

NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2007

LOOKING AHEAD

The 2007 Annual General Meeting will be held on **Tuesday 20 November at 7.30pm** in the vestry of **St John's Church, Bridge Street, Derby**. We urge all members to attend.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of 2006 AGM (appended to this *Newsletter*)
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Subscriptions for 2008
8. Election of Officers and Committee
9. Programme for 2008
10. Suggestions for future programme
11. Any other business

May we, as in previous years, point out that the business of the AGM is only a mere formality, or a rubber-stamping of decisions and nominations already made, if members allow it so to be by their failure to attend or to participate actively in it. The Committee has a duty to fix the coming year's programme in advance, for obvious practical reasons, and to ensure that there will be at least one nominee for each post. Beyond that nothing is predetermined.

We can inform readers of some particular decisions that will have to be made:

- A new Chairman must be elected - the present incumbent will not be standing for re-election.
- The Treasurer intends to propose a £1 increase in the basic subscription (the first for 11 years).

* * * * *

Our first event of 2008 will be the **Annual Dinner**, which is again to be held at the Lion Hotel, Belper, on Saturday 19 January at 7.00 for 7.30. The speaker will be Canon Nicholas Henshall of Derby Cathedral. Menu details and booking form with our December issue.

CHILDREN AND THE ORGAN PROJECT

Stephen Johns

The Association's Committee has agreed to take on a project aimed at making the organ more interesting and accessible to children, particularly in the 8-11 age group. We would all like to see more pupils playing the instrument, but before that can happen a drive is needed to encourage teachers and pupils to see the organ as much more "mainstream" than it is at present, and to appreciate what an exciting experience it can be to hear a good instrument well played. Several initiatives have taken place around the country, and the RCO "Outreach" Dept. led by Simon Williams is leading the way.

We plan to approach two schools in the Derby area in the New Year, and discuss with them the possibility of a two-hour session for a class of upper juniors in Repton PC. This would include hearing *and seeing* the organ in action. Then there would be practical workshops in which pupils learn about tracker action, pipes and their arrangement, sound production, case design, pedalling etc. They would have a chance to play the instrument. In addition, bearing in mind schools' need to justify all they do in terms of the National Curriculum, we would provide plenty of follow-up work springing from the experience at the instrument. This would cover such areas as maths, music, basic physics of sound and design/technology. The more you think about it the more the organ seems such a rich source of learning for children, but the essential point is that the musical experience of the instrument be exciting and lead pupils and teachers to want to explore further.

Terry Bennett and I are spearheading this work initially, with the support of the Committee, but we shall need further help. If you are interested please contact me in the first instance ☎ (01332) 764792.

WINGERWORTH AND BOLSOVER

On 13 October the Association was welcomed at two churches in NE Derbyshire. Synoptic specifications of both organs were published in the last *Newsletter*. At Wingerworth Robert Girdler spoke briefly, played briefly, and tactfully left members to it, remaining to engage us in conversation and to give information. All Saints is a beautiful modern church with striking stained glass windows, while treasuring priceless relics of its mediaeval past. The organ is contained in a chamber above the west end, protected by what is basically the original Snetzler screen. Some of us did just wonder if the apparent enclosure of the pipework might unfavourably affect the immediacy and impact of the organ, but no! The sound was rich, bright and varied. Mr Girdler had begun by playing on the original Snetzler pipes. Despite a puzzling remark in the printed information supplied, the most recent rebuild had not restored the original *pitch*, but the original *wind pressure*. Jonathan Wallace, the organ builder responsible, commented that the former high pressure had not been to the advantage of the 18th century pipes. There seemed to be an excellent balance between the three manuals. Moreover, as members played, I more than once ran to the console to see what stops they were using, delighted with the quality of sound. And finally, a plaque on the side of the console acknowledged a grant from a landfill firm; there's no way of knowing who will give you money for an organ if only you ask for it.

That piece of news I passed on to Andrew Yeomans, the organist at Bolsover, who is seeking £70,000 for work on the soundboards and the tired-out electronics of his instrument. But its sound was magnificent - the pipes stand free at the west end of this ancient (though much rebuilt) church - and Mr Yeomans assured us that acoustically the building is splendid with a congregation present, even though the organ may seem rather over-strong when only a smallish gathering such as ours is there. Members gave this instrument too a good going-over, playing Howells, Handel, Krebs, Elgar, Whitlock, Sam Wesley, Widor and others. The effect was thrilling in the stirring music, as well as tender and intimate in the contemplative sections. Probably this organ is more adapted to the romantic and neo-romantic repertoire, which is not to belittle the effect of the classical pieces that members played.

We thank the organists for their welcome, and the members of the churches who were on hand to help. Excellent documentation was provided at both. Long may the congregations enjoy these instruments, and good luck to Bolsover in raising the dosh!

James Muckle

OTHER CHURCH/ORGAN-RELATED EVENTS TO NOTE

- | | | |
|-----|--------|---|
| Sat | 3 Nov | David Butterworth : St Giles, Sandiacre, 11.00 (<i>see note</i>) |
| Sat | 3 Nov | Concert by <i>Tapestry</i> (dir James Foulds) : All Saints, Sudbury, 7.30 |
| Sun | 4 Nov | Sophie-Veronique Cauchefer-Choplin : Albert Hall, Nottingham, 2.45 |
| Sat | 10 Nov | Simon Lindley : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00 |
| Sat | 10 Nov | Singing day with John Rutter : Cathedral (NB already sold out!) |
| Sat | 17 Nov | <i>Vespers of 1610</i> (Monteverdi) : Derby Bach Choir : Cathedral, 7.30 |
| Sat | 1 Dec | Donald Mackenzie (silent film) : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00 |
| Sun | 2 Dec | Ron Sherwood (Victorian Organ Recital) : All Saints, Matlock Bank, 2.00 (<i>see note</i>) |
| Sun | 2 Dec | David Redfern : The Organ Loft, Belper, 2.30 (<i>book on 01773 822670/828544</i>) |

ST GILES, SANDIACRE

The 30th anniversary of the opening of the Nigel Church organ will be celebrated on 3 November with a recital by David Butterworth at 11.00, followed by lunch. Booking is not obligatory, but the organisers would appreciate some idea of numbers hoping to be fed - contact Stuart Bassett ☎ (01332) 872746.

VICTORIAN RECITAL AT MATLOCK

Ron's FREE concert on 2 December is part of Matlock's annual Victorian Weekend. He writes:

Last year's recital (which received an unsolicited [*and favourable -Ed.*] review in the *Newsletter*) was well attended despite being only a "fringe" event; this time it is to be fully accredited on the official programme of varied entertainments for the weekend. Items to be played include Suppé: *Poet and Peasant Overture*, Dvorák: *Humoresque*, Godard: *Berceuse de Jocelyn*, Handel: *Water Music*, Ketelbey: *In a Monastery Garden*, etc.; also, a few Victorian parlour songs will be sung by Liz McKenzie.

NORFOLK LANES and ORGANS

This year, our annual Veteran Cycle Club Camp took us to Reepham in Norfolk. Fortunately I had the foresight to consult Rodney regarding organs in the area; Rodney strongly recommended that I try to play the instrument in Little Walsingham of which more later.

We were blessed with lovely weather for the whole week, and enjoyed some excellent cycling. Our first ride took us to Aylsham, and after only a very short distance we came across the most impressive late Victorian church of St Michael the Archangel at Booton. It was quite a pleasure to find that most of the churches in Norfolk are open to the public all day and so a group of cyclists wandered into this splendid building. Magnificent wooden angels peered down from the sturdy wooden-framed roof structure; perhaps all the available money had been spent on the angels since the organ seemed rather lost in the building that really deserved something more impressive.

Nevertheless it was an attractive 2-manual organ with decorated pipes. To my surprise the instrument had not been converted to electric blower but still required hand pumping. I tend to carry some music in my pannier, so I tried out a Bach Prelude. The sound was not so attractive, however it was the first organ I had played which was hand-pumped. The wind chest must have leaked badly, since, much to the amusement of the group, it required vigorous pumping to maintain sufficient air pressure to play. I suspect it does not have much use since it would require a super fit assistant if extended performances were to be given!

For those railway enthusiasts amongst us, I should mention that our ride then took us on to the Bure Valley Narrow Gauge Railway, where, with our path running alongside the track, some of the madder members decided it would be fun to try racing the train!

Amongst the highlights of our holiday was the organ at St Mary's, Little Walsingham, which we visited on the second day. Although a modern instrument – built in 1964 – it really is worth hearing because of the wonderful sound it produces. It is a 2-manual instrument, notable as being an early example of a modern tracker action. The specification is as follows:

Gt: 8, 8, 4, 4, 2 2/3, 2, 1 3/5, IV rks, Sw: 8, 8, 4, 2, 1 1/3, 1, 16, 8,

Ped: 16, 16, 8, 8, 4, 2, II rks, 16, 8, 4.

Krebs, Walther and Bach all sounded splendid, the more so owing to the wonderful acoustics in the church. My only complaint was that I struggled to find a soft fluty stop for some passages, however I suspect that was my failing rather than the organ's. I was extremely fortunate to be able to spend the best part of 2 hours playing the organ, and would recommend this organ to anyone visiting the area.

After two organs in as many days, the children were suffering from a slight "organ-overload", however these opportunities don't happen every day, and whilst cycling through Little Snoring we found yet another specimen that I needed to try out. This time it was a 1-manual organ with only 3 stops dating from 1800, built by a local firm in Fakenham. A manual piece by Pachelbel sounded quite effective on this instrument.

For any bicycle enthusiasts amongst us, I should say that two of us were on pre-war Hercules machines, whilst my husband, Derek, rode a 1903 "Scorcher" when not on the modern Triplet which accommodates both children when necessary. All our old bikes are fun to ride and well-suited to slightly undulating Norfolk lanes.

I didn't expect to be playing anything on the third day, and the children dearly hoped we wouldn't find another organ, but I took some music just in case. This time we cycled on the disused railway from our camp at Whitwell Hall, which took us all the way to Norwich. We parked our bikes by St Andrews and Blackfriars Hall, where we visited a collectors' fair. The building used to be a monastery, but nowadays two of the halls are converted into concert halls. One had a grand piano on the stage, and (oh joy!) in the other, a large organ. I did not for a moment expect that I would be let loose on this instrument, so we merely passed through the hall and had a good look around the collectors' fair. Passing a reception desk on leaving, I casually asked whether it would be possible to play the organ, expecting the inevitable "No", however I couldn't believe my ears when the man said "I'll just get the key!"

And so the family were dragged back into the hall for me to have a go on this huge instrument. It was a Wm Hill, Norman & Beard large 3-manual organ, with what appeared to me a vast ocean of stops. It has 54 speaking stops, which include a tuba duplicated on the great and the choir organ. Particularly impressive was the 32' pipe and the sheer power of the instrument. After playing a few pieces I noticed it had a "record and playback" function. This appealed to Derek's mischievous nature; I recorded a few pieces and sat our seven year old daughter at the console, a quick flick of the play button and we disappeared to the back of the hall. As people wandered in and out of the fair they were amazed by the child prodigy at the keyboard of the mighty instrument!

So, an organ a day so far, and a ride to Fakenham planned for day 4. The music was in the pannier, but I really didn't envisage getting it out again. Our ride took us past Great Ryburgh church – a Saxon church with a round tower, but the children were let off the hook when we couldn't get up to the organ. No such luck when we arrived in Fakenham, however. It was market day, and we parked our bikes outside the Parish Church, where there was a coffee morning and book fair in progress. The vicar was around, and as he was chatting to us about our triplet, I asked him whether it would be possible to play the organ. Again I heard those magical words "I'll just get the key!", but with the proviso that I played quietly.

So, off I went again, this time on a medium-sized 3-manual organ built by Hele & Company, Plymouth. It had 30 speaking stops including pedal reeds, and had recently been restored. As part of the rebuild, a new trombone stop had been added, and it was whilst I was trying this out that I was politely asked to play a little more quietly. Oh well, it was good whilst it lasted. A lovely instrument to play, with quite a breadth of different sounds possible, even without the louder reeds.

Day 5 (of 7) onwards was organ-free. We cycled to the beach a couple of times, and spared the children of any more of my music. It was a lovely holiday, with something for everyone, and even more for me.

Gillian Chatto

Our thanks to Gillian for her substantial article. Further contributions from members (including a lengthy instalment from France) have had to be held over, but keep them coming; next year's Editor (whomever the AGM may elect - does anyone else fancy the job?) will no doubt be grateful - Ed.

NEXT NEWSLETTER will be published early December : deadline 24 November

Editor: Edmund R. Stow, 411 Burton Road, Derby DE23 6AN; ☎ 01332 342183