; the Frederiksborg Castle Compenius organ before its restoration in 1988; a Carsten Lund organ, in which the metal pipes are of hammered metal, and instruments manufactured by Bruno Christisen and Poul-Gerhard Andersen who were both Marcussen employees before establishing their own firms.

The contemporary musical scene in Denmark was also presented to us by David. As in several European countries, the church is supported by the state through a voluntary tax. The tax, besides supporting numerous musical institutions, also pays organists' salaries as organists are regarded as civil servants. The most competent receive the equivalent of £40,000 a year. Organists are encouraged to compose, may teach if it is required, and provide music for the services. (In Haarlem, the city pays for two console assistants in St Bavo.)

The picture painted was that of a thriving musical culture, rich in organs and musicians, and also rich in public interest. David told of a city a third of the size of Derby which supported three musical academies and had eight organists on the civic payroll. The final, choral recording provided

ample evidence of the success of the Danish system – a very good setting of the Gloria by a provincial organist/composer, sung by one of the academy choirs. The standard of the music and singing would grace any cathedral.

Peter Williams thanked David for his excellent and engaging presentation on a subject that was new to many; the animated conversation after the presentation reflected the enjoyment experienced by those present.

A presentation of book tokens was made to Ed Stow in recognition of his 36 (37?) years as a committee member; a similar award was made to John Hunt by post, a gesture which found favour with all present. TW

---

(continued from page 2)

(There are a few books available with some suggestions for well-known hymn tune extemporisation). Far from being daunted by the need to play a lot of music for which there is either only a melody line, or sometimes no music at all, I look upon it as an opportunity to brush up on my improvisation and attempt to actually make the music interesting. From the occasional kind remarks that are received I must be improving!

Everyone charged with playing the organ should attempt to try some improvisation without the benefit of music. It may prove difficult to start with, but it can be most rewarding when it all comes together. DW-H

---

(Continued from page 3, column 3.)

The full grandeur of the Willis choruses can be appreciated once more (the two Great mixtures still have to be regulated). In true Willis style, the choruses not only retain all of their brightness and vigour into the upper registers but increase steadily in richness – a truly exciting sound.

The Pedal has yet to be connected to the new, solid-state switchboard, but promises to be all that one might hope for with the addition of the substantial Open Wood.

The organ is to be rededicated during Evensong on Whit Sunday, 23<sup>rd</sup> May, with the opening recital by Philip Scriven on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June – details to follow.

See page 1 for details of new date. TW