

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2008

LOOKING AHEAD

Tuesday 9 September : Chairman's Event : St Wystan, Repton, 7.30

***Bach and his Rhythm Stick* : Some thoughts on rhythmic performance in Bach's organ music**

We hope the time and effort our Chairman, Peter Williams, has put in to preparing this presentation will be rewarded by a good turnout. The subject should be of particular interest to practising organists, but we emphasise that the event is not aimed exclusively at Bach players. For those who may wish to come armed with their own copies, Peter gives notice that the programme will include the Toccata, Adagio & Fugue in C (BWV564), *In dulci júbilo* (Orgelbüchlein), the Trio Sonata in d (BWV527) and pieces from the Clavierübung Pt III, all of which have been chosen to demonstrate rhythmic problems that can arise in performance and the solutions that he has come up with after many years' deliberation. As for the intriguing title - we are promised that all will be revealed on the day.

As a further inducement to attendance, refreshments in the form of cakes kindly supplied by our Secretary, as well as the customary beverages, will be available at the end.

Tuesday 14 October : Social Evening : Spondon Church Hall

The principal activities of the evening will be a quiz, which we are promised will be of a general nature, suitable for members' families and friends, and eating and drinking. Food is to be provided on a "bring and share" basis, for which instructions will be given in our next issue. The facilities at Spondon are excellent, so we can look forward to an enjoyable event. Make sure it is in your diary!

OTHER CHURCH/ORGAN-RELATED EVENTS TO NOTE

- Wed 20 Aug Gareth Green : Cathedral, 7.45
Fri 22 Aug The Bishop's Consort : *Requiem* (Fauré) etc. : St James the Greater, Leicester, 7.30
Sat 23 Aug Rodney Tomkins : St Andrew, Twyford, 7.30
Sat 30 Aug Michael Rhodes : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00
Sun 31 Aug Sarah Baldock : Albert Hall, Nottingham, 2.45
Sat 6 Sept Come and Sing *Nelson Mass* (Haydn), cond. Peter Williams : Melbourne Leisure Centre
(Information from Melbourne Arts Festival Booking Office ☎ 07962 430450)
Sat 20 Sept Jonathan Scott : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00
Wed 24 Sept Edmund Stow + Darley Hillside Choir : Cromford Methodist, 7.30 (*inaugural concert of new organ*)
Sat 27 Sept Joint Choirs : Vaughan Williams concert : Cathedral, 7.45
Sun 28 Sept Keith Beckingham : Burton Town Hall, 2.30
Sun 28 Sept Simon Gledhill : Albert Hall, Nottingham, 2.45
Sat 4 Oct Derby Cathedral Choir : All Saints, Ockbrook, 7.30
Sat 11 Oct Paul Carr : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00
Sat 11 Oct IAO Midlands Organ Day, Lichfield (*contact our Secretary* (☎ 01773 606900) *for information*
Sun 26 Oct Adrian Partington : Albert Hall, Nottingham, 2.45 */booking forms*)

ORGANS IN CROMFORD

Some 20 members were joined by supporters of the two churches on 28 July, on a sunny and warm evening (was that the summer?). The history, background and restoration of the two instruments was comprehensively covered in a leaflet given out on the evening.

The 1906 Nicholson & Lord instrument at the Methodist Church in Water Lane must have been a labour of love to recover from its former state and then restore [*money was involved as well!* - Ed]. Ed Stow played a Chorale Prelude from the *Orgelbüchlein* (Bach) and an arrangement by our member David Wells of the *Berceuse* from Fauré's *Dolly Suite*. The organ was then open to members, and what power from the Great Chorus, and from the fiery Oboe (no shrinking Oboe!), whether assisting the chorus or used as a pedal reed. Finally, and memorably to the writer, Tony Westerman extemporised on a hymn tune, starting from a soft stop and building up to full organ. We must record our thanks to the church members for supplying food and refreshing drinks. [*The official opening of this instrument on 24 September is noted above*]

On to St Mary's Parish Church for an introduction and demonstration, by Rodney Tomkins, on how to use this 1859 Hill Great and 1861 Lloyd tenor-C Swell. The restoration has included the addition of a Twelfth (replicating the lost original) and 2-rank Mixture on the Great, and the provision of a more complete chorus, of Clarabella (formerly on the Great), Principal and Fifteenth, on the Swell. Members then explored the different tone colours and stop combinations, all helped by the excellent acoustics. So a fine restored organ to complement a fine restored church. The Arkwright Society representative was very pleased to hear the organ, and said that when the Society had visitors they usually had the organ played or demonstrated.

We now have two fine restored organs in this historic part of Derbyshire; I hope that they are put to good use during Sunday services.

GJC

CHILDREN AND THE ORGAN

After what has seemed an age of planning, assembling resources, and the occasional panic, we eventually made it to St Wystan's Church, Repton on July 9 to run our first session. We met two local schools - St Wystan's (morning) and Repton Primary (afternoon) - with pupils in the age range 9-11. The sessions lasted an hour and a half.

What better start to the day than a barnstorming "Widor" - albeit somewhat truncated - from Peter Williams. This was followed by a session lasting about 30 minutes in which we introduced the children to the basics of the organ, including a lot of "question and answer" and some listening games. The talking was backed up by such exhibits as "Terry's Tracker" - a one-note tracker action mounted on a flat board, and what was probably the star of the show, Ed's "Big Bertha" - an exceptionally fruity 8' Trumpet pipe which the children loved.

To give everyone the chance to "have a go" at the organ we devised some related activities that could go on at the same time. These included designing a pipe layout with two sets of properly scaled painted wooden dowel pipes, and doing coloured pipe decoration on paper. In both cases the children had access to a set of pictures of various case and pipe designs. They also had a chance to explore pedal technique on a dummy pedalboard.

The behaviour was excellent and there was plenty of interest. The children tackled some quite difficult listening games with enthusiasm and several asked some very penetrating questions, including the young man who asked Peter if the most famous organ piece was "I do like to be beside the seaside". The measured reply, delivered with a gentle smile - "It depends who you are"! This led on to memories some of them had of Blackpool Tower, and a final "Toccata in D minor" to round off the session.

We now plan to offer the event to other schools in the area in the next academic year. Suggestions from members for venues will be welcomed (contact Stephen Johns ☎ 764792 or any of the collaborators named below). We aim it at children aged about 9-11. The organ must be in a church within walking distance of a Junior/Primary school, and needs to be so positioned that the children can gather round it and see what is happening, as at Repton (regrettably this requirement rules out some good instruments which are in galleries or are hemmed in by choirstalls or other obstructions). The action should preferably be mechanical, as this is the system mainly discussed, though other types may be acceptable in situations where everything else is right. The organ need not be large, but it must have a reasonably impressive *tutti* - there was an audible reaction from the Repton children when Peter launched into the Widor on full organ, which a dull late-Victorian/Edwardian octopod would be unlikely to elicit.

Some aspects of what we did need to be revised, and this we shall be doing fairly soon. It is crucial to the success of the venture that the schools feel they get something that helps with the National Curriculum, and not just in Music. The organ's potential to help with Science and Technology is obvious and we have tried to exploit that.

Finally a big "thank you" to the team who worked on this, offering both practical help and wise counsel: Ed Stow, Peter Williams, Terry Bennett, James Muckle and Anne Johns; also to David Wells who took time to produce the finely scaled dowel pipes. One or two further members have indicated they would be interested in joining in - I shall contact them soon. In the long term it would be good to have a "pool of players" to call on. I shall be writing a brief report for the *RCO News* at the request of Simon Williams (Head of Education) who is encouraging the development of this kind of work with children.

Stephen Johns

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We regret to have to record the death on 12 July of our member **Jeremy Clegg**, of Matlock.