

# Northampton and District Organists' Association

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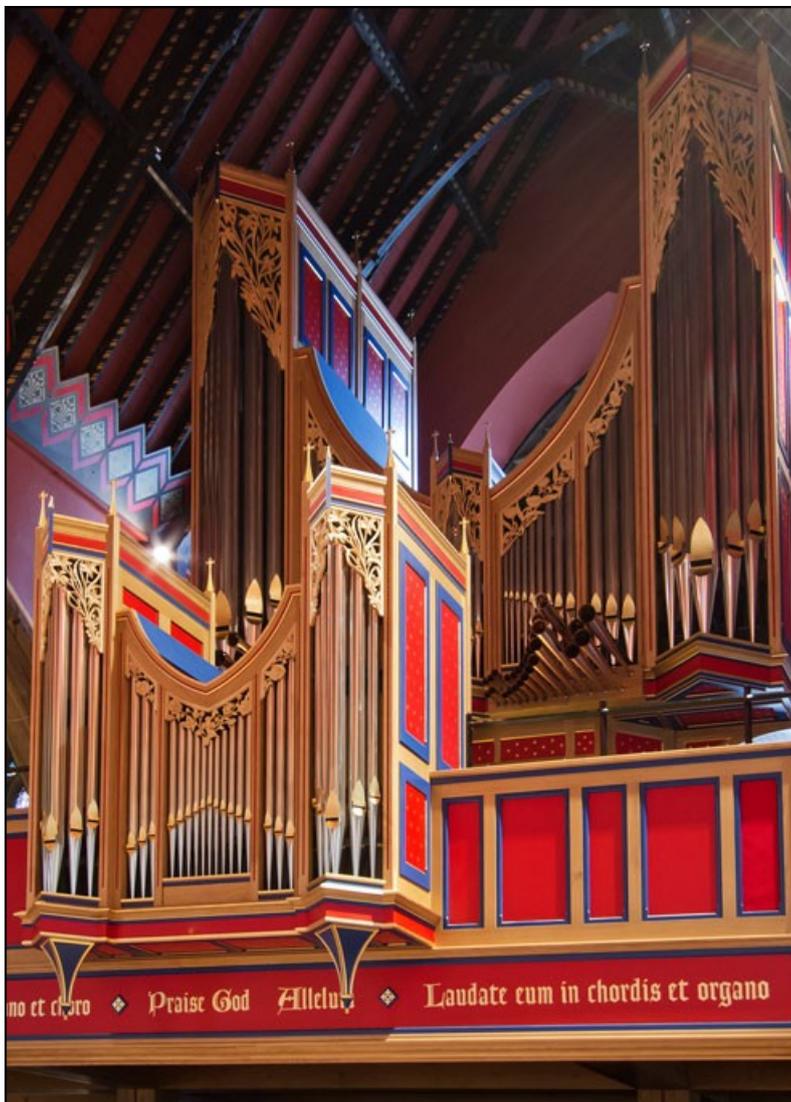
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*June 2013*

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View of the Tickell organ for St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle. The gallery, also built by Tickell and Company, is not completely decorated in this picture. *Picture: courtesy of Kenneth Tickell.*

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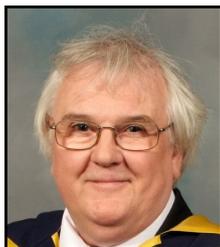
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## FROM THE EDITOR



Welcome to the June N&DOA Newsletter. As you may have noticed I am making some very gradual changes to the look of the Newsletter. This does not imply that there was anything wrong with the previous layout, however, now that I have found my way around the software package that is used to produce the Newsletter I have discovered several hidden design tools which will, I trust, enhance the basic format that everyone is familiar with. The printed Newsletter still retains its handy A5 size but inside there will be fewer double columns to make more use of available space, and a change of font which makes text easier on the eye. You may already have observed some of these changes in the March Newsletter which also allows larger pictures to be displayed.

For a number of years now the Newsletter has been reproduced on the website by cutting and pasting the text and by copying the pictures with varying degrees of success. Jonathan Harris, our treasurer, who undertakes this task has found it to be a time consuming exercise and, moreover, the Newsletter loses its formatting so that pictures sometimes appear in inappropriate places. You can now read the Newsletter in PDF format on the website which can be downloaded in the A4 format in which it is created. It is the copy shop that converts it to the A5 pocket-sized booklet with which we are all familiar.

If you have any suggestions on what might go into the Newsletter they will be most welcome. As will contributions from you, dear N&DOA members. Do you have an interesting article up your sleeve? The more articles that you, the members, send in the less likely you are to have to read my recycled essays from long ago! Roger Smith started a series of 'The organ I play' but so far members seem reluctant to bring their instruments to the attention of the wider membership. Don't be shy, no matter how humble the organ you play it has a story behind it.

Have you composed a hymn tune, psalm chant or short anthem that you would like to share, copyright free, with your fellow organists? It may not always be possible to put it in the Newsletter itself but it could be included as an insert. In the days when I was an organ tuner (when dinosaurs roamed the earth) I would often find a photocopied manuscript on the organ desk called the 'Midsomer Service' or something similar. Most were written specifically for the abilities of the choir (and the organist) of that particular church. Among the uninspired and the dreadful were occasional gems that really should have been published. Is there a Stanford or a Malcolm Archer out there in our community of organists?

The picture on the front page is a delight to the eye. At the time it was taken the organ, at St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle was in the process of being installed. For months (just before I retired) I watched it grow in Ken Tickell's workshop. Then one afternoon when I arrived for work it had gone. All that remained were a few panels still being decorated by Jenny Duffy in the workshop. On pages 4–6 you can read more about this splendid new instrument.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Wadson".

Editor, N&DOA Newsletter

### Newsletter Editor:

Please submit articles, announcements and details of events etc., to:  
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# N&DOA NEWS

## Young Organists Make the Grade

Congratulations to two of our young organists in successfully passing their ABRSM organ exams. Jacob Collins (St. Mary and St. Giles, Stony Stratford) passed his grade 7 with distinction and Callum Alger (St. Matthew's, Northampton) passed grade 8 also with distinction. Both have been assisted in their studies by the David Morgan Education Fund.

## Afternoon of CDs Cancelled this Year

An afternoon of CDs, a popular annual event at the home of Robin and Sally Desbois, was cancelled in January due to heavy snowfall and it had been hoped to rearrange it for later this year in September. However, September will be a very busy time for Sally as well as Stephen (our current president) and Lee Dunleavy (president elect) with their patronal festivals to prepare for, not to mention the N&DOA Annual General Meeting in November. It has therefore been decided to resume the event in January 2014 (in the hope that snow will not interrupt play again).

## Get N&DOA Emails

You can find updates on changes to dates and times of events and new events by going to our website: [www.northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk) or by requesting that you be put on our email list. There are many notices that we receive which are too late or too numerous to be included in the printed Newsletter. To receive notifications by email contact: [helen.murphy1@tesco.net](mailto:helen.murphy1@tesco.net)

## New Leaflet for N&DOA

Robert Page, one of your committee members, has recently updated and produced an attractive new leaflet for the N&DOA. It is hoped that this will encourage more people to join the Association and take part in its activities. Leaflets are enclosed in this mailing. Please give them to anyone who might be interested: clergy, organists, or those with an interest in the organ. We are not an exclusive sect and welcome all.

## Friends of St. Matthew's Music

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends of St. Matthew's Music took place on May 11th at 6.00 p.m. It was followed with a concert given by Nikki Hannent (soprano), Stephen Moore (organ & piano), Simon Williams (flute), Callum Alger (piano) and Ben Drouet (saxophone & piano).

The Friends of St. Matthew's Music supports the music at St. Matthew's including paying part of the salary of its music director. Without this support the church would not be able to attract organists of the quality of Stephen who has been your president for the last year.

## Farwell to Ben Newman

Ben Newman, organist at St. Andrew's Hospital chapel, Northampton, and a committee member of the N&DOA, has moved to pastures new, His post as organist at St. Andrew's has become vacant. Anyone with an interest in applying for this post should contact:

The Revd Rachel Hetherington BA  
Chaplain  
St Andrew's Healthcare  
Billing Road  
Northampton NN1 5 DG  
Tel: 01604 61632  
E-mail: [RHetherington@standrew.co.uk](mailto:RHetherington@standrew.co.uk)

Remuneration is £3,646.36 per annum for 3.75 hours per week plus other fees for weddings, funerals etc. 2 manual Father Willis organ.

## Happy Birthday IAO

This year is 100th anniversary of the founding of the IAO of which the N&DOA is a constituent member. Members will be aware that the N&DOA had to increase its membership fees due to an increase in capitation fees to the IAO. However, as an N&DOA member you can claim a reduced subscription fee to *Organists' Review* which is filled with articles and news of international and national events about organs, organists and organ builders. A leaflet is enclosed with this Newsletter.

# KENNETH TICKELL'S NEW ORGAN FOR ST. MARY'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL, NEWCASTLE.

*by Barry Wadeson*

St. Mary's Cathedral, Newcastle is one of the major Gothic Revival churches designed by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin. It was completed in 1844 as a parish church for the rapidly growing number of Catholic people arriving on Tyneside. In 1850, St. Mary's was designated the Cathedral Church for the new Catholic diocese of Hexham, later to be named Hexham and Newcastle.

The first organ of three manuals and pedal board was installed in 1869 by Thomas C. Lewis and Co of London. This organ sat on a gallery over the west door in a location close to where Kenneth Tickell and his team have built the new organ. I will not go into the history of the Lewis organ, which was considered to be one of the best in the northeast, since Paul Hale has written an extensive article chronicling the demise of this instrument in the March 2013 edition of *Organists' Review*.

At some time in the early twentieth century, however, the organ was moved by Nelson and Co. of Durham to the south east end of the church. No-one today appears to know why this decision was made. It seems that the only place available was through an arch into an unused chapter room above the sacristy. The organ builder was tasked with squeezing an organ of more than 2000 pipes into a tiny room.



The Tickell organ sits on an octagonal gallery, designed by Cathedral architect Kevin Doonan, at the west end of the Cathedral. The gallery was also built by Tickell's and is decorated in the same red, blue and gold colours that embellish the organ case. *Picture: courtesy of Kenneth Tickell.*

The largest pipes had to be cut and mitred to fit the small space and only the slimmest of tuners could squeeze along the 12" wide walk boards. The most obvious problem was that all the sound was contained in the chapter room and not the church. Moreover, the pneumatic action of the organ caused a noticeable delay between pressing notes on the console (situated on the other side of the chancel). And, ladies could not play the organ as they were not, in those days, allowed in the chancel.

In the 1980s dry rot was discovered to have invaded the organ chamber and surrounding areas. The only way to be found of treating this disease was to remove the organ (which was apparently broken up). It was replaced by a two manual and pedal organ in 1981 by Nigel Church of Stamfordham. This instrument was installed on the opposite side of St. Mary's in the north aisle. Many who came to hear

it commented that it was in the wrong place. In 2006 a Makin digital organ was installed with three manuals and pedal board and 60 stops. But it was clear that what the Cathedral needed was a pipe organ of distinction to complement the surroundings and beauty of Pugin's building.

The opportunity arose when substantial restoration work on the Cathedral began and in 2008 Kenneth Tickell was invited to Newcastle with a proposal for a new organ:

*I first visited St Mary's in June 2008. In preparing proposals for a new organ I was aware of the past history of organs in the church, and it was clear that the project presented a great opportunity for a well-placed, exciting new organ. I considered the west end to be the only suitable location for the new instrument: there was an established history of a previous organ in this position, while other locations in the building had already been tried and found to be unsuccessful.*

After 160 years history was about to come full circle with an organ back at the west end but this time in a stunning new case worthy of the Cathedral. In a letter to the Cathedral in September 2008 Ken wrote:

*The organ must be sympathetic to the architecture, but curiously, there is relatively little to be learnt from Pugin himself. He seems not to have been involved with the installation of any organs of significant size. Although there may be no direct examples to draw inspiration from, there are certainly guiding principles which hold true as much in good organ design as in architecture. Pugin believed in honesty of form, with decoration enriching the essential construction rather than applied for its own sake. In organ design this translates into a clear expression of the main divisions of the instrument within the organ cases, with prospect pipes displayed in their natural lengths, and decoration applied to the pipeshades and framing of the case. An honest, straightforward layout will ultimately produce the best result not only in appearance but also for tonal projection.*

I am immensely grateful to Ken for providing me with a description of the new organ. "The organ is a three manual and pedal organ, with mechanical (tracker) action to the keys and pedals, and electric stop and combination action.

This colourful and versatile instrument is well suited to the needs of both intimate choral accompaniment and supporting and encouraging large diocesan congregations. It gives a good account of the major solo organ repertoire, and is a stimulating instrument for both recitals and teaching. The organ is conceived with the demands of repertoire very much to the fore. Such a scheme naturally provides the resources needed to accompany singing. In tonal terms it is well integrated, with blending choruses speaking clearly into the building from their elevated position.

The Great has a complete principal chorus from 8ft through to a IV rank Furniture, and is capped by the higher-pitched Sharp Mixture III. Gravitas is provided by the Bourdon 16'. The broad, tapered Cone Gamba contrasts with the narrower-scaled, parallel slotted strings of the Swell, and together with the Flutes and Diapasons blends as a *fonds* combination. The Harmonic Flute is conceived as a solo register, sharing the lowest notes of the Stopped Diapason. The Cornet III, vital for French repertoire, completes the Great flute chorus, also binding with the bright, open-toned Trumpet. The Chamade 8' is formed by

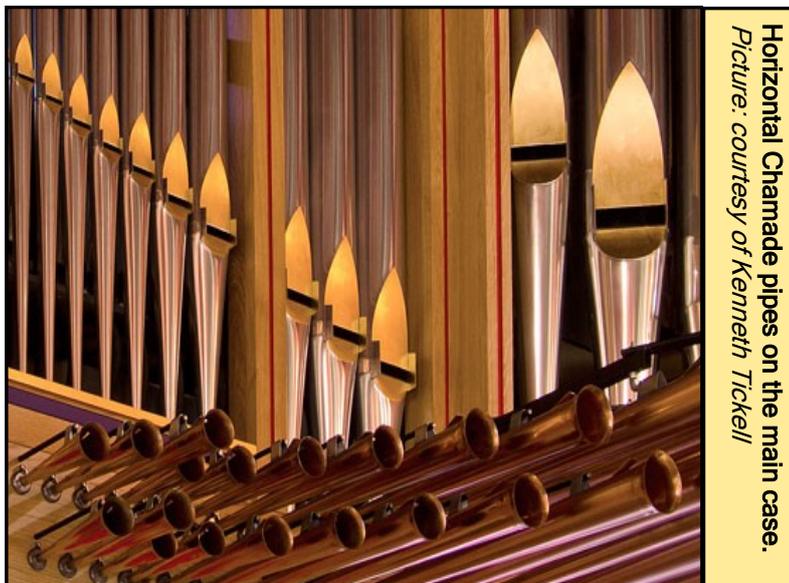


The console of the new organ at St. Mary's  
Picture by Kenneth Tickell

horizontal Trumpet pipes on the front of the case and gives the instrument a dramatic and dominant solo voice.

The Swell department forms the secondary division for nineteenth century and later repertoire, and as well as housing the softer flutes, strings and celestes it also provides the powerful reed chorus which is necessary for the symphonic repertoire as well as forming the typical English 'full Swell'.

In contrast the unenclosed Choir manual partners the Great for eighteenth century and earlier repertoire. Sitting at the front of the gallery its registers have greater presence and clarity in the cathedral. In addition to its principal chorus, this division also contains a complete series of wide-scaled mutations and a Cromorne, giving many possibilities for solo registrations. A small Salicional provides additional versatility.



The Pedal organ is contained in the outer towers of the main case and is divided in C and C# sides. Restrictions of height affect the treatment of the Open Diapason 16' which share the lower prospect pipes of the Great Open Diapason 8'. The inclusion of the full-length wooden Contra Bass, standing at the back of the organ, is therefore vital, and provides weight and definition to the pedal line. The pedal organ has a properly independent chorus, which is completed by the Choral Bass and Mixture. The pedal soundboards are compact, and some economy of space is achieved by two extended ranks - the Subbass 16' & Flute 8' and the Bombarde 16' & Trumpet 8'. These latter two reed stops respectively underpin the full organ *tutti* and provide *cantus firmus* possibilities, while the Fagot 16' with wooden resonators is ideal for sonority for the bass line of smaller registrations - a 'Bach' reed."

The dedication of the organ was held on the 9th of February 2013. You can hear an address given by Paul Hale (the organ consultant) at the following internet address:

[http://www.stmaryscathedral.org.uk/media/2013/organ\\_dedication/ph\\_address\\_9feb13.mp3](http://www.stmaryscathedral.org.uk/media/2013/organ_dedication/ph_address_9feb13.mp3)

and you can hear a short excerpt of the organ being played by Dr Magnus Williamson, of Newcastle University at this internet address:

[http://www.stmaryscathedral.org.uk/media/2013/organ\\_dedication/kt\\_organ\\_cath\\_9feb13.mp3](http://www.stmaryscathedral.org.uk/media/2013/organ_dedication/kt_organ_cath_9feb13.mp3)

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## ARE YOU LINKED IN?

As well as our superb website (one of the best designed websites for an organists association in the country) the N&DOA has a new venture. Begun last year, but so far with few members, the N&DOA has a forum on Linked In the site for serious users of social media. Unlike Facebook which is frivolous and used for product placement Linked In offers users the opportunity to discuss with fellow N&DOA members current organ and organ playing topics. If you have a query you may find the answer there. Or perhaps you just want to talk about something, or offer other organists the benefit of your experience.

Go to: <http://uk.linkedin.com/> and sign up. There are two types of membership; standard membership which is all you need to access the N&DOA forum is free. Once you have signed up search for the N&DOA forum and join it.

## CHRISTOPHER WEAVER AT ST GREGORY'S, NORTHAMPTON

by Helen Murphy

Christopher Weaver gave a recital on the Gern organ at St Gregory's church in Northampton to a small but appreciative audience on Sunday afternoon, 27th January. Christopher, organist at Northampton Cathedral, started his musical life in the brass section (trumpet in the school orchestra and lead trombone with the county youth), but soon fell under the spell of the organ and, in the fullness of time, enjoyed a long career as an organist and choirmaster both here and abroad.

In homage to the organ's ancestry (built by Auguste Gern, who had worked for Cavallé-Coll), he chose a programme to display its tonal palette to full advantage, ranging from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century (but not in chronological order), some of it familiar, some less so. A spectacular *Fanfare* by Lemmens opened the proceedings, followed by the Adagio from Beethoven's *Suite for Mechanical Organ* and Bach's sublime *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier*. César Frank's *Andantino* was clearly much at home on the Gern, as were Messiaen's *Majesté du Christ* and Pierné's *Cantilène and Prélude* (three very contrasting works). But the one that remains top of my list was the *Homage to Pérotin* by Myron Roberts, not least because I had recently sung some Pérotin and I still had swirling round in my head those fierce, primitive dissonances - his early experiments with the strange concept of two sounds at once, rather than a single melodic line. That was a truly revolutionary step out of the early mediaeval comfort zone - and music has never looked back.

See page 10 for review of Stephen Moore's recital at St. Gregory's.

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## BEGINNERS GUIDE TO THE ORGAN

by Dee Sharpe

This annual N&DOA event is a valuable introduction to the organ for those who have ever dreamed of progressing from piano or keyboard to the mighty instrument that makes small people walk tall. On Saturday, March 2nd a small but enthusiastic band of would-be organists braved the elements and came to St. Gregory's Church and St. Matthew's, Northampton to be inducted into the mysteries of the king of instruments. The sessions were led by Jonathan Harris at St. Gregory's from 2.00–3.00 p.m. and by Stephen Moore at St. Matthew's from 3.00–4.00 p.m.

Stephen and Jonathan began their sessions by taking participants through the range of sounds that the different stops make on the organ, explaining how different combinations of stops can change the character of sound altogether. Stephen's impression of a sheep in distress on the Vox Humana with added tremulant is one of those unforgettable moments. There is obviously a big difference between St. Gregory's 15 stop Gern organ and the grandiose Walker organ at St. Matthew's with its 49 speaking stops (and no expense spared).

A few courageous souls tried their fingers and feet on these two fine instruments and once the embarrassment of making the odd mistake had passed enjoyed themselves exploring the wondrous sounds that make the organ such a satisfying instrument to play. Sadly, of course, they could not take these two fine instruments home with them but, it is to be hoped, they will be inspired to find an organ near home on which to practice and perhaps to take lessons from one of the two masters of the art who conducted the sessions.

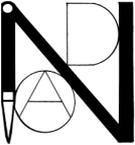
Stephen Moore keeping a close eye on one of the day's participants at the St. Matthew's console.





# What's On



- Sunday 2nd June** 4.00 p.m. **Come and Sing for the Coronation** at St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. NN1 4RY. Parry: *I was glad*, Vaughan Williams: *Old one hundredth*, Wesley: *Thou wilt keep him*, Handel: *Zadok the Priest*. Rehearsal from 4.00 p.m., Service at 6.30 p.m. Contact Stephen Moore DoM for details.
- &
- 6.30 p.m.
- Sunday 16th June** 2.30 p.m. **Be a chorister for a day.** St. Matthew's Church, Northampton. NN1 4RY. Children aged 7 -15 years are invited to come and experience an afternoon of singing, games and fun, and to find out what being a chorister at St. Matthew's is all about.
- Sunday 16th June** 7.30 p.m. **Last Night of the Proms.** Northampton Bach Choir. Royal and Derngate, Guildhall Road, Northampton. NN1 1DP Parry: *Jerusalem*, Arne: *Rule Britannia*, Handel: *Hallelujah Chorus*, Puccini: *Nessun Dorma*, Elgar: *Pomp and Circumstance March No 1* (and more).
- Saturday 22nd June** 2.00 p.m.  **Visit to Turvey & Bedford.** Meet 2.00 p.m. at All Saints Church, High Street, Turvey, MK43 8EP. There are two pubs serving food in Turvey; 'The Three Cranes' is close to the church and 'Ye Three Fyshes' is only a short distance away on the A428 Northampton-Bedford Road. Arrive at Bedford for 5.30 p.m. St. Paul's Church, St. Paul's Square, Bedford. MK40 1SQ. There is a multi-storey car park close to the square in Horne Lane.
- Saturday 22nd June** 7.30 p.m. **Organ recital.** Ian Tracey (Liverpool Anglican Cathedral) at St. Mary Magdalene, Castle Ashby, NN7 1DH (the church is in the grounds of Castle Ashby House). N&DOA members returning from Turvey & Bedford may find this the perfect way to end the day.
- Thursday 27th June** 1.10 p.m. **Lunchtime organ recital.** Lee Dunleavy and Nathan Lam. All Saints Church, George Row, Northampton. NN1 1DF.
- Saturday 13th July**  **Visit to Wakefield Cathedral & Leeds Parish Church.** Visit and details depend upon numbers going on trip. Please let Stephen Moore know before the end of May if you wish to go. Visit will be cancelled if there are insufficient numbers.
- Saturday 17th August** 7.00 p.m. **Organ recital.** Jonathan Harris at Christ Church, Christchurch Road (corner of Wellingborough Road), Northampton. NN1 5LL
- Monday 26th August** 11.00 a.m.  **August Bank Holiday Organ Crawl. Rugby School, Barby Road, Rugby. CV22 5EH.** Richard Tanner, formerly Director of Music at All Saints, Northampton and Blackburn Cathedral has promised four organs for members to play.

## MEMBERS' RECITAL, 20th APRIL at ST. MARY'S, WELLINGBOROUGH

by Spitzflöte

After what has been a long and cold winter running into spring, this year's members' recital took place on the first warm and sunny Saturday of 2013 bringing to life the glorious interior of St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough. There, amid the gold and blue (see back cover) an admiring audience sat bathed in sunlight listening to the fine little Hill organ as the talent of the N&DOA was put on display.

Stephen Moore (DoM at St. Matthew's) began with Thomas Hewitt-Jones's *Carnival* a piece that showed off the tonal colour of this small, but delightful organ, especially the soft strings. Callum Alger (organ scholar at St. Matthew's), fresh from gaining his Grade 8 ABRSM with distinction, followed with Vierne's indulgent *Rêverie*.

Then came Jonathan Harris to take us back a few centuries with Buxtehude's *Ein feste burg ist unser Gott* and J. S. Bach's *Liebster Jesu, wir sind hier*, BWV 731. Jonathan then returned to the twentieth century with Kenneth Leighton's *Lumetto: Little canonic variation on 'Jesus bids us shine'* (something of a novelty even for Leighton). Finally, a composer who may not be familiar to all; the Dutch Jacques van Oortmerssen is well known (at least in Europe) for his interpretations of Bach's organ works. His *Nun ruhen alle Wälder* is clearly influenced by Bach's own chorale of the same name.

Philip Bricher was in ebullient form in Haydn's *Terremoto* and Andreus Willscher's pleasing *Tochter Zion*. Lee Dunleavy (DoM, All Saints, Northampton) then returned us to the eighteenth century with Benjamin Cooke's enchanting *Minuet* and *Fugue* and two intriguingly named pieces by the 20th Century Adrian Self: *Wortham's Dumpe* and *Maggie's Toye*.

No recital is complete without a piece by Herbert Howells. Here Stephen Moore performed *Psalm Prelude Set 2 No. 1* (Out of the deep). There is something about Howells that is instantly recognisable from his style; arching phrases, sensuous harmony and shifting rhythm so familiar to choirs can also be found in his instrumental works. This elegiac piece could almost have been written for the Hill organ at St. Mary's. Finally, Stephen teamed up with Callum Alger for John Rutter's *Variations on an Easter Theme for Organ Duet*. Teacher and pupil provided the audience watching the screen below with a remarkable display of coordination as four hands, four feet and one organ brought the recital to an exciting end.

During a short interval Callum Alger explained to the audience how the David Morgan Education Fund had enabled him to continue with his organ studies. The proceeds from the retiring collection at the end of the concert were in aid of the fund which is to support young organists with tutorial fees and purchase of music.\* Many thanks to clergy and laity at St. Mary's for hosting this excellent event which included refreshments provided in the church and the opportunity for N&DOA members to catch up with each other after such a dismal start to the year.

\*Members will be pleased to know that £171.00 was raised for the David Morgan Education Fund as a result of the concert. Jonathan Harris has described the event as one of best attended. that he can remember (Editor).

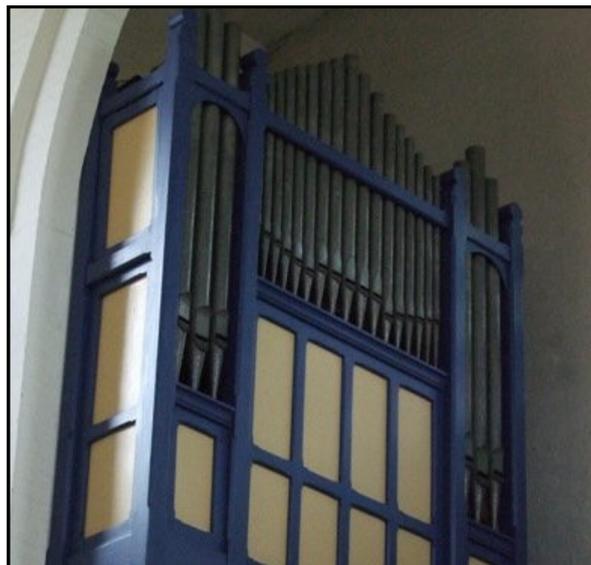


## A FIERY PERFORMANCE AT ST. GREGORY'S

by Spitzflöte

President of the N&DOA, Stephen Moore, gave a fiery and assured performance during a recital on the remarkable little Gern organ at St. Gregory's Church on Sunday, 24th February. With a programme of Mendelssohn, Brahms, Vierne, Howells and Jackson, Stephen showed off the French character of this gem of an organ to fine effect. To an appreciative audience who had learned of the recital at the last minute this was a fine way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Apart from the addition of a Trompette 8' this organ remains much the same tonally as when August Gern built it for Holy Trinity Church, Grazeley near Reading in around 1880. Gern, a former employee of Cavaille-Coll (said to be Cavaille-Coll's foreman) settled in London where he built a number of instruments in the French



style. The reediness of the organ was much in evidence during Stephen's performance. This acquisition by St. Gregory's provides the church with a fine little organ that is powerful enough to support a large congregation and is suitable for recitals and concert performances.

St. Gregory's has not always been so fortunate with its organs. When the Church opened in 1954 there was very little money left to purchase a pipe organ worthy of the building. However, at that time the Northampton organ building firm of Alfred E. Davies and Son located on Campbell Square was experimenting with electronic organs in conjunction with the Acoustical Manufacturing Company headed by Peter Walker. A prototype was installed in St. Gregory's and the model was later named 'The Gregorian' after the church. Consisting only of a console (which contained all the electronics) and two speaker columns it was the cheap alternative to a pipe organ. Sadly, sound quality was poor and the organ was analogue which meant that it still had to be tuned (unlike digital organs). Davies's produced quite a number of Gregorian Organs, several of which were dotted around Northamptonshire. Richard Young, who carried out the restoration of the Gern organ, discovered an abandoned Gregorian a few years ago in a village church gallery. We will not say which church!

When the Gregorian became unplayable Davies's installed a small extension organ consisting of only six ranks of pipes in 1975. However, six ranks of pipes is barely enough to fill a modest sized room with sound let alone a church. St. Gregory's luck changed when the Gern organ became available from the redundant Anglican church in Grazeley, Berkshire. It was free to anyone wanting to collect it. Substantial restoration work was carried out by Richard Young with a new electro-pneumatic action and added Trompette.8' on the Swell. Now with a detached console with terraced stop jambs the August Gern label is still prominently displayed. .

Gern would no doubt be pleased to hear his little organ still sounding very much the way that it did 133 years ago, and still going strong after its restoration. And he would probably have enjoyed Stephen's lively performance showing off his instrument to such great effect. Incidentally, the organ has a Grade I historic organ certificate listed on the National Pipe Organ Register. St Gregory's have got a bargain which they should cherish. Properly maintained it should last another 133 years, if not longer. The organ perhaps could do with a more secure foundation at the 16' level, but there is no need for St. Gregory's to rush out just yet and purchase a 16' reed which would only be required for full organ (and if Gern had intended it that way he would have put one in).

From Mendelssohn's delightful *Sonata in C minor, Op. 65 No. 2* with its five movements providing variety and change of pace, through Howell's thoroughly well-known *Master Tallis' Testament* to Stephen's final, exciting playing of Francis Jackson's *Toccata, Chorale and Fugue* this sturdy little organ showed what it can do with an organist of Stephen's caliber and skill at the console.

## ON THE RE-ORDERING OF CHURCHES AND ORGANS

by Canon Hilary Davidson  
(Organs Advisor, Archdeaconry of Northampton)

A recent rather sad experience has prompted me to send a polite message to all Church of England members of the Northampton & District Organists' Association, and I hope that they will accept it as expressing my concern for all our organs and a reminder of the need for consultation.

I visited a church recently (and for obvious reasons, it must remain anonymous) which has undergone re-ordering, so that all services are led in the nave of the church building. The organ was built in the Victorian position, under one of the arches in the chancel; and when it was built, it was expected to accompany a chancel choir. It was a pleasant enough instrument, and adequate for its original purpose. However, it has been left quite isolated, with a great deal of masonry separating it from the congregation.

This situation has resulted in determined effort to alter the organ so that it can be heard by the people in the church's nave: the pipes of two stops have been taken out, and other stops have been moved up an octave to make the whole organ brighter. One result of this is that some of them have no top octave, and others no bottom octave. Any visiting player would find the organ difficult to control, quite apart from hearing very little of the congregation's singing.

Our church's law is that all alterations to organs must have a faculty from the diocesan Chancellor: we are not allowed to climb into the organs we play and alter things round for any reason; and any approved alterations must be carried out by a professional organ-builder. Quite apart from possible accidents and the need for insurance, we all have differing ideas about how 'our' organ ought to sound; what to one organist is beautiful is just ineffective to the next one to sit on the stool. In this case that I've described, it would be perfectly possible to play up an octave when starting a hymn or other music off, and there is no real reason to alter the original organ-builder's design.

The other point is, that if an organist doesn't sit on the Church Council, he or she still deserves to be consulted when re-ordering is suggested. If there is a choir, they and the organ should be one item (to use a modern description); when there is no choir, the organist should still be in a position where he can hear the congregation, and the congregation can hear their instrument without it being played 'all out'. Of course, it still costs a great deal of money to move an organ, and people will use this fact as an argument to leave the poor organist where he is—in a little place by himself!

There are people qualified to give advice in these situations, and the secretary of the Diocesan Advisory Committee will always be able to make suggestions about whom to consult in your area.

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### UPDATE ON MERBECKE ARTICLE IN THE MARCH NEWSLETTER

I have acquired a PDF copy of an 1871 reprint of *Merbecke's Booke of Common Praier Noted*. An introduction by the editor Edward F. Rimbault tells us that Merbecke did receive his music degree from Oxford (recorded in a manuscript dated 1553 held in the Oxford Music School). Rimbault also says that Merbecke died in 1591 and is buried within the cloister of St. George's Chapel, Windsor. If this is correct then it seems plausible that the date of his birth was more likely to have been 1510 rather than 1505. (Ed).

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**\*Please submit all items of news, events, and other articles that you wish to be included in *What's On*, to: Barry Wadeson, 24, Bransgill Court, Heelands, Milton Keynes, MK13 7LN. Telephone: 01908 315880. Email: [editor.ndoa@gmail.com](mailto:editor.ndoa@gmail.com) Internet Address: [www.northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk) The Association's web site has received a total of 5,801 visits.**

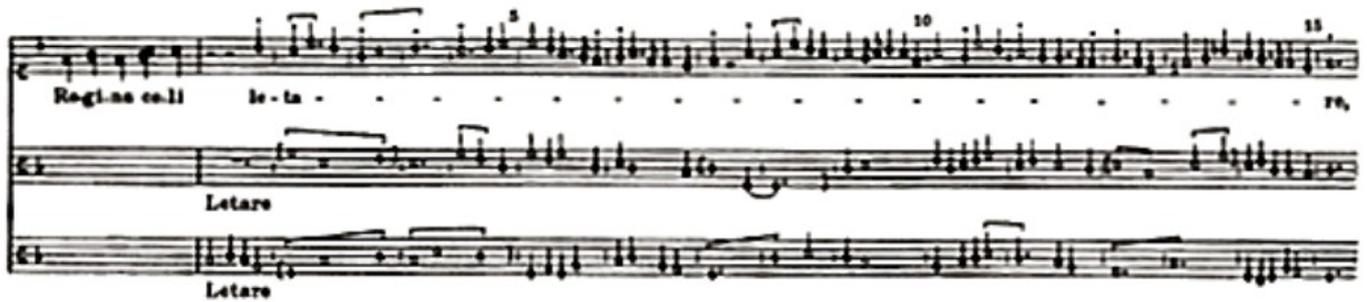
## ENGLISH CHURCH COMPOSERS - II

John Dunstaple [Dunstable, Dunstapell, Donstaple, Dumstable]

(c1390 - 24th Dec1453)

by Barry Wadeson

### IX. Regina celi



*Regina celi* by Dunstaple. Note the absence of traditional bar lines which are only used at the end of phrases.

After Merbecke we are taking a step back to the late medieval period of English Church music under Plantagenet rule, if only to see what we are missing. There are many long forgotten English composers of whose works only fragments remain: Queldryk, Excetre, Bedyngham, Olyver, Damett, Power, Cornysh, and Fayrfax. Some works of these exotically named musicians have recently been pieced together and performed on specialist CDs but to all intents and purposes this wonderful canon of early English church music has been lost forever. What was not destroyed during the Reformation was finally swept away during the Commonwealth, leaving only a few surviving pieces, often with parts missing, in libraries and private collections.

One composer whose surviving works has recently been painstakingly pieced together is John Dunstaple (this is the most frequent spelling found in contemporary manuscripts). Dunstaple was not only a fine English composer, possibly the greatest of his age, but a legend on the continent of Europe where he particularly influenced Guillaume Dufay, Gilles Binchois and other composers of the Burgundian school.

Widely believed to have been born in Dunstable, Bedfordshire (the ancient spelling of the town being Dunstaple) he spent part of his life in the service of John of Lancaster, 1st Duke of Bedford (son of Henry IV). After Lancaster's death in 1435 the Dowager Queen Joan became his patron; and after her death in 1437 the patronage passed to her son, Humfrey, Duke of Gloucester (the fifth son of Henry IV). Despite all this English royal patronage he appears to have travelled widely and was better known on the continent (particularly in France, Germany and Italy) than in England for his compositions. In France he was described as *La contenance anglois*.

Dunstaple was highly educated, yet there is no record of him having studied at either Oxford or Cambridge Universities. He did, however, have some links with St. Albans Abbey. He was certainly well-known to the Abbot, John Wheathamstead, who would later write Dunstaple's epitaph. It is assumed that he was not a cleric since parish registers seem to suggest that he was married (thus ruling out his identity as John Dunstapylle, a canon of Hereford).

Dunstaple owned property in London, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire and Normandy (Lancaster was Governor of Normandy from 1429 - 1435). Dunstaple also gained a reputation as an astronomer, astrologer and mathematician - a monument (destroyed in the great fire of London) to Dunstaple in St. Stephen's Walbrook described him as 'having secret knowledge of the stars'.

Dunstaple is perhaps best known for his use of *cantus firmus* with a plainchant melody occurring

throughout several movements of a mass setting. Where this is in the lower tenor part only it is described as *isorhythmic*, a structural device that became Dunstaple's trademark. He had a liking for thirds and sixths and many of his works were in triple time. Where Dunstaple employs duple time it is usually in the middle of movements of masses but returning to triple time at the end. Typical of his age Dunstaple's compositions were usually in three parts for tenors and countertenors supported by viols and trombones (rather than organs which were still at an early stage of development). His works listed in *Musica Britannica* are mainly for 1, 2 or 3 voices often with instrument accompaniment. Four part voice works by Dunstaple are less common.

What we do know about Dunstaple's compositions is largely gained from sources on the continent rather than from England. There was no sense of copyright at that time and works were ruthlessly copied and plagiarised by copyists (making it difficult to know who had written what) and other musicians regarded using another composers lines as a compliment rather than theft. What survives of Dunstaple's works are two complete masses and around fifty or so other works (antiphons, carols, liturgical texts, incomplete masses and three Magnificats). Only in the last 100 years has Dunstaple attracted any attention and some of his works are beginning to appear on CD or can be downloaded via Amazon. As I write this I am listening to Dunstaple's *Veni Sancte Spiritus* (five minutes of sheer bliss) which is on the first of 5 CD's in EMI's *Treasury of English Church Music*, a reissue of LPs from the 1960's (£9.97 from Amazon and a bargain).

You will not hear Dunstaple's works being sung by the average church choir, or by many cathedral choirs. You may, though, just be fortunate enough to hear a brief motet or antiphon if you attend an Oxford or Cambridge college chapel, or indeed St. Alban's Abbey, for which he composed: *Albanus roseo rutilat* (possibly on the occasion of a visit there by Lancaster himself). If you really want to revel in Dunstaple's delicious and intricate harmonies I suggest you get yourself a CD or download of some of his works via Amazon.

### Music to buy:

It is possible to find modern editions of various works by Dunstaple as free downloads via the internet (beware of poor editing). And, if you have £82 you can get the 'complete' works from *Musica Britannica*, Vol: VIII. Unfortunately, not all is as it seems and there is still dispute over some pieces ascribed to Dunstaple, for instance, *O Rosa Bella* is now believed to have been written by Bedyngham. Dunstaple's *Quam pulcra es* can be found in *Anthems for Choirs 3* edited by Philip Ledger, available from the RSCM.

### Music to Listen to:

*John Dunstaple: Sweet Harmony, Masses & Motets.* (2005) Compact Disc. Antony Pitts/ Tonus Peregrinus. Naxos: 8.557341

*Dunstaple - Sacred Choral Works* (1995) Compact Disc. Orlando Consort. Metronome: B000024G55

### Bibliography

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# THE ORGANS OF NORTHAMPTON CATHEDRAL IN CONCERT

by Helen Murphy

Towards the end of October 2012, Christopher Weaver, the organist at Northampton Cathedral, gave a recital showing off and contrasting the different sound qualities of the two organs, with a programme of music chosen to suit each instrument (which resulted in a DVD for sale in aid of the Friends of Northampton Cathedral).

Prior to embarking on his recital, Christopher talked about the organs, what he was going to play - and why (a transcript of which is contained within the DVD package, and from which the quotations in this article are taken). He explained how he first came across the 'old' organ:

*On the cathedral web site, the organ in the North gallery is called the "historic tracker-action" organ - historic because, whether by design or accident, in every way it resembles an organ of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is very convincing - so convincing that it fooled me for a while when I first met it.*

He goes on to relate how the former Dean, Fr. John, took him up to the gallery one day to show him the organ.

*As we approached, I couldn't believe my eyes. I thought "What have we got here? It's obviously an antique - but what is it?" Fr John switched it on and left me, saying, "Enjoy yourself - have a go." I pulled out a stop and just dissolved in this sweet sound and started thinking, "Where on earth has this come from? Perhaps it has come from a redundant church in Europe somewhere." I wondered if it was German, then I tried the mixtures and some of the mutations and thought, "No, it's French." I thought it could be from the early part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century - around 1720 - with these stop sounds. Then of course it was the put-down of my life when I realised it wasn't France 1720 at all, but Northampton 1976! To confuse the pedigree even more, it was built by a Dutchman, Hendrik ten Bruggencate, who had come from a firm of Swiss organ builders, so I think my confusion can be forgiven.*



In order to compare and contrast the individual voices of the two organs, Christopher decided to begin (on the Bruggencate) and end (on the Viscount) with a suite and see 'how they progressed'. Opening the batting for the Bruggencate, he chose Clérambeault's *Suite on the Second Tone* (from around 1720). Although Clérambeault was a church composer, he was not far from Versailles, where the monarch, Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, was indulging his lifelong passion for dancing (with his court musicians beavering away even at mealtimes), so he could not fail to have been influenced by the general de spirit of the age and gathered together dance tunes, just like everyone else.

Moving from France to England via Germany, Christopher chose Handel's *Organ Concerto No 1* (roughly contemporary with the Clérambeault) 'for', as he puts it, 'one reason only - that is because I couldn't resist it - to play Handel on the little Bruggencate organ is sheer delight'. Handel had written this concerto when he was employed by the Duke of Chandos, hence the English connection. Interestingly, Christopher goes on to say that:

*...there are documents of the organ that he used to play in Chandos House and it's very similar to the organ we have here. You will be able to tell the difference between the London writing and the French writing - there is much more garlic in the French music and, being Handel, of course, it is much more stately, polite and beautiful.*

Quite so. And then, concluding the first part, he went on to play the *Organ Voluntary No 8* by John Stanley. A generation younger than Clérambeault and Handel, Stanley was the organist at the Temple Church in London, despite having been blind from an early age. His voluntaries started life as improvisations, for which Stanley was renowned, and fortunately for us, someone was able to write them down.

Although the next piece of music could easily and very authentically have been played on the Bruggencate organ, Christopher chose the Viscount, in order, as he put it, to 'fire off the big guns with what is probably the best-known piece of organ repertoire - Bach's *Toccata in D Minor*'. With its twelve different speakers in twelve different places around the building, he was able to 'toss the music around the building a bit and give you echo and antiphonal effects'. Pietro Yon's *Humoresque* - 'a piece of fun' - with its rippling effects, showed off the Viscount's flutes.

Returning to the suite form to see how it has evolved in the intervening centuries (as he set out to do at the start), Christopher chose Alan Ridout's *Canticle of the Rose*, written for the dedication of the magnificent rose window in the North transept of St Alban's Cathedral (which can be seen on the DVD). With the Holy Trinity of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit centrally placed, surrounded by many more 'roses', what he calls the 'fringe' roses (round the outside) depict the four elements of Earth, Fire, Air and Water. Christopher explains:

*What Alan Ridout does in this piece of music is give you a picture in sound of those elements. You will first of all hear a very solid piece for Mother Earth; then you will hear flames raging through the building and fire licking up the pillars; then soft, warm breezes will come; then you will hear water dripping and trickling through the place. Finally, a Postlude... This starts off innocuously and builds up and up to a huge climax and, as it reaches the end, you will hear a fanfare. That fanfare was played for the first time as the window was unveiled by the Prince of Wales on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1989.*

So, although Ridout's *Canticle* is not a set of dances, there is a unifying theme - and thus, it is a suite. As for liturgical as opposed to concert use of the organs, Christopher points out that the division of speakers on the Viscount includes two in the sanctuary area, i.e. at the opposite end of the building from the console and main speakers. This is particularly useful when he is accompanying a cantor at the ambo, with the choir in the west gallery, enabling him to accompany whoever is singing from wherever they are placed. The Bruggencate's modest specification was designed for the accompaniment of straightforward liturgical music, such as responsorial psalms. That it is a superb recital instrument as well, for music of the 'right' period, is an added bonus.

The specifications of both of the organs can be seen on the cathedral's web site. ([www.northamptoncathedral.org](http://www.northamptoncathedral.org)) together with information on the Friends of Northampton Cathedral.

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## A VERY WARM WELCOME TO THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS:

**Lauren Hollis** (student) - organ scholar at St Andrew's Gt Linford

**Michael Needle** (student) - junior organ scholar at St Mary the Virgin, Finedon

**Harrison Cook** (student) - a pupil of Stephen Moore.

**Mrs Hilary Goodman** - choir member at St Mary, Higham Ferrers

**Mr Mike Dando** - St Ninian's, Corby

**The Very Revd Canon Horsley** - All Saints', Northampton

**Mr Robin Desbois** - (family member, husband of committee member Sally)

**W**e trust their time as members of the association will be an enjoyable and happy one and we look forward to meeting them at N&DOA events.



St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough where the N&DOA Members' Recital took place this year on Saturday 20th April. This gloriously decorated building was designed by Sir Ninian Comper. The organ console is situated on the rood screen behind the great cross, the organ itself is to the left at the same level. See page 9 for a review of the recital.