

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



New Chairman and Committee for 2020

Retiring Chairman Margaret Eades congratulates Tony Westerman as her successor

It was pleasing that the Annual General Meeting last November was well supported and welcomed some new faces. The retiring Chairman, Mrs Margaret Eades, presented brief reports on the excellent variety of activities during 2019: A new website launched in January; talks on Women organists, Improvisation and Danish organs; visits to London, St Albans, Oxford, Lincoln and Melton Mowbray; Children and the Organ workshops at Belper, Bramcote, Duffield, Micklover and Holbrook.

Margaret paid tribute to the late Ed Stow who had been a stalwart member of the Association for many years, contributing much as a fine musician, friend, organ builder and counsellor. She also offered thanks to Chris Darrall for his long service as Treasurer. In recognition of this, she announced the award of Life Membership of the Association, enthusiastically affirmed by the meeting. Recent committee business discussed concern over new safeguarding procedures introduced by the Derby Diocese; the matter was being addressed by a subcommittee which had written to

the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser asking for clarification. Concluding her report, Margaret thanked the many people who had helped her during her period of office, those who had organised events, and written articles for the Newsletter.

The meeting elected Tony Westerman as the new Chairman. In his inaugural remarks he paid tribute to Margaret's tenure as Chairman, observing that she was the first woman to be chairman in the Association's 115 year history. He thanked her for her hard work, measured approach and steady hand which had served the Association so well during the past two years.

The election of officers and committee was unopposed:

Chairman: Tony Westerman
Vice-Chairman: John Maxwell-Jones
Secretary: Andrew Storer
Treasurer: Gillian Chatto
Newsletter Editor: Laurence Rogers

Committee Members:
Margaret Eades, Terry Bennett,
Tom Corfield, Alex Binns, Denis
Littleton and Richard Brice.

DDOA Events 2020

Saturday 1st February

at St John's, Derby and Derby Cathedral.
"Celebrating Louis Vierne"
-Workshop, talk, recital. (See page 8)

Saturday 14th March

Visit to organs in Repton, Newton Solney and Eginton.

Tuesday 28th April

Evening visit to St Edmund's, Allestree

Saturday 13th June: Visit Lincoln

Cathedral and St Peter & St Paul Church, Lincoln.

Tuesday 7th July: Talk by Richard Brice, St Peter's Belper.

Monday 28th September: Seminar on 'Organ Practice' led by Dr Tom Corfield. St Matthew's, Darley Abbey.

Saturday 17th October: Association Lunch, Horsley Lodge.

Monday 16th November: AGM and Chairman's Evening

Concerts & Recitals

Sunday 5th January, 4.00 - 4.50pm

Derby Cathedral. *La Nativité du Seigneur* by Olivier Messiaen, played by Alex Binns. Free admission. Retiring collection.

Saturday 25th January

Bloomsbury Organ Day 2020

London. (See page 7)

Saturday 8th February, 12.30pm

St. Andrews Church, Swanwick DE55 1AN. Lunchtime recital by Martyn Noble (HM Chapel Royal, St. James's palace). Light buffet from 12, recital 12.30-2.30. Admission £6.00 including light buffet. Tickets are available at the door or in advance by calling 01773 605291.

Send to a friend

Do you pass on your Newsletter or forward the pdf version to a friend? This would be a useful way of broadening interest in our activities and introducing new members to our Association.



Recent Events

Talk by Stephen Alliss

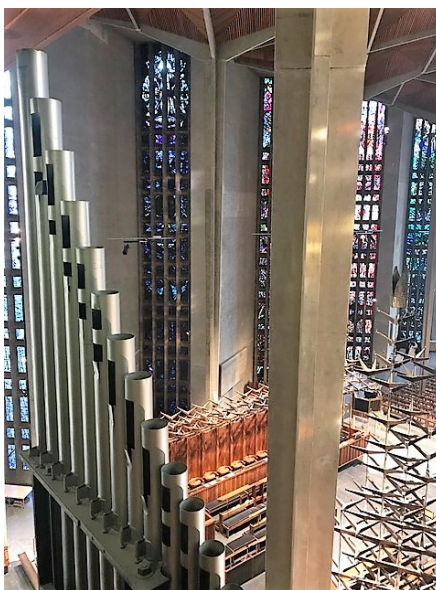
Following the AGM and superb refreshments organised by Sue Brice, our invited guest, Stephen Alliss, gave a talk illustrated with photos of organs from many angles taken on his travels as Head Tuner at the organ builders Harrison and Harrison. He gave us a taste of the joys and challenges that his working life takes in, travelling the length and breadth of the country. An unplanned challenge of the evening arose when we discovered that his *Keynote* presentation was not compatible with the *PowerPoint* program on Tony Westerman's computer. Furthermore, a potential backup plan of connecting Stephen's Apple laptop directly to the projector failed due to the lack of a proprietary Apple connecting lead. In the event, the audience huddled together a little closer to get a good view of the laptop screen.

Stephen began showing a very modest village church organ which, despite its remoteness in the countryside, still gave him as much satisfaction as some of the mighty cathedral organs that feature prominently in his round. Then he took us on a grand tour of cathedrals, starting with his favourite, Coventry. He confesses that, although his head for heights is not the best, the four-storey high levels of the cathedral organ are eminently accessible via ladders and the layout of the ranks is kind for tuning. He describes this instrument as "good natured" and he "never gets bored with its beautiful sound".

Then to the "local job" at Lichfield (Stephen lives down the road in Burton-upon-Trent), he once was



Stephen Alliss



Coventry: 1.our view 2. Stephen's view

called out for an emergency with an unplayable 6-rank mixture on Christmas Eve (his wife's birthday!) just hours before a broadcast service. BBC engineers, in their lack of wisdom, had routed some of their cables such that they must have dangled into and disturbed the mixture pipes.

Westminster Abbey is one of those locations where time for tuning is very restricted, in usually no more than one hour periods. This results in late night sessions in near total darkness, save for the lights of traffic in Victoria Street illuminating the vaulted ceiling like stars in the night sky. The Royal Festival Hall is another late night and early morning venue, having to work before morning rehearsal and after evening concerts.

Travelling on via Westminster Central Hall, Salisbury, Peterborough and Ely we came to Bury St Edmunds, an instrument of which Harrisons are justly proud.

One of the great virtues here is that all the soundboards are on one level, making it possible to complete tuning all the pipes in one day. In contrast, organs in free standing cases on choir screens, such as Exeter and Lincoln, are sometimes so compact that a high degree of tiptoe technique is called for when navigating the ranks.

The reception of cathedral staff make all the difference to Stephen's working conditions, and he speaks highly of the friendly and helpful welcome he frequently receives at many cathedrals.

Emergency standing-by is often needed at prestigious events, such as the International Organ Festival at St Alban's, and in this case Stephen recounts sitting through many virtuoso recitals by both young and famous players. Finally, Stephen took us to King's College, Cambridge, where he has frequently been on standby during the Christmas Eve Carol Service. He contrasts the seriousness at the chapel floor level with the party atmosphere in the organ loft, a description of which he did not develop in detail, but allowed our imagination to roam. Speaking of the late Director of Music, Stephen Cleobury, in spite of all the pressure and responsibilities of his role at the service, Mr Cleobury would always seek out Stephen after the service to offer his personal thanks for his part in making sure that the organ performs well at all times.

To sum up Stephen's talk, his job satisfaction and love of the instruments he takes care of was shown in abundance. Our Chairman thanked Stephen for giving us such a fascinating insight into his world inside organs and some of the stories of human interest that it has generated.

Laurence Rogers



A rare view of King's organ during renovation

October Meeting: 'Organs in Denmark' – Laurence Rogers and Denis Littleton

Up to the 1970s most of us kept our holiday photos in albums which we could pass to family and friends. Then came slides which we could project on to a screen. Digital technology has allowed us to take this a stage further and we could bore our family for hours with every detail of our holidays. If you were afraid the October meeting would be another such occasion, you were very much mistaken! Laurence and Denis gave us a fascinating travelogue for an hour and a half with beautiful photography interspersed with stunning audio (and video) clips and a mass of statistics. I have the unenviable task of reporting this in a few paragraphs.

The source of their information came from a seven-day visit to Denmark, with occasional forays into Sweden and Germany, organised by David Butterworth in March 2016. He fell in love with Marcussen organs over 40 years ago, and was therefore the moving force behind the fine examples we have in this area in St Mary's Nottingham and Clifton Parish Church. As Denis said, it is difficult to both imagine and remember the effect these instruments had on the local organ scene, so unlike anything else in the area (although quickly followed by the Nigel Church organs we have recently visited in Sandiacre, Breaston and Trent College, Long Eaton. Marcussen was the main focus of the organ visiting side of the trip, topping the list with 19 instruments out of the 38 visited. Other local builders included Andersen-Bruhn, Bruno Christensen, Robert Gustavsson, Frobenius, Compenius, Rasmussen and Jensen & Thomsen. More of a



Sven-Ingvar Mikkelsen demonstrates the 1610 Compenius organ at Frederiksborg Castle

surprise to us on the list was a Bishop, yes, in the Conservatoire in Copenhagen and a Cavallé-Coll. With 38 instruments to try, David had to organise a strict rota to ensure that the 34 participants all had a fair share of opportunities to play.

I find it difficult to express in words the beauty of the sounds we heard from the variety of styles of instruments, each with their subtle nuances of tone, but one of the most fascinating, and earliest, instruments, at Frederiksborg Castle, was still pumped manually and was in the most exquisite case.

The visit was not solely organised to visit organs. David Butterworth has great experience in choir training and has a particular connection with Treenighedskirken Drengkor (Trinity Church's Boys Choir) which was founded by organist Per Günther in 1964 and led by him until he retired 1989. Since 1990 it has been directed by Lone Gislinge. Thereafter, it has been supported by Esbjerg



Denis and Laurence create the wind

Municipality and the 'Esbjerg Academy of Music and Dramatic Arts' in collaboration with the church. Today it consists of around 50 singers, boys and men. The boys start at the age of 8 or 9, and in many cases continue through their teens to join the men on the 'back rows'. They give concert performances in Denmark and abroad. Venues have included St Peter's, Rome, Notre Dame de Paris, Westminster Abbey and St Mary's Clifton. Their concerts have also been widely broadcast on radio and television, not only in Denmark but in Europe and North America.

This was a very interesting and informative event enjoyed by a small but appreciative audience, making its first, but certainly not last, visit to a new venue, St. John's Church, Mickleover. Our thanks go to Laurence and Denis, and also to David, who was able to join us towards the end of the evening and to provide additional information and insight.

John Maxwell-Jones



Clips from the video recorded at the Marcussen Organ factory in Aabenraa showing the rarely seen process of pouring and spreading pipe metal into a uniform layer.

L'orgue du voyage - John Maxwell-Jones

Members who attend our meetings on a fairly regular basis will know that there is light-hearted banter between my good friend, Terry Bennett, and me on the subject of trying organs in France during my annual sojourn there. I have not the confidence to invite myself to try the ultimate masterpiece of the *chef d'œuvre* of Aristide Cavaillé-Coll, in the Abbey Church of Saint Ouen in Rouen under the watchful eye of the notorious titulaire, Maîtresse Marie-Andrée Morisset-Balier. As the church is now deconsecrated, opportunities to hear it are sadly few and far between, there being no Sunday masses to attend. However, this summer I spotted that the church's new, young Co-titulaire, Jean-Baptiste Monnot (JBM), was running a masterclass for a week. Having checked, I found that the sessions would run each morning and that the church would remain open. I was therefore able to attend and, at last, hear the mighty beast. However, it is not the Cavaillé-Coll that is the subject of this article.

I returned to the church one afternoon (a two-hour lunch-break is virtually compulsory in France) to hear organ sounds as I entered, but they weren't emanating from the west end *buffet*. I walked round the apse to find that another instrument had been installed in the Lady Chapel and that was the source of the sound. JBM's *orgue du voyage* is just that, a transportable pipe organ. Many of us know of 'churches without walls'. The publicity for this instrument uses the same phrase! I was fascinated to see a collection of nine units on castors with a console made of riveted aluminium and four *ventilateurs*. JBM has abandoned traditional materials in favour of



The nine modules of the *Orgue du voyage*

lighter ones, so pine and plywood feature for the 'casework' but the pipes have been collected *à la Ed Stow* and are mainly late 19th and early 20th century. The layout is also original, but practical, for example *en chamade* pedal pipes. It is, of course, built on the extension principle and has about 450 pipes. For its size I found the sound excellent and heard it demonstrated (to students on the course) by JBM and by students themselves. The clarity of sound of line was magnificent.

The instrument was conceived, as its name states, to allow JBM to take the organ 'out to the people'. Although there are many fine instruments in France, there are also a much greater number of churches which have no instrument. The nine modules can be adapted to suit the size and acoustic of the venue. I was able to speak to JBM and ascertain that installation takes an

hour (including tuning!) He also uses it to duet with other organs, although I didn't find out whether he intends to rival or resurrect the famous "Battles of the Organs" so beloved of Carlo Curley! He also uses it to accompany choirs and in orchestral concerts. The notes about it I was able to find online say that it will truly 'voyage' next year – as far as Venice, Italy. I look forward to hearing it for a full concert or recital.

John Maxwell-Jones



Jean-Baptiste Monnot beguiles his audience

Recent Events

2nd November Recital by Daniel Bishop and Daniel Greenway

In the world of organ playing it is always a special pleasure to witness and celebrate young talent. This was clearly the case in the recital at St Matthew's, Darley Abbey, sponsored by the Alan Dronsfield Trust. As Associate Organist at Liverpool Cathedral, Daniel Bishop enjoys a reputation as a superb young player, and on this occasion we had a taste of his teaching personality, sharing the stage with his protégé, and former Head Chorister at the

Cathedral, Daniel Greenway. This younger Daniel presented the majority of the diverse and entertaining programme with assured performances of pieces from Susato to Langlais. His well-prepared introductory remarks were exemplary, giving that buzz that makes an audience sit up and listen. He has given many recitals in Liverpool churches and at the Cathedral and has recently been awarded the organ Scholarship at Keble College, Oxford in 2021. A talent to look out for!

Laurence Rogers



Daniel Greenway with his teacher, seated.

Editorial Comment

In recent months the Diocese of Derby appears to have introduced a surveillance system which has inhibited the exercise of deputising duties by several of our members. It has long been the case that the Church of England guidelines for the recruitment of musicians to regular posts require DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) Enhanced clearance. However, for organists volunteering to deputise in situations where there is no responsibility for a choir or authority over or access to children, there is no legal obligation for this clearance ([Ref.](#)). However the exercise of Diocese safeguarding procedures now seem to incorporate a blanket ban on deputies without DBS clearance. There are now cases where long-serving volunteer organists have been banned from playing for services. Aware that, as well as

stretching beyond current C of E guidelines, such a ban deviates from procedures in neighbouring dioceses, the DDOA committee wrote in October to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) requesting an authentic explanation and clarification of the situation. After the absence of an acknowledgement of our letter or a reply to date, we might conclude that the situation is not a matter for questioning. The implied discourtesy is either neglectful or gross misconduct.

Unfortunately, the blanket imposition of DBS clearance on a raft of church volunteers has led to resignations, disaffections and disillusionment amongst many faithful, causing much anguish within the clergy. This is self-harm on the part of the church, which, considering many other pressures affecting attendance, manpower and reputation, it can well do without. As Christians, we are all

signed up to safeguarding, since care for others stems from the teaching of Jesus and is an implicit part of our faith. In the modern social climate we have an obligation to accept the need for procedures, but when these consist of crude rules imposed with hard-hearted rigidity, we must question their Christian appropriateness. Trust in the procedures is vital, but it is easily eroded if they are seen to lack fairness and proportionality.

How much longer do we have to tolerate a pernicious regime which is dictating to clergy and often trampling over loyalties in our parishes? The manner in which safeguarding procedures are conducted, often via covert emails and phone calls to clergy and parish officers, should be the subject of an independent review offering transparency over how decisions are made and defining the accountability of those making them.

A Menorcan Organ Recital - Margaret Eades

On a short break to Mahon, the historic old town on the Balearic island of Menorca, I came across the church of Santa Maria, an 18th century Neo-Gothic church built during the British occupation of the island. Short 33 minute daily organ recitals were advertised on the 1810 Swiss organ, built by Franz Otter and Johannes Kyburz, who had established themselves in Barcelona. The organ has 52 stops, 3210 pipes and 3 manuals. It is substantially in its original condition, the exception being the pedalboard, which, enlarged to 30 notes in 1955, originally only had 12 notes. Many characteristics would define it as a classical French design but there are also German features, and the horizontal reed trumpets clearly show Spanish influence. Together with the magnificent church, it was declared by the Spanish government in 1979 to be of special cultural interest.

This organ proved to be an ideal instrument for baroque music as the following recital by Spanish organist, Bartomeu Olives showed.

The recital opened with the ever popular and appealing, Bach *Toccata & Fugue in D minor* played with impressive, accomplished technique using a full chorus of mixtures, contrasting effectively with the more delicate flute



The organ at the church of Santa Maria, Mahon, Menorca

interjections in the manual antiphonal sections. The very large reverberation of the acoustic of this huge church and the rapid speed in which the music was played, unfortunately compromised the overall clarity.

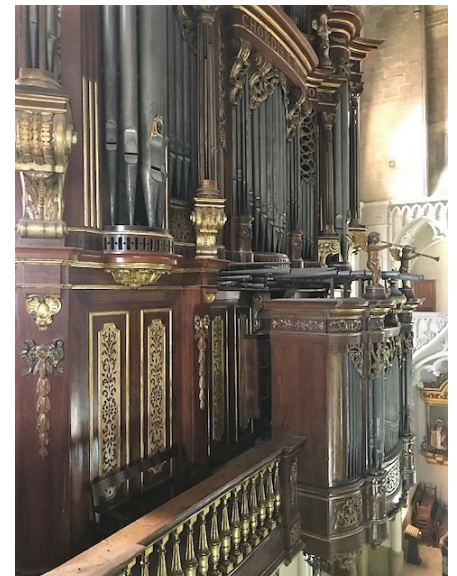
Much better clarity was attained in the slower pieces: A slow movement from the Vivaldi *Largo del concert en B flat* where a Flute and Tierce solo on the Positive made a haunting sound. A Clérambault *Suite*, gave us a good idea of the beauty of delicate flutes and a fiery reed as contrasting solo stops. Bach's *Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland* also made a good contrast with its sensitive

accompaniment to the restrained reed stop solo.

The final item was again a 'crowd puller', the Karg-Elert *Marche Triomphale*. The chosen tempo was again on the fast side, losing the character of the March, but despite the resulting lack of clarity caused by the acoustic, it made a suitable concluding item.

Overall, this was a very welcome experience for visitors to be able to enjoy this beautiful instrument with its eloquent decorative case in a very fine church.

Margaret Eades



Organ 'Heaven' continues in Alkmaar - Denis Littleton

In a week-long tour of organs in the Netherlands last September, Denis spent Monday in Amsterdam and Tuesday in Edam and Haarlem. The tour continues:

Trains or buses were not needed on Thursday, which we spent in Alkmaar, our base for the week. We started at the Lutheran church which was another hidden church. The organ here may be by Christian Müller. If so, it is his oldest in Netherlands. There are clues in the style of the case and pipe markings; there is a carved swan on top of the case, it is, apparently, a Lutheran symbol, when Jan Hus (an early Protestant) was about to be burned at the stake he told his executioners that they might roast him like a fat goose but in 100 years a swan would follow him, this is thought to be predicting the emergence of Martin Luther 102 years later.

The organ has 2 manuals with 15 stops; there are no pedal stops. It is tuned in an unequal temperament. It has its idiosyncrasies, the stop knobs are in two rows above the music desk, short pedals of a short compass which makes playing the pedals something of a balancing act.

Across town is the Kappelkerk, which boasts an organ by Christian Müller dating from 1762, with 2 manuals and 19 stops, the pedal has no independent stops and is coupled to the Hoofdwerk. The stops are arranged along both sides and top of the console. Access was via the statutory narrow stairs. The



Alkmaar Kappelkerk



Alkmaar Lutherse Kerk - prospect with swan sculpture and console

organ bench is literally at the top of the stairs, and has a trapdoor and gate, without this arrangement you could slide off the end of the bench and go, involuntarily, straight downstairs.

The highlight of the day was our visit to St Laurenskerk. This is another vast building with no current religious use, it is however a major tourist attraction in Alkmaar, and we had to have an after-hours visit so as not to disturb the tourists. The place was emptying as we arrived and we met Pieter van Dijk, the City Organist and organist of the Grote Sint Laurenskerk; he acts as custodian of the two significant historic organs in Alkmaar. He is also professor and Head of Organ Studies at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, professor of organ at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater in Hamburg, and joint Artistic Director of 'Organ Festival Holland'.

Pieter began with a demonstration of the smaller of the church's two instruments, the Van Covelens dating from 1511. This organ has 2 manuals and pedals, with 13 stops, the only independent pedal stop being an 8' trumpet. The organ is at 6' pitch, like the Oosthuizen instrument, meaning that it starts at G rather than C. For its size, compared with the other organ, it makes its presence felt.

That was the *hors d'oeuvre*, now for the main course. The 3 manuals, 56 stops organ by van Haagerbeer (1645) and Schnitger



(1723-25) occupies most of the west wall of the building, with the organist hidden by the Positive case, on a surprisingly small balcony. Like most of the organs we visited, the stops are arranged in rows with no department labels. There is a system to the arrangement, whereby the top row refers to the (top) Bovenwerk manual, the second row to the middle (Hoofdwerk) manual, the third row to the pedal, and bottom row to the Rugpositief. Just to add to the difficulty the stop labels are generally in an archaic script which is less than easy to read. In the hands of someone who knows the organ it sounds magnificent, perhaps less so in the hands of a comparative newcomer. Fortunately Pieter van Dijk was on hand to offer registration suggestions and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Baroque repertoire.



Van Covelens organ Sint Laurenskerk



St Laurens, Alkmaar Schnitger organ

The final day saw us on the trains and buses again, this time to the Grote kerk in Monnickendam.

Again, this is a huge church, for the current size of the place and is not used in winter. The organ here is by Gerstenhauer and dates from 1780, it has 2 manuals, and 36 stops, this time with four on the pedal. The organist's position here is one of the oddest, being situated behind the wall, in a separate little room, with a view of what is happening in the church through the carving under the central pedal tower. There is a window to the



Monnickendam

left of the player which gives a limited view of proceedings in the church. The stop knobs here are like brass door handles, mounted onto steel rods. One advantage to this arrangement is that the organist can heat the room independently of the climate in the church. It will come as no surprise to learn that the organist has no idea how the organ sounds in the church; in the 'shed' it is like listening to the organ from outside.

The final organ was at Purmerend, in the Catholic church. The building is octagonal and situated on the Market Place. It started life as a Catholic church, was taken over by the Protestants at the Reformation, rebuilt in 1850 and was again taken over by the Catholics when the Dutch Reformed church closed it in 1950. The organ by Garels dates from 1742, and has 3 manuals and 39 stops.



Pumerend

The Dutch really seem to look after their organs, if the ones we played are anything to go by. The organists, particularly in the smaller locations were very welcoming and more than happy to share the history of the buildings and the organs. I certainly know more about the Dutch Reformation than I did a few weeks ago. I had the impression that the Dutch Reformed Church was a pretty austere organisation with its plain church interiors, but they went to town on the organ cases, they make most of ours look like an afterthought. During our visit we played a selection of organs built between 1511 and 2018 and thoroughly enjoyed the whole trip.

Denis Littleton

Forthcoming Event

Bloomsbury Organ Day 2020

At least three members of DDOA attended the 2019 Organ Day at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church. Geoff Howell and your Editor wrote up the event in the March 2019 edition of our Newsletter. Hopefully the warm comments will encourage members to attend the 2020 event. This will be held on Saturday 25th January, starting at 12.30 and continuing until about 7.15pm. It will follow last year's pattern with short recitals, master classes, displays and talks continuing until about 5.00pm. Admission is free, though there are collection buckets prominently on display. The truly dedicated may elect to stay for the whole five hours, or come and go in a 'drop in' fashion. At about 5.00pm there is the famous "Bloomsbury Buffet", a feast for only £5.00. As seating (and food) is limited, booking in advance is essential. As some of the DDOA contingent found last year, virtually no last-minute tickets are available on the day itself. The day concludes with a celebrity recital (admission £7.00) with tickets available in advance and throughout the day.

Soloists will include Alexander Hamilton, Paul Greally and students from the RCO Academy and the celebrity recital will be given by Catherine Ennis. As last year, Dame Gillian Weir will conduct a master-class. Brief details of the Day are available at organistsonline.org/bloomsbury/ with the detailed programme being made available closer to the time. For those who wish to hear the fine Bloomsbury organ in action, I recommend Jonathan Scott's transcription of the *Funeral March of a Marionette* (Gounod) on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzeEdtgCFhs

Members will probably wish to travel down by train, and bargains are to be had if they park in Burton on Trent (free, unlimited, outside the Town Hall or around St Paul's Church). It's a ten minute walk to the station. Advance booking should indicate some bargain fares from Burton. Additional bargains are available if you book in "legs": day-returns from Burton to Birmingham or Tamworth, then separate day-returns Tamworth (or Birmingham) to London

Alan Dronsfield

'Swelling' Thoughts - Richard Brice

'Swelling' thoughts after this year's St Andrew's organ course: The course focus was on French Music. Performances, tuition and lectures all reflected this rich heritage. César Franck was on the syllabus and I prepared his *Third Chorale*. We learnt that Franck's organ at St Clotilde was regarded by Cavaillé-Coll as his finest creation. On this organ, only the Swell (*Recit*.) was enclosed and it was operated by a trigger pedal on the extreme right side. If you see any hairpins, *cresc* or *dim* it means that the *Recit* must be in there somewhere; and, that when the swell pedal is used, any pedal notes must be played with the left foot. Regrettably the organ has since been 'improved' - twice - and it now bears little resemblance to the organ Franck knew or Cavaillé-Coll lauded.

Playing César Franck on an organ with the swell pedal on the right is quite possible, unsurprisingly since in this, it resembles the organ it was composed on.

The first swell boxes were made in England in the 18th century using a design called 'nag's head'. Here, the box had horizontal slots on the front and a vertically sliding shutter which moved up or down in the manner of a sash window. This contraption was soon replaced with something much better, which

worked like a Venetian blind. The horizontal shutters were pivoted off-centre so that they were normally shut. It was operated by a pedal to the right side which was up for shut and down for open, a notched stick on the pedal would keep the box open, or half-open. Note that when you use a swell, the volume goes up non-linearly, i.e. the pedal only a quarter down may already give you half-volume. The Swell organ was for swelling - normally quiet but could go loud and was especially used for the *sforzandos*. This is called a 'trigger' or 'ratchet' swell.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the 'balanced' swell started to be used by a few organ-builders, although there were others who refused to use it. The shutters on the box will be vertical so that they move much more easily, and the pedal is in the centre of the console; not only does it stay in position, but either foot can use it. However, for the protruding part of the pedal, down is shut and up is open. *Sforzandos* don't work of course (unless you bring the toe clips from your bike to the organ). With detached consoles, a balanced swell must be used as the linkage to the shutters is usually no longer mechanical.

So far, so good. If your organ has a trigger swell, you will struggle with Hollins and Whitlock, but with a balanced swell the frequent *sf*'s in early English music are not possible. The problem comes when someone wants to convert a trigger swell to a balanced one. The shutters may be rebalanced, or more likely a big spring or weight will hopefully keep the shutters in any position. However, this hugely adds to the inertia and the pedal becomes much heavier and slow to respond. A decent balanced swell can be kicked up with the toe under the front edge; try that on most converted ones and you'll break a toe!

In a mechanical organ, the central position for a swell pedal is awkward, as the space just above the pedals is cluttered up with the coupler trackers, which is why the pedal finished up on the right side. Often the new pedal overhangs the keys a bit and is low so that its easy to play a note with heel when enthusiastically quietening. Even worse is leaving the pedal to the right side. You can then only use it with the right foot, and to add insult to injury, if you play on an organ with a trigger pedal - your brain has to think in reverse (down loud, up soft).

Richard Brice

Forthcoming DDOA Meeting



Saturday 1st February 2020 Celebrating Louis Vierne (1870-1937) on the 150th Anniversary of his birth

At St John's Church, Bridge Street Derby:

2.00 pm: *24 pièces en style libre* - a Workshop led by David Cowen

3.45 pm: Tea or Coffee

4.00 pm: *Vierne in context* - a Talk by Stephen Johns and Tom Corfield

5.30 pm: Sandwich tea

At Derby Cathedral:

7.00 pm: a Vierne recital given by Alex Binns and Ed Turner

Admission: £12 for whole event: £6 for recital (Afternoon session free for DDOA members)

Items of news or articles for the March/April edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 24th February**, either via e-mail: DDOAnews@gmail.com or by post: Dr Laurence Rogers, 24 St.David's Crescent, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4SS. The Secretary, Andy Storer, 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.