

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



Peter Gould - Happy 30th Anniversary!

On Saturday 12 January 2013 over a hundred souls gathered in Derby Cathedral to mark Peter Gould's thirty years there as Master of the Music. After an impromptu, informal welcome, the Dean, The Very Revd. Dr John Davies DL explained why we were there and expressed the Dean and Chapter's appreciation of all that Peter had done during his time at the Cathedral. He referred to the state of the music when Peter was appointed and made a telling comparison between then and now, pointing out that he had been made a Lay Canon in recognition of his achievements.

The first of the entertainments was a *This Is Your Life* hosted from the Pulpit by the Revd. Dave

Perkins, Canon Precentor, who introduced a number of live guests together with written tributes, which were read out by the Dean. The live guests spoke at first out of sight, from the Consistory Court, before appearing and confronting Canon Gould with their reminiscences.

A long time chorister and choir man, Walter Ball, began and reminded Peter that he was on the panel that appointed him to the post. He was followed by past vergers Geoff Hewitt and Paul Blanch who had come all the way from St. George's Episcopal Church, Schenectady, NY where he is now Rector! Canon Gage amused us with his memories of trying to sing the service as did

DDOA Events 2013

16th March (See page 6)

Afternoon visit to organs in Nottingham:
Lenton Methodist. 2.00pm
St Peter's, City centre. 3.30pm

15th April

Peter Williams: 'Service with a Smile'
Repton Parish Church. 7.30pm

20th May (See page 6)

David Cowan: 'Improvisation'
Derby Cathedral. 7.30pm

10th June

Annual dinner at Willersley Castle

Early July (Date to be confirmed)

Family Recital: Follow-up to CATO visits.

14th September

Annual full day outing to Oxford,
including Keble College.

12th October

Daytime visit to Ashbourne, including St
Oswald's PC

13th November

Chairman's Event and AGM

Concerts & Recitals

Saturday 9th March, 3.00pm

Calke Abbey Riding School. Choral works
from Gabrieli to Britten. Derwent Singers.

Friday 22nd March 7.30pm

St Alkmund's Church, Duffield. 'My Delight
and Thy Delight'. Sitwell Singers.

Saturday 23rd March, 7.30pm

Derby Cathedral. Bach - St John Passion.
Derby Bach Choir

Saturday 27th April, 7.30pm

Derby Cathedral. Bach - B minor Mass.
Derby Choral Union.

St Mary de Castro Leicester

Saturday 23rd March 7.30pm

Leicestershire Chorale directed by Tom
Williams sing music by Schütz, Schein,
Bach & Praetorius, with Sackbutt Ensemble

Southwell Minster

Monday 1st April, 3.30pm

Organ Recital by Kevin Bowyer (Glasgow
University) Free admission.

four Precentors - Canons Parsons, Gatford, Henshall and the present incumbent. At various times Peter stood up for himself to explain some of the remarks and to express his appreciation of what was being said. Some of the distinguished clergy remarked that Peter had showed that Cathedral music could be achieved without a high-spending outlay. There was also much mention of TRAINS.

The written tributes included contributions from the Very Revd.

Ben Lewers, a previous Provost; Bishops Humphrey and Alistair and Rodney Tomkins, who mentioned that during his interregnum incumbency, before Peter arrived, he was assisted by a young Stephen Layton. Indeed one of the features of Peter Gould's time in Derby has been the training and promotion of excellent young organists and there was a message from Steven Grahl, Organist and Director of Music at St Marylebone Parish Church and Assistant Organist at New College, Oxford.

The next event was a 'Psalm' to an anonymous text sung by the choir conducted by Peter's long serving assistant, Tom Corfield. Then the aforementioned quartet of Precentors rendered some creditable close harmony, wafting mellifluous sounds over the whole assembly. After a short projection of 'pictures from a life', which was accompanied by recordings of the choir and the organ, Peter rose to give thanks. During his remarks he paid generous tribute to Tom Corfield, which gave rise to prolonged applause and to his wife, Dorothy, who also received much applause.

This was a very enjoyable evening and all credit is due to Wendy Bateman and Messrs Potter and Corfield as instigators and the Dean and Chapter who hosted the event. Of course much credit should go to Peter Gould himself for all his work over the past thirty years. Running a city cathedral without the back-up of a choir school, or the wider choice that such institutions bring, is very hard work - something that Peter has never been afraid of.

Peter Williams



Peter Gould with a quartet of precentors, Canons Perkins, Gatford, Henshall and Parsons

Peter Gould in conversation with Laurence Rogers

Peter is not a man to stand still for long. Recently, I managed to catch up with him in between a bout of administration in his office and a visit to a local school. Ever since his arrival in Derby thirty years ago, Peter has been out there in the community networking continuously with teachers, parents and pupils. Teaching music and singing in local primary and junior schools has complemented his work at Derby Cathedral as Master of the Music. This has been a special ingredient which has enabled him to achieve his early ambition of building a musical tradition of a stature equal to the best of the ancient cathedrals of England, and to do this without the benefit of a choir school. He readily admits pride in the choral tradition he has established and his most recent honour of being made a Lay Canon is a special recognition of his achievement.

Son of an amateur organist in Portsmouth, as a youngster Peter was soon engaged in music; playing for Sunday School at age 11, playing for weddings at 12 and playing for Sunday services at 13. However, it was in his late teens, whilst attending an RSCM course at Darley Dale, that the world of church music opened up and inspired his passion. As a student, in his spare time he grew a church choir in Putney and in his third year at the Royal Academy of Music, won the Choir training Prize. Soon after the launch of his teaching career in Huddersfield, he was appointed Assistant Organist at Wakefield Cathedral, a post he held for nine years before coming to Derby.

At thirty years, Peter's tenure is presently the longest of cathedral organists in England, and also for the record books, his professional partnership with Tom Corfield as Assistant Organist is an all-time record of 28 years. The secrets of such longevity are for all to see, dedication, hard work and

systematic renewal. At home, Peter is always learning a new organ piece and the choir is always learning new music. Further afield the choir always seems to be travelling. As Peter reels off the places where they have sung in recent years, St. Paul's Cathedral, Westminster Abbey, King's College Cambridge, Scotland, Osnabruck, Paris, Italy and so on, it is beginning to sound like a travel brochure, or perhaps like one of Michael Portillo's Great Railway Journeys, because they always try to travel by train. Peter masterminds all these trips with enthusiasm, confessing that he is perhaps a frustrated travel advisor! Where will they go next? Or who will come to Derby next? It will be difficult to top the visit of the Queen in 2010, but Peter still takes pride in the regular visits of the BBC to record services.

At this point in our conversation Peter has to catch a bus. There is no sign of him running out of steam yet. (No railway pun intended!)

Laurence Rogers

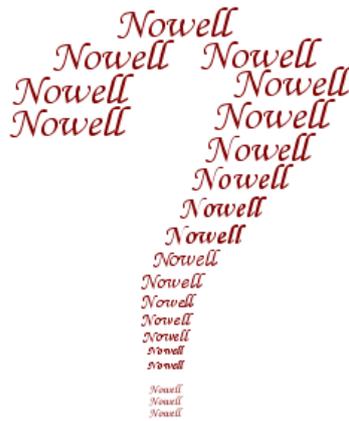
Christmas Hymns and Carols - Can't we do better?

It has worried me for years that Christmas music has become something of a bore. Having played at a carol service, a midnight communion, and a Methodist Covenant service on Epiphany Sunday, I am staggered by the poor quality of many of the pieces that people seem to want to sing on these occasions. Can British musical culture not come up with higher quality in our Christmas music?

Not that there are no good carols. Yet I am sure that we accept, perhaps even enjoy, the rubbish because it is familiar and recalls our childhood for us. I am not immune to that sentimental nostalgic 'pull'. I can grit my teeth and sing along with a lot of the 'traditional' carols. But how traditional are they really? Some of the so-called 'traditions' do not go back very far. The problem is sometimes with the text and sometimes with the tune, sometimes both.

'O little town of Bethlehem'. Now, this is a jolly good poem (Phillips Brooks, 1835-93, a Harvard-educated pastor in Philadelphia). The mystery of the Incarnation is hinted at beautifully without giving a lecture in theology (the hymn was written for his Sunday-school children); but does 'Forest Green' really do justice to it? Lines 1, 2, and 4 of this undistinguished folk tune are identical; only line 3 really comes to life and rises above the level of mediocrity. In a four-verse carol we have to sing the first line twelve times, and it doesn't really lend itself to tarting up by fancy alternative harmonies. Yet, thanks to Vaughan Williams, who scrapped the competition in the *English Hymnal* (while thinking better of it in *Songs of Praise*), it has become almost totally identified with this poem. Moreover, King's Chapel have cemented this in their annual services. Can't Cambridge University show better taste?

And there *are* better tunes. Barnby wrote one: 'Bethlehem' (*Methodist Hymn Book* 1933, no. 125). Walford Davies's 'Christmas Carol' was once regularly sung to it, and is set in *Congregational Praise* (1951) and as an alternative in *SOP*. These surely deserve to be sung. Vaughan Williams even



arranged another English folk tune which goes well to this song ('Kingsfold', *HP* 113[ii]). The same repetitive feature as in 'Forest Green' is shown in 'The First Nowell': the same strain three times in each verse, and there are and have to be six verses, because the libretto tells a story. A dreary tune: the opening motif has to be sung 18 times - overkill if ever there was.

'In the bleak midwinter frosty winds made moan; earth stood hard as iron, water like a stone.' The editors of the *Companion to Hymns and Psalms* refer to 'this lovely poem', connecting it with the English folk tradition, taken up by Milton, that it snowed at Christ's Nativity. I am astounded: how could a decent poet like Christina Rossetti bring herself to write such drivel? Had she ever been to the Holy Land in midwinter? I was there in mid December 1999 and we were sunning ourselves in by and in the Dead Sea - and so were dozens of others. 'Ah,' you will; say, 'but she is transferring the events to our own land.' Why, on earth? Christ was not born in England, and not on 25 December; nobody can say for certain when it was. We celebrate it on that day, no more. Rossetti sentimentalises the event, pouring a great barrel of goo all over it. 'Snow had fallen, snow on snow, snow on snow.' Was there ever a more obvious bit of worthless padding in a poem? - Keep on piling up the snow to provide extra syllables to make up the verse so that no-one notices you aren't saying anything of worth at all. Snow is good for sentimentality, and it rhymes with 'long ago' - funny how some carol writers are fond of telling us how long ago it all was. Rossetti tells us nothing of the real significance of the Incarnation.

In the second verse we have some theology; the second coming is contrasted with the wintry nativity of Rossetti's fantasy. Mild agnosticism creeps into verse three: 'Angels... *may* have gathered there.' In the final verse her poetic vision deserts her completely: 'If I were a wise man, *I would do my part.*' What a feeble line! But the last word has to rhyme with 'heart', and that's why we have it. As for the tune, Gustav Holst was faced with the major problem that the poem does not scan regularly, having never been intended as a song. His tune 'Cranham' is pretty dreary and in that sense matches the words perfectly. The famous setting by Darke rescues it; a far better melody than the words deserve.

'It came upon the midnight clear' - Sullivan did his best with this Herefordshire folksong; apparently the fifth and sixth lines (only) are his. It is not a great tune, but people like it; the original may be tasted as 'Eardsley' (*EH* 601) and Sullivan's version must surely be reckoned an improvement on this inane stuff. As for 'Hark the herald' - it is a rousing piece, but Mendelssohn himself deplored its use in a sacred context. He apparently saw it as a festive patriotic tune. We'll never change that!

As I look through the hymn books, I am struck by the fact that some modern carols in folksy style ('Born in the night', 'See him lying', 'The Virgin Mary had a baby boy') really do seem to succeed, and have become deservedly popular. It may be because of the attractive Caribbean rhythm of the last two: one-two-three, one-two-three, one-two: eight quavers divided 3 + 3 + 2. In an early setting of this by Malcolm Sargent it appears that the arranger misunderstood this, writing it as bars of four crotchets. Can Sir Malcolm really have been so uncomprehending? I can see that it would be fun to set two-and-two-thirds bars against fours for exciting rhythmic contrast, but such contrast becomes 'fun' only when you have absorbed the way it was to start with.

Another class of successful carols in our hymn-books are those imported from Germany. 'O Little one sweet', must surely be one of the loveliest. 'Vom Himmel hoch' and 'In dulci jubilo' benefit greatly from our involuntary recollection of Bach's glorious harmonisations of them. But a very interesting case is 'Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht', Austrian rather than German. The composer, Franz Grueber, was the village organist to the poet, Pastor Joseph Mohr, but his organ had broken down and he set it for guitar when it was first sung. It is one of those amazing inspirations: a fetching melody which benefits from the simplest harmonisation. Tonic, dominant, sub-dominant, tonic. That really is all you need. Many, many hymn-book editors have come close to spoiling it by sophisticated chromaticism; listen to the way it is sung and played in Austria/Germany: dead straight.

I must take a swing at 'Dix' for 'As with gladness'. The author of the hymn (rather a good one, theologically and poetically), W. C. Dix 1837-98) thought nothing of the tune named after him by its arranger, we are told - and he was quite right. It has little to recommend it. A four-square melody moving stepwise for much of the time; repeated notes, and a conventional conclusion. Again, we have King's Chapel to thank (if that is the word) for its having become standard. Surely they know Stanford's inspired tune 'Orient' (MHB 132)? In the very first verse the word 'gladness' leaps joyfully forward; in 'Dix' nothing disturbs the tedious calm of an uninspired drone. For Stanford, 'hailed its light... burning bright' rise optimistically into the last lines; 'evermore be led to Thee' meander descriptively until firmly led to the conclusion! How can we have rejected this gem by a major composer and replaced it with a nondescript piece of routine hack-work?

Modern carols? Of course, there must be some good ones. But it is surprising what rubbish the public will accept. Some people will not notice doggerel if it is set to reasonably acceptable music. Sentimentality and triviality are acceptable if encased in musical tunes. If those tunes are sentimental and trivial, so much the better. Take the 'Nativity Carol' by John Rutter. It begins: 'Born in

a stable so bare, born so long ago, Born 'neath light of star, he who loved us so.' Here we have the largely meaningless word 'so' three times in four lines. In no case does it add anything, except a spurious emotive jerk. 'So bare' as what? Was 2,000 years 'so' long ago in the context of all human history? 'Loved us so,' - the poet could not think how to express the magnitude of divine love except by using the weakest word in the language. In verse 2 we have more: 'mother so fair' and 'son so dear'; in verse 3: 'worship the babe so rare'. There is other distortion of the English language. Instead of 'beneath' we have 'neath - a clumsy attempt to save a syllable; are 'light of star' or 'distant far land' elegant English phrases? And what do we make of the frantic attempt to get into the *Guinness Book of Records* for rhymes for 'ay'? Far away/silent lay/born today/your homage pay/born for aye/born on Christmas Day. Who is being told to pay homage? No other line in the lyric is addressed directly to the listener. At the end of the refrain we have the ultimate banality: 'born on Christmas Day'. Of course he was! We call it that because he was. And this line repeated several times becomes the punch-line of the whole carol. It adds nothing to our understanding of the Nativity. It means: 'Christ was born on the day we call Christmas Day because that's the day he was born on'. The regular reiteration of this vapid line, the numerous incidences of 'so', the repetition of banalities are clear attempts to intensify the sentimentality of the piece, the verse of which is a worthy rival to McGonagall. But it's popular, for some reason.

We need to abolish some and rediscover other aspects of our carol heritage. At the same time innovation is essential both as regards composition and arrangement. Maybe the trouble is that practising organists are so busy with their own carol services that they have little opportunity to listen to what others do. Then, almost the only widely broadcast Christmas music is from one Cambridge College, and spurious traditions grow up, simply because we see and hear no others. We must look critically at the carols we sing. We can surely do better, can we not?
Iachimo

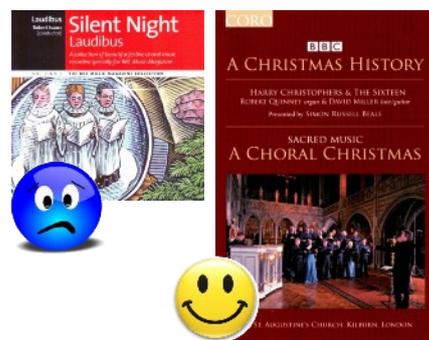
What is your opinion? – A note from the Editor

When I received this contribution, it was accompanied by a note expressing the hope that it might stir up some response from members to agree or disagree and then write to the editor to say so! Well, to get the ball rolling, here is my quick response:

I couldn't help feeling empathy with many of the sentiments expressed. I have long felt bored with the repetition in The First Nowell with its tediously wandering tune. The chorus is good fun, but we need a new tune for the verses. Perhaps we need new poetry as well?

As a subscriber to BBC Music Magazine I am always curious about the CD that accompanies the Christmas issue to see what the editors can conjure up as a new approach to Christmas music. In my opinion there have been in past years some outstanding examples of fresh light shed on the Christmas repertoire. For the December 2012 issue I thought the repertoire was superb, but unfortunately the recording was frequently marred by an ugly brand of vibrato offered by the sopranos. It was that annoying operatic brand of uncertain intonation. Most of the soprano solos were bad enough, but to my ears some of the chorus harmony was also completely ruined by this treatment. This was a terrible shame with such superb repertoire; some lovely fresh compositions and some beautiful new settings of old favourites. I wonder if any other members shared my disappointment?

In a complete contrast, I received from a friend a DVD of The Sixteen presenting a potted history of Christmas music with narration by Simon Russell Beale. Here the singing was superb, the explanations fascinating and the video images enhanced the beauty of the music.



Recent Events

Ancient Tones with Tony Westerman

The DDOA programme for 2013 got underway in February with a fascinating presentation by Tony Westerman entitled 'Music in the Ancient World - Scale, Melody and Notation.' In just over an hour Tony took us on a journey spanning 6000 years. This sort of story reminds us how privileged we are as beneficiaries of countless generations of experimentation and refinement in musical culture.

From the fundamentals of defining musical scales to the notation of melody and rhythm on the page, human minds have been continuously active in devising solutions to problems which we now take for granted.

Our journey started in the Greek Empire, at that time a loose federation of autonomous states and cities bordering the Aegean Sea. In such a social and political climate there was a proliferation of local traditions in the design and tuning of musical instruments which is a world away from the standardisation we are accustomed to today. Some *lyres* had three strings, some had seven. Tony introduced us to the *aulos*, a double reed woodwind instrument which curiously was played in pairs; the player would blow into two instruments simultaneously! From Tony's sound extract, the sound resembled a raucus bagpipe tone.



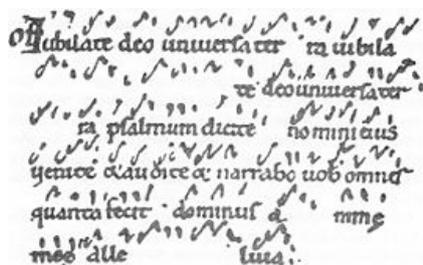
A lesson in playing the lyre.



A double aulos performer



In theories of scales, the interval of a perfect fourth emerged as the significant baseline, rather than the octave of modern times. The fourth led to the *tetrachord* consisting of four notes which divided the fourth into three smaller intervals. The method of tuning devised by Pythagoras used a mathematical method of ratios for defining the intervals, but this was rejected by Aristoxenus, a pupil of Aristotle, who in several musical treatises maintained that the intervals should be judged by ear. With such disagreement it is not surprising that there were many different versions of the tetrachord.



Neumes: An early version of plainchant notation which evolved into the more familiar squares on a four-line staff.

For hundreds of years there were no standard forms of notation. Wavy lines and even Arabic symbols were used in a variety of ways to record melody and rhythm but it was not until the collation of Gregorian chant in medieval times that a de facto standard emerged. Today the *English Hymnal* reminds us of the plainchant heritage and the leap to modern staff notation seems to be a short one in comparison with the journey from Greek times.

In truth, Tony's topic for the evening is a long and complex story, but we are grateful for the insights which he shared with us, giving us a window into this fascinating history.

Laurence Rogers



A beautiful score from the Byzantine period containing what appear like hand waving signals as a form of melodic notation.

DDOA - Your Association

Membership List

The updated list are available to members on request. Please contact the Secretary by email at mail@derbyorganists.co.uk.

Annual Dinner 10th June

Although this event is some way ahead, our booking at the Willersley Castle Hotel requires us to send in our menu choices before the end of May. Since the next newsletter will not be published until 1st May we are giving members notice now so that swift action can be taken in May to confirm our booking with the management. A reply form for making booking and menu choices accompanies this newsletter. Please use this at your earliest convenience. If you can deal with this now, it will greatly assist those organising the event.

Derbyshire Organs CD Project

This project aims to celebrate the variety and historical importance of the organs in our area. Work is now under way and a preliminary visit has already been made.

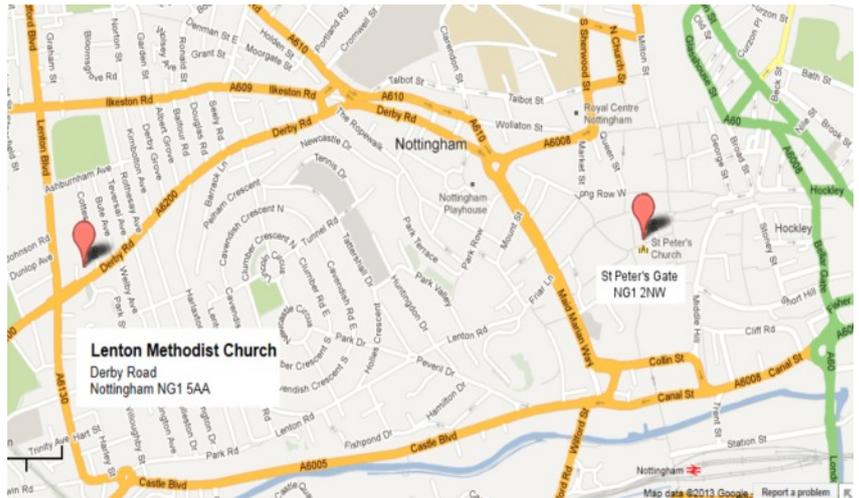
Members' News

We are delighted to welcome a new member, Chris Greenleaves who is organist at All Saints, Brailsford.

Afternoon Visit to Organs in Nottingham. Saturday 16th March

We are planning to visit two interesting organs in Nottingham, Lenton Methodist Church (Lloyd 2-manual, 25 stops, recently refurbished) and St Peter's in the city centre. The latter is a hybrid organ comprising both pipes and digital sounds.

Start at Lenton 2.00pm. Street parking is possible in Cottesmore Road, Ashburnham Avenue and parts of Lenton Boulevard. It is not advisable to park at the church where you could get hemmed in. It is suggested to take the bus to central Nottingham to arrive at St Peter's at 3.30pm and stay till about 5.00pm. (Cup of tea provided.) Then a bus back to Lenton.



**PETER WILLIAMS presents 'Service with a Smile'
Monday, 15th April 7.30 pm
at St Wystan's Parish Church, Repton**

Peter will discuss and illustrate various aspects of service playing, within the framework of a notional service, from 'music beforehand' to the final 'voluntary'.

There will be sections on different types of hymnody and worship songs, psalms, interludes etc. interspersed with anecdotes from a 'long and disgraceful' career.

Bring your problems and, above all, bring your singing voices!

Repton is 2 miles south of the junction between the A38 and A50 on the south western side of Derby. From the junction take the B5008 through Willington. St Wystan's Parish Church (DE65 6FH) is easily found in the centre of the village with ample adjacent road parking.

**DAVID COWEN on Improvisation,
Derby Cathedral Monday 20th May**

I have had a most useful consultation down in Leicester at St James the Greater with David in preparation for this event which I warmly commend to you all. David is himself an Improviser of international reputation and we really are lucky to have him, plus the chance to visit the Cathedral – thanks to Peter Gould's good offices.

He has some excellent suggestions for starting to improvise which are not at all daunting and are easily accessible whatever your standard of competence. He makes the point that many people find the art difficult because they try to start on a very demanding level – playing in 'hymn tune style' with a very fast rate of chord change and in four-part harmony. The result can sometimes lack shape and direction and easily becomes a musical equivalent of a 'politician's waffle'! He lays stress on clarity and simplicity and uses

scales and modes as a starting points as well as more traditional harmony. My session with him was a mixture of teaching and discussion and it was very stimulating. Needless to say he can do the French Toccata stuff with the best of them (he has studied in France with top teachers) and he will happily share some of the tricks of the trade. I asked him how he came to develop such expertise. His reply was typically modest and rather surprising - 'it was because I absolutely was no good at it – so I went and bought some books and just got on with it' Now that is good news for us all. So please do come along. Play if you wish, but there is no compulsion. I have had 'offers of help' on the night from several members already.

Improvising is fun, a very good discipline and a vital tool for the church organist at any level. I play in two village churches and have occasion to improvise at almost every service – so can you.

Stephen Johns

Items of news or articles for the May/June edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 22nd April**, either via e-mail: DDOAnews@gmail.com or by post: Dr Laurence Rogers, 24 St.David's Crescent, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4SS. The Secretary, Stephen Johns, may be reached via mail@derbyorganists.co.uk Please visit the DDOA Website www.derbyorganists.co.uk for information about Association activities, past editions of the newsletter, photo gallery and many special features of local interest.