

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



*Dedicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury -
The Restored Organ at St Oswald's, Ashbourne*

St Oswald's Church, Ashbourne, is surely one of the medieval gems amongst Derbyshire churches. Its spacious chancel and sanctuary, backed by the great east window, are the perfect setting for the rituals of high festivals and splendid occasions, such as the recent visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury. A congregation and choir of 1,100 was present for that occasion and the newly restored organ was put to the test. Director of Music Michael Halls was delighted with how well the restoration has remedied a problem that has been present for

many years. With a chancel and sanctuary nearly as long as the nave, the logistics of organ sound reaching the nave have always been difficult. Hitherto the organist has been challenged by the problem of leading congregational singing in the nave with an organ whose sound had been fine tuned for the chancel at the expense of presence in the nave.

The origin of the present instrument goes back to 1858 when William Hill installed a three-manual tracker-action organ. It



DDOA Events 2011

22nd November at 7.30pm
Chairman's Event and AGM,
St Werbergh's Spondon

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the AGM for 2010
3. Matters arising (to be taken under 'other business')
4. Reports: Chairman
Secretary
Treasurer
5. Change to Constitution: position of Chaplain
6. Election of officers and Committee
7. Other business
8. Votes of thanks

Chairman's Evening:

Please see page 6 for details.

Concerts & Recitals

Saturday 12th November, 7.30 pm
Landau Forte College, Fox Street,
Derby. Will Todd - Mass in Blue, John
Rutter - Feel the Spirit
Derby Choral Union. £16, £12, £5

Saturday 19th November, 7.30 pm
Derby Cathedral. Duruflé - Requiem,
Elgar - The Music Makers
Derby Bach Choir. £12

Saturday 26th November, 7.30 pm
St Peter's Church, Stapenhill, Burton-on-
Trent DE15 9AF
Musique Française; works by Duruflé ,
Saint-Saëns, Poulenc and Fauré.
Sitwell Singers. £10

Saturday 3rd December, 7.30 pm
St Wistan's Church, Repton. In Terra
Pax; works by Lauridsen, Finzi & Haydn
Derwent Singers. £10

Monday 12th December, 7.30 pm
St John the Evangelist, Derby
The Little Road to Bethlehem
Sitwell Singers. £8

Saturday 17th December, 7.30 pm
Derby Cathedral. Handel - Messiah
Derby Choral Union. £15, £10

Photos: St Oswald's Church, Ashbourne
Pipes in the chancel facade.



The low-level console is next to the choir stalls on the south side of the chancel

had eleven stops on the Great, eleven on the Swell and six on the Choir with six pedal stops, five couplers and six composition pedals. For its time this was a generous specification indeed which benefited from wealthy local support. The organ was dedicated to the memory of Edward Corden, a wealthy benefactor of the town and church.

In 1882 the organ was raised to its present position in a well-proportioned chamber enjoying ample height on the south side of the chancel. One suspects that poor egress of sound into the main body of the church was recognised at an early stage and perhaps part of the intention of this modification was to remedy the problem. On this occasion the improvement was carried out in recognition of the work of Benjamin Parkin who had presided over the Hill instrument since its inception. When he retired in 1904 he had served as organist for 48 years. (What a great record, but later to be equalled!)

The next major rebuild was undertaken in 1951, under the supervision of organist Chris Daly Atkinson, who also served for 30 years until 1992 and was well-known in Derbyshire and beyond. The old tracker action which had served for ninety three years was replaced by a detached console with electro-pneumatic action and stop keys. At the time, the strong choral tradition in worship focused attention on the accompaniment of

an accomplished choir in the chancel, but the old problem of lack of projection into the nave was not addressed, to the detriment of supporting congregational singing in the nave. A further restoration in 1982 by Hill, Norman and Beard also failed to address the problem. On this occasion a new action was fitted together with an Ellen Playback Transmission System which incorporated digital control so that the console could be moved to the tower crossing to provide for more effective use in concerts and recitals. Again, supporting congregational singing seemed to be a low priority.

This brings us to the most recent chapter in the evolution of the instrument. St Oswald's regularly



Main Great division facing the chancel
A spacious, clean and tidy environment

enjoys large congregations on Sunday mornings; 120 worshippers is typical. Funerals usually draw congregations of 200, and Michael declares that these occur on a weekly basis! In recent years St Oswald's has regularly hosted ordinations, always attracting full capacity congregations. Michael directs a substantial choir of 30 mixed voices, including 14 boys and girls, which sings at two services every Sunday and a full choral evensong once a month. Thus the demands on the organ are many and diverse, and the most recent rebuild carried out earlier this year by Henry Groves and Son has demanded imaginative solutions.

Several measures have succeeded in improving sound egress into the nave:

- An additional soundboard for the Great with four new Diapason ranks has been provided behind the south transept pipe facade, facing west.
- A sound reflecting canopy has been installed above the new division.
- Shutters have been added to the west facing side of the Swell box to direct sound towards the nave. Thus the Swell now has shutters on two sides, west (facing the nave) and north (facing the chancel), which can be used independently or together.
- The Tromba pipes have been turned around to speak to the nave.



Nave Great division behind the south transept facade pipes

Thus congregational singing is much better served by the organ and processional choir singing in the nave has also benefitted in that the sound of the organ can now be heard above the singing. Formerly, processions could be quite disjointed due to the organ being inaudible in the nave.

With such a thriving choral tradition in the church the needs of choir accompaniment have not been neglected. On the contrary. Now that the Swell speaks so much more effectively to the nave, some of the Swell reeds have been toned down, since they no longer need to force their sound into the chancel to stand a chance of reaching the nave. The result is a much more blended Swell sound in the chancel allowing stop changes to be graded with greater subtlety. Also, when using the north facing Swell shutters only, the crescendo from closed to fully open is most impressive. The Choir organ, tucked away in the eastern side of the chamber, has also become much more useful for choir accompaniment due to the addition of a Nazard, Tierce and



Tromba pipes, formerly pointing towards the Swell, now facing west towards the nave.



Clarinet. Together with some revoicing, these additions have made possible a much better blend of sound. So services of Evensong, held in the chancel, have benefitted from a much more choir-friendly presence of organ sound.

The organ has some new lungs, with two new blowers replacing an exhausted single one. Some judicious revoicing has generally improved the brightness of the organ as a whole and Michael has been very pleased with the overall balance of sound in all parts of the church. One should mention that the main exception to this is the south transept into which the Swell and the new Great division speak so directly. So this part of the church has become a sort of reservoir of sound which then spills out into the tower crossing and nave through some very lofty Gothic arches. Fortunately the south transept has no regular seating, so for most of the time it is not occupied by congregation.

Finally, the latest rebuild has furnished the console with some of

the latest electronic accessories: There are six divisional pistons for each manual and six general pistons; 200 channels for setting these and sequencer buttons for advancing through the channels. Michael confesses that he has not yet exploited these gadgets to the full, but he is in no hurry because he is already very content with the versatility of the renovated instrument.

I am very grateful to Michael for his kind hospitality in showing me the organ and allowing me to play.

Laurence Rogers



Michael Halls

SPECIFICATION - St Oswald, Ashbourne

William Hill & Sons 1858, Norman & Beard 1952, Henry Groves & Son 2011

Great		Swell		Choir		Pedal	
Contra Viola	16	Lieblich Bourdon	16	Stopped Diapason	8	Harmonic Sub Bass	32
Open Diapason I	8	Open Diapason	8	Viol d'Orchestre	8	Open Wood	16
Open Diapason II	8	Rohr Gedeckt	8	Wald Flute	4	Violone	16
Gemshorn	8	Salicional	8	Nazard	2 2/3	Contra Viola	16
Claribel Flute	8	Vox Angelica	8	Flageolet	2	Bourdon	16
Principal	4	Octave	4	Tierce	1 3/5	Octave Diapason	8
Nason Flute	4	Twelfth	2 2/3	Clarinet	8	Bass Flute	8
Twelfth	2 2/3	Fifteenth	2	Tromba	8	Trombone	16
Fifteenth	2	Mixture	IV	Tremulant		Contra Fagotto	16
Mixture	III	Contra Fagotto	16				
Posaune	8	Trumpet	8				
Tromba	8	Horn	8	Couplers			
		Oboe	8	Swell Octave	Choir Octave	Swell to Pedal	
		Clarion	4	Swell Unison Off	Choir Unison Off	Great to Pedal	
Great Nave Division		Tremulant		Swell Sub Octave	Choir Sub Octave	Choir to Pedal	
Open Diapason	8			Swell to Great	Choir Sub to Great	Gt.& Ped.Combs	
Principal	4			Swell to Choir	Choir to Great	Nave On	
Fifteenth	2						

The Gratians - Belper's Organ Building Family (Part 2) - Rodney Tomkins

The Move to Derby

The last child of Joseph's first marriage was born, as we have seen, in 1829 and baptized in 1830. The next firm date we are aware of is that of his second marriage – to Sarah Warin (or Warren) – which took place in 1840 at Derby St. Alkmund's, his address (and, by now, that of his business) being 56 Upper Brook Street, in the parish of St. Alkmund, Derby.



The medieval church of St Alkmund's, Derby. Before demolition and replacement in 1846.

Clearly his first wife must have died some time between 1830 and 1840. By the time of his second marriage Joseph was 55 and his new wife "officially" 21 (no doubt to qualify being described as "of full age"!), though in reality she may only have been 19 or 20, having been christened at Derby St. Werburgh's in February 1822. (Confusingly, the 1841 census gives her age as 15 - a result in that particular census of ages being rounded down to the nearest 5!)

What actually promoted the move from Belper (where he was still recorded as living and working as late as 1835) is not known. Could it have been prompted by redevelopment of the old Gratians Lane site by Brettle's mill around 1835, or was it just a desire to seek new opportunities (not to mention a new wife!)?

This second marriage was blessed with two children – a daughter, born in 1842, and a son, Henry, born in 1844, and about whom we



St Werburgh, Derby c.1880

shall hear more later. The parents do not seem to have been in any hurry to get these two baptized : it was not until 1849 that they were actually christened (together), in St. Alkmund's, Derby.

Joseph was clearly involved with St. Alkmund's and its 1825 Buckingham organ. When in 1844 the instrument was advertised for disposal prior to demolition and rebuilding of the Mediaeval church, it was soon snapped up by the Belper Wesleyans. We are not told whether Gratian actually carried out the transfer but, in view of his connection with both churches and the fact that his signature (dated 1847) is to be found in the instrument, and also the fact that he maintained the organ during the 1850s, it would be quite reasonable to guess that he was responsible for the whole operation.

Another instrument from this period was at Sandiacre church, in 1849. The news report refers to him as "Mr. Gresham, of Derby". This is no doubt a typical reporter's misrepresentation of "Gratian"; the verbal pronunciation is not dissimilar and it is certainly not the first time that this spelling had occurred.

Joseph and Sarah continued to live in Upper Brook Street until Joseph's death in 1863. He was buried at Nottingham Road Cemetery on 11th. February and his will was proved on 25th March, witnesses being Joseph Kerry and William Yeomans; executors were John Winfield and Thomas Slater. Sarah, still only in her early forties, survived him, though where, and for how long, we do not know. All we can say is that by the 1871 census another family were resident at the Upper Brook Street address.

Henry Gratian, 1844-1921

Henry was born in 1844 at the family's Derby home in Upper Brook Street, the youngest child of Joseph Gratian, the Belper organ builder, now aged about 60, and his young second wife, Sarah (Warin).

Like his elder brother, Joseph (junior), Henry appears to have been in the music business. In his

father's will, of 1863, he was the recipient of all Joseph's music and musical instruments. He was also due to receive further inheritances, by way of property, on attaining the age of 21 – which would be in 1865. On receiving this bounty he must have decided to leave his widowed mother and take himself off to London where, in 1866, he married Eliza White, 18 years his senior, the marriage being registered in Brixton. The couple had two children, Joseph Hector (1867) and young Henry (born 1870, but died the following year).

By the time of the 1881 census Henry's family had moved to West Ham (then in Essex). In that same year Eliza died and, in 1882, Henry married again – to Mary Hannay. In 1909 Mary died and in 1913 Henry (now aged 70) married for a third time – to 20-year-old Rose Phillips. This blissful state was not to last long as Rose died only four years later. Henry himself passed away in 1921.

Henry Gratian appears to have made a name for himself as a reed organ maker during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, his business address being 38 Ferndale Road, Upton Park, West Ham. The 1881 census gives him at another West Ham address working as a pianoforte tuner.

Thomas Gratian, 1827-1905

Thomas, born in Belper in 1827, was the fifth child of Joseph and his first wife, Sarah (Riley). In 1861 he married Emma Bradley (from Swanwick) in Chesterfield Parish Church. On the marriage certificate his father is described as "Professor of Music". Thomas himself is later, in the 1881 census, referred to as a colliery mechanic, resident in Woolley Moor, Stretton.

The importance to us of Thomas is that, thanks to the researches of Pat Haldenby, of Littleover, we are able to trace a direct line of descent (albeit with spelling now changed to Gratian), to the present day, making him great-grandfather of Geoffrey Gratian – who is therefore a great-great-grandson of our Belper organ builder.

It is nice to think that Geoff's wood-carving skills are something he has inherited through the

generations : Joseph obviously needed such skill as part of his organ-building trade, and we know that Joseph's own father, Richard, had been described as a joiner.

To be continued.

Editor's note:

The final instalment of Rodney's history of the Gratians of Belper will appear in the January *Newsletter*. The complete story will be available to members in 2012 as a 12-page booklet.

Recent Events

Cathedral Organ Recitals 2011

- Hans Hielscher
- Timothy Byram-Wigfield
- Anthony Hammond
- David Briggs
- Andrew Dewar
- Peter Gould, Ben Bloor, Sachin Gunga, Christopher Johns, Tom Corfield
- Michael Harris
- Peter Litman

Opinion on performers at any recital can be surprisingly varied depending upon several factors: the performer's rapport with the audience; the position of one's seat; the programme and, not least, the talent and musicianship of the player. It will therefore be no surprise to readers that opinion this year was as varied as ever, though the standard of playing was generally of the first order with each performer bringing different strengths.

There has been much comment in recent years on the subject of recital programmes and the need to make them more approachable to the public. As the theme for this year's series was the music of Guil mant, a formidable recitalist and improviser in his day, the choice of pieces to complement his

music assumed a particular significance – sadly overlooked by one or two of the recitalists. Whilst structural analysis of Guil mant's sonatas might reveal hidden depths, few of the movements communicate with a twenty-first century listener in a meaningful way in one hearing – the same might be said of Liszt's somewhat esoteric structures. Juxtaposing lengthy works by Guil mant and Liszt in one programme was, perhaps, a breve too far for many listeners!

High points of the series for me were Timothy Byram-Wigfield's musicianship and interpretive skills, Andrew Dewar's phenomenal technique; Michael Harris's musicianship and ability to communicate music to an audience, and Anthony Hammond's performance of Dupré's *Variations sur un Noël, Op. 20*.

The 'home' team must be mentioned for the entertaining spectacle of five organists playing three organs and moving between them with some alacrity to perform Guil mant's *Grand Choeur in D*. Mention should also be made of Tom Corfield's delightful composition *A Little Suite for All Saints* in which each of the pieces represented one of the cathedral staff; I do hope that Tom has the suite published.

Tony Westerman

Annual Outing 24th September

Held later in the year than in previous years, this annual social event was well supported by an enthusiastic corps of members and friends. A warm welcome awaited us at three locations. In Oakham School Chapel, Peter Davis,



Members at Oakham Parish Church

Director of Music amazed us with his story that when planning the new Peter Collins organ in the 90s it had to be loud and bright enough to compete with the volume of singing of 500 students. The organ certainly possessed both these qualities but also charmed us with some beautiful softer tones, especially on the positive division, just above the player's head. Playing members offered a varied repertoire exploiting its brilliant voicing with Bach, and its varied mutations with French pieces. An added bonus to this visit was the participation of the organ builder Peter Collins who entertained us in genial conversation.

Just across the road at Oakham Parish Church we were welcomed by Kevin Slingsby who demonstrated the Kenneth Tickell organ, an interesting instrument with a beautiful case between the Lady Chapel and the north aisle.

Later in the afternoon at Peterborough Cathedral we attended a grand Choral Evensong with the regular choir swelled by a sizable gathering of former choristers. After Evensong, Director of Music Andrew Reid gave us a warm welcome and explained the vast resources of the organ, originally built by William Hill, considerably extended in subsequent rebuilds and now with 86 speaking stops. He demonstrated the huge dynamic range of the instrument with Liszt's *Fantasia and Fugue on BACH*.

Laurence Rogers

Members' News

With sadness we record the death of our member Stuart Pratt, organist at Etwell for many years and a keen student of organ design.

We are delighted to welcome a new student member, Ben Middleton, who is studying organ with Peter Gould.



Peter Gould, Tom Corfield, Chris Johns, Sachin Gunga and Ben Bloor at Derby Cathedral.

Forthcoming DDOA Meeting

This year the Chairman's Event will immediately follow the AGM on Tuesday 22nd November

Chairman's Evening

22nd November 8.00 pm at St Werbergh's Church, Spondon.

'Your choir can sing this'

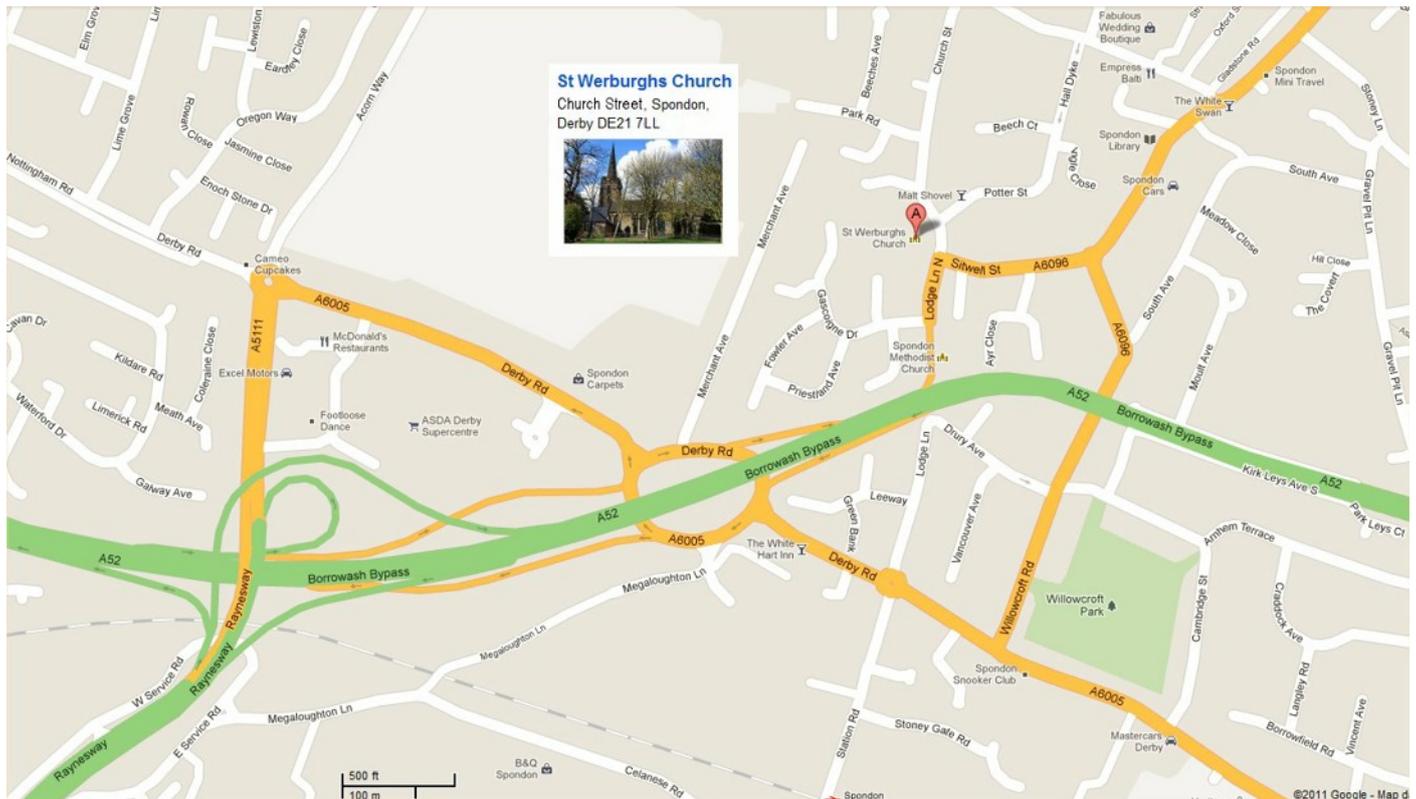
An introduction to Russian Orthodox Church Singing, and some pieces you might like to try.

Our Chairman, Prof. James Muckle writes:

"DDOA must hold an **Annual General Meeting**, and it will take place at **7.30 pm**. The agenda is published on the front page. As Chairman, I am determined to see that it does not last more than thirty minutes, but that depends on you, the members. We have no desperately difficult matters to discuss. If you wish to raise anything important, please contact the Secretary or me and brief us appropriately. Otherwise, we do not want to waste your time, and I therefore look forward after the AGM to talking to you about something I greatly value: the musical tradition of the Russian Church.

With the help of our technical wizard, David Shooter, I aim to show you pictures of churches and let you hear some of the music of Russian Orthodoxy. But it is not just recordings and pictures. Over the last 25 years I have built up a collection of my own editions and translations of this music: we shall sing some of it ourselves and explore a tiny corner of the repertoire. If any of the music we sing takes your fancy, I shall let you have PDFs of my editions, which you are welcome to use, but this applies strictly to those attending the meeting!

A point I shall be making is that this music is eminently adaptable – men's voices, women's? The texts? What does it matter? However, I remind you that DDOA meetings are open to all, so please invite your choir members and others, so we can have a really good sing. Tell non-members to aim to turn up at 8 p.m. – they'll be bored to death before then. And everybody else – make them welcome!"



Items of news or articles for the January/February edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 19th December**, 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.