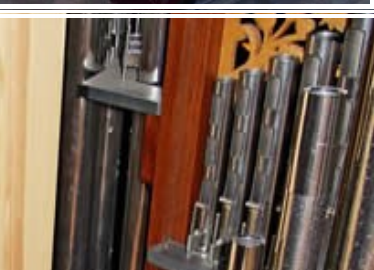


NORTHAMPTON & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

September 2014



Kenneth Hugh Tickell BA, FRCO, Organ Builder (born: 25th August 1956, died: 24th July 2014, aged 57). President of the Northampton and District Organists' Association: 1985–1986 and 2007–2008.



Reg. Charity No. 274679

FROM THE EDITOR



Apologies if some of you feel this edition is a little late. However, recent events mean that the intended Newsletter had to be re-written at the last moment to carry an article on the untimely death of Kenneth Tickell, organ builder, organist of distinction and former President of the NDOA. I already had a belated obituary – the death of Philip Pfaff,

Organist and Choirmaster of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton (1936–1940) and President of the NDOA (1939–1940) who died aged 99 years on 4th of March this year and never expected to report the deaths of two past Presidents in the same issue. Nevertheless, it is right that we honour the memories of our past presidents even if we have to forgo articles on more recent events.

Elsewhere, you will find a report on our Annual NDOA Organ Crawl; and I can only share our secretary's breathless excitement for the little gem of an organ that lies hidden in one of Northamptonshire's tiny villages. Which one? Go to page 14.

Editor, NDOA Newsletter

CONTENTS

<i>Obituary: Kenneth Tickell, Organ Builder</i>	<i>p 3</i>
<i>What's On</i>	<i>p 7</i>
<i>Finedon Festival Chorus</i>	<i>p 8</i>
<i>Encounters with Naji Hakim, other musicians... and Olivier Messiaen</i>	<i>p 9</i>
<i>Crick Parish Church Seeks Organ Students</i>	<i>p 9</i>
<i>Letter from John Bertalot</i>	<i>p 10</i>
<i>Obituary: Philip Pfaff, Organist of St. Matthew's Church (1936 – 1940)</i>	<i>p 11</i>
<i>Bank Holiday Organ Crawl Report</i>	<i>p 14</i>

President:

Lee Dunleavy

MA (Oxon), FRCO (DipCHD), ACertCM
337 Wellingborough Road
Rushden
Northants
NN10 6BB
07817 695535
lee.dunleavy@talk21.com

Hon. Secretary:

Helen Murphy
23 Hawthorne Road
Finedon
Northamptonshire
NN9 5DR
01933 680955
helen.murphy1@tesco.net

Hon. Treasurer:

Jonathan Harris
11 Pytchley Way
Brixworth
Northamptonshire
NN6 9EF
01604 881182
treasurer.ndoa@gmail.com

Committee Members:

Christopher Colby
Sally Desbois
Tim Dolan
Tony Edwards (President Elect)
Andrew Moodie
Stephen Moore (Past President)
Robert Page
Roger Palmer
Robert Tucker

Newsletter Editor:

Barry Wadeson
24 Bransgill Court
Heelands
Milton Keynes
MK13 7LN
01908 315880
editor.ndoa@gmail.com

Front cover pictures (clockwise from top left): Choir case, Lincoln's Inn Chapel, Holborne; Rikkyo Gaukin, Japan; Lincoln Cathedral continuo organ and Choir pipes of Lincoln's Inn Chapel organ.

Kenneth Hugh Tickell, BA, FRCO
Organist and Organ Builder



On Thursday 7th of August the church of St. Matthew's, Northampton was filled with the great and the good from the organ playing and organ building world for the funeral of Kenneth Tickell who, as members of the NDOA know, was Northampton's most prominent organ builder and designer of high quality instruments, many of which are in our cathedrals and college chapels.

Kenneth Tickell (Ken to his many friends, staff and clients) was born on the 25th August 1956 in Orrell, Lancashire – a village three miles to the west of Wigan. Ken was the elder of two brothers. His father was a teacher who moved the family to Coventry when Ken was two. He learnt violin as a child which seems to have inspired a wider interest in music when at an early age he became a church organist.

Ken studied at the Coventry School of Music prior to taking up an organ scholarship at the University of Hull in 1976. His organ teachers included Robert Weddle (Coventry Cathedral), Francis Jackson (York Minster), Simon Lindley (Leeds Parish Church) and Dame Gillian Weir. He gained the Fellowship diploma of the Royal College of Organists in 1977 and graduated in Music from Hull University in 1978. For many years he was Director of Music at St Mary's, Far Cotton, Northampton.

Ken's interest in building organs developed when, during a summer break at Hull, he assisted a friend installing a second-hand organ in his parish church. The job turned out to be a more complicated than had been anticipated, and it was at this time that Ken discovered a practical skill that he could combine with music. Following his degree and studying for the Fellowship of the Royal College of Organists his interest in building organs led him to an apprenticeship with the Northampton firm of Grant, Degens and Bradbeer.

Ken Tickell was one of a small number of visionaries like the late lamented Robert Shaftoe (who died last year); he believed that British organs could be made better than they were by bringing back a traditional look to the organ which included time-honoured craftsmanship combined with modern materials. He was also one of the growing number of imaginative British organ builders who resisted the tide of electrification (or, as Ken described it, electrocution) of organ actions in favour of what was then considered the limitations of tracker action.

The Victorian era was one of the greatest periods in British organ building history for the sheer number of organs being built. Churches that had never had organs before now acquired them and the growth in municipal pride meant that every town hall had to have the biggest and best organ available. However, by the early 20th century quality had declined with heavy reliance on electric action and minimalist casework (which so often meant no casework at all). Apart from a few firms such as Mander's in London the excellence which had characterised some of the Victorian builders such as Willis, Walker, J. C. Bishop and Holdich had given way to cheap and inferior instruments with extended ranks of pipes. And whereas Victorian organ builders felt they could learn something from their European counterparts, British organ builders at the beginning of the twentieth century regarded the continent with disdain.

Ken's vision was to bring back to these shores organ building skills that appeared to have been lost. It is no surprise, therefore, that he choose tracker (or mechanical) action as the way forward. With very few exceptions (for example Worcester Cathedral), all Tickell organs are tracker action but with a nod to modernity employing electric piston and stop action on larger organs. One of the first (if not the first) organ builder to use computer assisted design, Ken was able to squeeze a lot of organ into a small space and yet make all of it accessible to tuners. Ken Tickell would also demonstrate that there were few limitations when it came to tracker action organs. Three, even four manual organs were

possible, despite manuals coupled, without loss of lightness of touch. and as this small company showed with Lincoln's Inn Chapel, Holborn, St. Andrew's Headington and other contracts a mechanical organ did not have to be built entirely around the console.



Like others who had struck out on their own before him, Ken began humbly in the barn of a farmyard in 1982 where he was often disconcerted to find himself being eyed up by a goat as he worked. His early work involved rebuilds and renovations whilst at the same time he built up a portfolio of tuning and maintenance contracts in and around Northamptonshire. Sooner or later he would begin to build authentic Tickell organs from scratch. His first Tickell organ was for the Church of All Saints, Preston Bagot, Warwickshire in 1986 (see picture left). More accurately, this organ was made in 1985 to be showcased at the St. Albans International Organ Festival, where it immediately attracted attention from organ consultants and organists, and was acquired by Preston Bagot Parish Church the following year, unaware that it was making organ building history with Tickell Opus 1.

With one manual and three stops: Stopped Diapason 8', Chimney Flute 4' and Principal 2' the keys are covered in Satinwood and Ebony, controlling a sensitive suspended action. The whole organ is contained within an English oak case. The blower and wedge bellows are contained inside the lower case. Here, we can already see the beginnings of the Tickell vision that organs must not only sound good but look good too. In fact Ken was to go on to make many more small organs many of which are in our cathedrals and Oxbridge chapels and

have almost become a 'must have' acquisition for any music department. Even the BBC has one to accompany the BBC Singers. But, it wasn't just cathedrals and music institutions which regarded a Tickell chamber or continuo organ as an essential instrument; private individuals queued up to buy Tickell small organs for either private practice or to donate to their old college or school chapel.

With very few exceptions, Kenneth Tickell's preference was to build free standing organs rather than to intrude the organ into a chamber which was probably not built to accommodate an organ in the first place. However, from 1993 the company began to take on larger contracts with bigger organs, including sensitive restorations with new organs inside historic cases. The most obvious that come to mind are St. Mary le Bow in London with a new organ inside the existing case and Keble College, Oxford where the Butterfield front case and pipework were cleaned and restored with an entirely new Tickell Organ behind them. The ancient Hill organ on the south gallery had become unplayable and the college had been using an electronic organ for many years. Unsurprisingly, the college is delighted with its new organ inside a sympathetically restored case. And, anyone viewing the Keble organ today would hardly notice that the front casework has been raised slightly to accommodate the new console. That, of course, was Ken's genius—to build organs sympathetic to their surroundings; so for instance, the explosion of colour which greets the visitor viewing the organ of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Newcastle is entirely in keeping with Pugin's building. One new organ that Ken considered an example of his best work was that of Lincoln's Inn Chapel, Holborn (see picture on p. 7). The organ looks as if it has always been there with casework, pipe shades and motifs that are inspired by the existing chapel decorations. The console is fitted into the North case with the tracker action to the South case and the central Choir case covered by a false floor. Such a design in the past would have been based on electric action it being considered too difficult to build an organ of this design using tracker action.

Of course, none of this would have been possible working from a barn and in 1986 Ken moved to an old bakery when he began taking on staff for the increasing work coming his way. At the time Ken lived above the premises with his wife Pippa and daughter Eleanor. As Tony Coles, Ken's long serving works manager until his recent retirement recalls, some of the larger organs had to be assembled on their backs, a problem solved by Ken when he cut a hole through the floor of his living quarters. It was during this time that Ken resolved only to build new rather than to rebuild old organs, except for historic restorations such as the new organ inside the original Father Smith case at Eton College Chapel.



Worcester Cathedral Organ

By 1992 the Tickell reputation ensured a continuous supply of customers anxious to acquire a Tickell organ for their church or chapel (Ken never advertised, relying on word of mouth as his best advert). With a core staff of craftsmen and a number of associates Ken moved again to larger premises at Rothersthorpe Crescent in Northampton. The fact that Ken was an organist of some distinction also began to show through with organs that could manage both a romantic repertoire and early English and continental music.

He developed a close relationship with pipe-maker Terry Shires of Leeds for the authentic English organ sound whilst buying in pipework from continental suppliers such as Stinkens of Zeist in the Netherlands. Also working closely with Ken were companies such as Penny's Mill for some of the heavier parts of cases, David Frostrick who voiced many of the reeds, Keith German the Norfolk woodcarver whose many pipe-shades, decorations and tracery can be found on Tickell organs, organ tuners Michael Latham, Alan Goulding and Richard Young. And, as members will recall from an earlier article, Jenny Duffy has worked on many projects from gold leafing new pipes on the organ destined for Worcester Cathedral to the restoration of the Keble College front pipes

which are alleged to have been painted by William Butterfield himself.

Rather predictably, many have seized on the Tickell Company's largest ever organ building project at Worcester Cathedral as an example of the Tickell's master craftsmanship; however, Ken's personal favourites tended to be his beloved tracker organs which left one gasping in admiration at the beauty of the case, before even a note had been sounded. Moreover, he put as much love and care into the smaller instruments he built for many of our cathedrals, with Lincoln Cathedral being the recipient of the latest of these versatile organs. It was through the hire of the company's small continuo organ (sometimes called the 'box organ') that led to orders for such organs – once played and heard those who hired it just had to have one for themselves.

It was this and the need to bring in more substantial orders that created so much stress for Ken. Over a weekend he might be transporting his hire organ to three separate venues hundreds of miles apart often with an overnight stay. Ken stayed with the organ tuning it according to the requirements of the client, Vallotti, equal temperament or whatever. Visits to and from various clients up and down the country with designs and drawings occupied much of his working week. Back in Northamptonshire Ken typically spent the morning working from home and the afternoon in the workshop. His relationship with his workforce was one of trust to get one with the job. Providing his employees put in the required hours Ken was one of those new breed of employers who encouraged flexible working. He was also a person of great kindness and understanding for those of his employees who had personal or domestic problems

Ken was immensely proud of the organs he built yet at the same time he often modestly held back at

opening recitals allowing the recitalist to show the organ off to its greatest advantage and taking a small, shy bow at the end. What Ken made of his funeral is difficult to know; held in the Victorian gothic splendour of St. Matthew's, Northampton, his coffin entered to the earth-trembling strains of Nimrod from Elgar's *Enigma Variations* played by organist Stephen Moore on the Walker organ that Ken had helped to restore under contract from Harrison's of Durham. This was followed by the introit *Faire is the Heaven* by William Harris. It says much about the esteem in which Ken was held that the assembled choir of friends, colleagues and employees filled the capacious choir stalls at St. Matthew's to overflowing.

This was as much a musical farewell as a funeral and with hymns like 'Angel-voices ever singing' (to the tune: *Angel Voices*), 'Dear Lord and father of mankind' (tune: *Repton*) and 'Oh praise ye the Lord' (tune: *Laudate Dominum*) we can be sure that Ken would have approved. As well as prayers and readings, tributes were delivered by Martyn Warsop a long time friend of Ken's who assisted him with organ building in his early days and by Simon Brown, Tickell's current pipe voicer. This was followed by more contributions from the choir celebrating Ken's life and achievements: Giuseppe Pitoni's *Cantate Domino* and Psalm 150 to Sir Charles Villiers Stanford's roof-lifting chant.

After the commendation and farewell the congregation sat as Stephen Moore played J.S. Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in B minor* BWV544, standing at the beginning of the fugue as Ken's mortal remains were carried from the church for cremation attended by family and close friends then sitting again to contemplate what a great loss has descended upon the organ building community in Britain and to music in and around Northamptonshire.

The firm of Kenneth Tickell and Company Ltd has a number of orders on its books which were well advanced in design and its talented workforce should have no difficulty in executing those commissions at least for the foreseeable future. That is one of the legacies of Ken's management of his workforce over the years with a team experienced in computer assisted design, electrical work, voicing, tuning and case building.



Lincoln's Inn Chapel Organ

A memorial Choral Evensong service will held at Worcester Cathedral on Saturday, October 4th. Evensong at Worcester is normally held at 5:30 p.m. on weekdays and at 4:00 p.m. on Sundays.

By The Editor



What's On



- Saturday 13th September** 7:30 p.m. **Organ Recital.** to mark the completion of the restoration of the organ at St Mary's, Finedon, NN9 5NR. Performed by the international recitalist Stephen Farr (from St Paul's, Knightsbridge). Admission free, retiring collection.
- Sunday 14th September** 6:00 p.m. **Finedon Flower Festival Choral Evensong** & Rededication of the organ. St. Mary the Virgin, Finedon, NN9 5NR. See page 8 for music list. Singers rehearsal: 4:30 p.m.
- Saturday 20th September** 3:00 p.m. **Annual Members Recital.** St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough, NN8 1HU. All proceeds from the recital will be given to the David Morgan Education Fund. Retiring collection.
- Sunday 21st September** 10:15 a.m. **St. Matthew's Day United Parish Mass.** St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, NN1 4RY. *Aspire to God Bednall* (2009 Commission); *Missa Brevis Matthias* (1973 Commission); O how glorious is the kingdom *Stopford* (2014 commission, first performance); *Panis angelicus Franck*; Final (Symphonie III) *Vierne*.
- Sunday 21st September** 6:00 p.m. **Solemn Choral Evensong.** St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, NN1 4RY. *Aspire to God Bednall*; Responses *Sanders*; Canticles in D *Dyson*; *Let the people praise thee Matthias*; Fanfare *Whitlock*.
- Sunday 21st September** 7:30 p.m. **Organ Recital.** St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, NN1 4RY. Andrew Reid, Director of the Royal School of Church Music, formerly Director of Music at Peterborough Cathedral and Hussey Organ Scholar at St. Matthew's 1989–1990. Admission free, retiring collection.
- Saturday 27th September** 7:00 p.m. **Organ Recital.** St. Mary the Virgin, Wellingborough, NN8 1HU. Benjamin Giddens (Reading Minster of St Mary the Virgin). Admission free, retiring collection
- Sunday 5th October** 7:30 p.m. **Organ Recital.** St. Matthews Church, Northampton, NN1 4RY. Simon Hogan, Southwell Minster. Admission free, retiring collection.
- Saturday 4th October** 11:00 a.m. **Organ Recital.** Shanna Hart, St Mary the Virgin, Finedon, NN9 5NR, Admission free, retiring collection
- Saturday 18th October** 10:00 a.m. **Pedals, pipes and pizza.** All Saints Church, Northampton, NN1 1DF. A day to encourage young musicians to take up the organ, including a performance of *Rex, the King of the Instruments*, for narrator and organ, and the video: *Pulling Out all the Stops*.
- Saturday 1st November** 11:00 a.m. **Organ Recital.** Jonathan Harris, St. Mary the Virgin, Finedon, NN9 5NR. Admission Free, retiring collection
- Sunday 2nd November** 7:30 p.m. **Organ Recital.** Stephen Moore, St. Matthew's Church, Northampton, NN1 4RY. Admission free, retiring collection
- Saturday 15th November** 10:00 a.m. **Organ Recital.** Kingsley Park Methodist Church, Northampton, NN2 7JF. Philip Bricher (Holy Trinity, Northampton). Part of the Church's Autumn Fair
- Sunday 16th November** 4:00 p.m. **Ninetieth Annual General Meeting.** St Mary's Church, Higham Ferrers, NN10 8DL. Installation of Tony Edwards as President of the NDOA for 2014–2015, followed by a recital on the Peter Collins hybrid organ and Choral Evensong by the Choir of St. Mary's. See separate sheet for agenda.

FINEDON FLOWER FESTIVAL EVENSONG

Dear Singers,

You are welcome and invited to join us to sing at the occasion of the Flower Festival Choral Evensong at St Mary the Virgin, Finedon, which will include the re-dedication of the organ, on Sunday 14th September 2014 at 6pm, led by Rev'd Richard Coles.

Rehearsals: Friday 12th September 7.00pm to 8.15pm, plus a rehearsal on the day at 4.30pm before the Festal Evensong at 6pm.

Music List

Introit: John Tavener *The Lamb*

Responses: Smith (4 part)

Canticles: Walmisley in D minor

Psalm: 23 (setting by Hylton)

Anthem: Parry *I was Glad*

Hymns: O Praise Ye The Lord (Parry) & All People That On Earth Do Dwell

Organ Voluntary: Antonio Soler Concerto no. 1 for two organs

(Dress is choir robes, dark suits or all black. Rehearsals take place at St Mary the Virgin, Finedon.)

You are also invited to join us on the Saturday evening for our post-restoration organ recital:

Saturday 13th September at 7.30pm, to mark the completion of the restoration of the organ at St Mary's, Finedon. Performed by the international recitalist Stephen Farr (from St Paul's, Knightsbridge). Admission is free; there will be a retiring collection.

The Finedon Festival Chorus consists of the Choir of St Mary the Virgin, Finedon plus visiting singers from local choirs and the local area. Please pass these details on to any singers you feel may be interested in joining us. Hard copies of the music will be available at the rehearsals. For practice purposes, I can email you a copy of the Parry, Walmisley, psalm and responses; just let me know if you'd like these. I have borrowed copies of Tavener's *The Lamb* so it is essential that these are returned immediately after the service (there is a useful recording of this piece on You Tube that can be followed along with the music). It would be most helpful if you come to the rehearsals with the majority of notes learnt beforehand!

Additional rehearsals you are welcome to come along to are: at St Mary's, Finedon any Friday from this week on - we will be rehearsing the evensong music during our weekly church choir practice from around 7.20pm; and at Holy Trinity Church, Old Wolverton, Robert Page will be holding two extra rehearsals with his choir on Saturday 30th August and 6th September between 2pm & 5pm.

Please ensure a message gets to me in good time, via phone, email or through a member of the Finedon church choir, to indicate whether you are able to sing at this evensong (and, if you've not sung with us before, which part you sing (SATB)).

The choir will be conducted by Robert Page and the organs played by myself and Shanna Hart. It promises to be a very special and enjoyable occasion so I hope you're able to join us.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Harris MSt(Oxon) BMus LGSM
Director of Music, St Mary the Virgin, Finedon

ENCOUNTERS WITH NAJI HAKIM, OTHER MUSICIANS... AND OLIVIER MESSIAEN: REMINISCENCES BY DON KENNEDY

by
Helen Murphy

A select few assembled in St Matthew's Parish Centre on 28th June to find out what this was all about. Did Don actually meet Messiaen? Well, no, as it happens - but it was a near miss. Wind the tape back 50 years. Having started his musical life as a chorister in St Matthew's Church choir (which included the seminal experience of singing new commissions on a regular basis), Don related how after university he spent almost his entire career in the classical recording industry, initially responsible for commissioning LP sleeve notes and artists' photos and later the content of CD booklets - which can be quite extensive - but which we perhaps rather take for granted. However, someone has to commission the notes (including translations, when you are publishing in three languages), select appropriate photos and illustrations, often liaise with the artists, and edit and proofread the final material, before Joe Public gets a look in - and that someone was Don in his work as literary editor.

We listened to some historic CD tracks of French organists playing their own works (including Widor and Messiaen); working on the booklets had brought Don into contact with the inimitable Felix Aprahamian. And we heard how, through his contact with Naji Hakim in Paris over a new organ recording at La Trinité, Don found himself the recipient of some precious video film of Messiaen, showing him improvising *in situ* at the organ there in 1988/91 (i.e. at Mass, as is the French custom), for which special permission had been sought and obtained from the powers that be; the great man is shown improvising and playing specific pieces at appropriate points during the Mass, with the sounds of the congregation and priest below singing various bits and pieces. But however hard I concentrate (and I've listened to it several times), I can't catch what words they are singing to *Winchester Old* - one thing is certain, however: it is not 'While shepherds watched their flocks by night'!

Yvonne Loriod (Madame Messiaen) is hovering at the edge peering over the balcony and signalling to him when it is time to draw a particular improvisation to a close, or when to start up again. At one point, he raises his hands and is just about to place them on the manual when he is pipped at the post by the celebrant below launching into the next bit of the liturgy - or it could have been the notices! He gives a wry smile with a Gallic shrug. You win some, you lose some - and we've all had *that* happen to us! A very poignant tape also shows him at his last recital given in December 1991. He is clearly not in the best of health, looking very tired, and in fact died the following April.

The original video tape was not of the highest quality; nevertheless, Don managed to transfer the various tracks onto a DVD, which Barry, with his technical wizardry, then catalogued into a form suitable for a PowerPoint presentation, complete with sound. (Don't ask me how - it seemed an awful lot of wires and leads trailing all over the place, all carefully taped down for safety, but Barry knew what he was doing with his equipment!) We had had a get-together at the venue a couple of days earlier to get it all set up for a trial run-through, where any potential hazards could be sorted out. All went well. As well as Barry, we have Stephen Moore to thank for his help and co-operation over the arrangements for using the St Matthew's Parish Centre. It was a shame there were not more to experience it on the day, but several people were away and had sent their apologies. Let's hope they'll be able to make the proposed re-run (whenever that may be), for which we'll use a simple DVD player!

Crick Parish Church would welcome any visiting organists to practise on their 1819 Thomas Elliot organ. They also have potential funding available to subsidise students having lessons on the instrument.

To access the organ, or for further information, contact their organist Nigel Howard Tel: 01788 823390. Further details on the organ are on their website <http://www.crick.org.uk/crickorgan/index.html>

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From Dr. John Bertalot

Barry - greetings,

May I congratulate you on the splendid and most exciting NDOA Newsletter which you create - I am so grateful to you for sending me regular copies for, of all the three posts I was privileged to occupy in my career (including Blackburn Cathedral and Princeton New Jersey), it is to the six years I spent at St Matthew's that I owe so very much, for it was there that I began to learn how to 'do the job', and I've continued to learn ever since.

I am so very proud that the tradition which I inherited at St. Matthew's all those years ago is continuing. I succeeded Alec Wyton - St John the Divine Cathedral NYC, and Robert Joyce - Llandaff Cathedral, and I was equally honoured that my two successors were Michael Nicholas to Norwich Cathedral, and Stephen Cleobury to you know where!



John Bertalot at the rather grandiose console of the organ of the Crystal Cathedral, Los Angeles. The 273 rank, five manual pipe organ, constructed by Fratelli Ruffatti, is the fifth largest in the world. They do things differently in the USA!

Perhaps your colleagues may be interested to glance at my Blog which currently has over 20,000 hits: www.bertalot.org - for there's a photo of my St Matthew's choir taken over 50 years ago. You'll see young tenor Stephen Meakins (Sr) and two of my head boys - Vaughan Meakins, who went on to win the Tagore gold medal at the RCM, and David Holton, who is now Professor of modern Greek at Cambridge.

Also in my blog are 35 articles on choir training (covering pretty well everything I've taught in choral workshops all over the world - especially how easy it is to enable young choristers to sight-sing) ... and also articles on Bach number symbolism!

With every best wish for the continued success of church music in Northampton, which is so greatly encouraged by your excellent NDOA Newsletter.

Most warmly

John

John Bertalot was organist and choirmaster of St. Matthew's Church, Northampton 1958–1964 and President of the NDOA 1962–1963. He is one of our honorary members who receives the NDOA Newsletter which he reads with great interest. John is organist emeritus at Blackburn Cathedral (he was director of music at Blackburn from 1964–1983) and as well as his blog, on which you can hear an excerpt from his arrangement of 'Amazing Grace', he produces Blackburn's 'Music & More' Newsletter. If you go to www.bertalot.org (John's blog site) and look in the main menu you will find a link to a downloadable history of Blackburn Cathedral's organs; well worth a read (Ed).

Philip Reynold Pfaff MusB BA

Organist and Choirmaster, St. Matthew's Church, Northampton (1936–1940)

President of the NDOA (1939–1940)



Sadly, we report the death of another former President of the NDOA earlier this year on 4th March aged 99 years. Philip Pfaff was born in Ripon, Yorkshire on 10th June, 1914 and educated at Ripon Cathedral School and Ripon Grammar School. His father, Philip Reginald Pfaff, was a lay clerk in the cathedral choir, with a BMus from Durham University and was very active musically in the town conducting orchestras and choral societies.

Unsurprisingly, young Philip was destined for a musical career and went on to St. John's College, Cambridge where he was a bass choral scholar. He graduated with a MusB and a BA in 1935 following on from which he completed a year's post-graduate study as McKenna Scholar at the Royal College of Music from 1935–1936. After his musical training Philip turned his thoughts to earning a living as musician. At some point he met Denys Pouncey who was just leaving St. Matthew's to become Master of the

Choristers at Wells Cathedral. Pouncey asked him if he was interested in becoming his successor at St. Matthew's and encouraged him to apply. In due course he was appointed to St. Matthew's where Canon Rowden Hussey was coming to the end of his incumbency.

A great deal of interest in Philip Pfaff has been generated by the Malcolm Arnold Society in recent years because he was Malcolm Arnold's first professional music teacher and a lifelong friend of the composer. An article on Pfaff written by Barry Wadson was included as an insert in the NDOA Newsletter a few years ago and was reprinted in the *Guild of Musicians and Singers Magazine* in September 2009. This article has been reprinted again this year in *Beckus* the Malcolm Arnold Society's own Newsletter. *Beckus* (issue 80) carried an interview with Philip Pfaff in the Spring of 2011 in which he described his first meeting with the young Malcolm Arnold following a request by Malcolm's father to teach his son music:

As soon as I had settled in, I rang to arrange a meeting and was rather surprised when he said that his son would come to see me on his own. And so, one day at the end of September, there was a ring at my doorbell and I opened the door to this boy who was to have a major influence on my life. Malcolm was extremely nervous and, he told me later, very frightened. He was a big fifteen-year-old,

overweight and rather gauche. He had brought a copy of a textbook by C H Kitson and some examples of counterpoint from it which he had attempted to work out, and he arranged to have two lessons a week on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It didn't take us long to establish a firm and amicable relationship - teacher and pupil, friend and companion - and, I think, mutual respect. I was only seven years older than Malcolm but there was some element of in loco parentis in our relationship. He was deeply attached to his mother but I really had very little contact with his father, who was a successful businessman running a large shoe factory. I gained the impression that Malcolm was rather scared of him at the time.

I first came to know Philip Pfaff when I began researching for a book (as yet uncompleted) on the choral tradition at St. Matthew's in around 2007. By this time he had long retired and his wife Angela (née Newell) whom he had met and married in Northampton had died. It transpired that Philip had had a long and exciting life in music. He found St. Matthew's to be 'very high church' and experienced some difficulty with the intricate musical interludes and improvisations that punctuated the services at St. Matthew's. Nevertheless, he settled down into his new role taking over some of the former pupils of Denys Pouncey as well as the conductorship of the Northampton Bach Choir and Orchestra. In 1937 Rowden Hussey retired and was succeeded by his son Walter Hussey whom Pfaff found to be much more interested in the music at St. Matthew's. Meanwhile, Pfaff continued with his teaching of Malcolm Arnold:

The following two years consisted of steady work and about 450 hours of one-to-one tuition. A lot of work was undertaken and completed, which eventually resulted in a personable young man with a wide knowledge of music, who was well able to hold his own as a new student at the Royal College of Music. We discussed neumes, early notation, canto firmo, styles of composition, aural training, orchestration (including Berlioz and new ideas about tonality) and contemporary composers - just a few examples to show the extent of the ground covered. It soon became obvious that Malcolm would have to master the keyboard and it needed some determination on my part to convince his father that this was essential. It was a terrible struggle for him to begin with and often left him exhausted at the keyboard, but fairly suddenly (later at the RCM) it all fell into place. During all the time we spent together - talking, walking, at the theatre - and during my own musical activities at the church - teaching, and with the Bach Choir and Orchestra - he gained experience of every kind. Meanwhile he continued playing the trumpet and was able to gain a Scholarship at the RCM to study under Ernest Hall. I hope that what I have written will help to explain these critical two years of Malcolm's life. For me, it was a privilege to have been a part of it.

We remained friends until he died and he composed his Little Suite and The Return of Ulysses at my request - a far cry from the last commission I gave him in August 1938, which became the song cycle In Kensington Gardens. The books written about him have been erudite, but none of them have managed to convey the journey from comparative ignorance to an extensive grounding, the wonder of this tremendous talent unfolding from month to month, and, really, the privilege I had to be able to play a part. One of the things I could never forget is seeing him crouched at the back of the orchestra, sipping from a small flask of water and playing the

Bach Brandenburg in F on an original F trumpet - I wonder if it was a record for the period?

In fact, Philip Pfaff championed Malcolm Arnold's works throughout his life giving many of them a first performance. However, this is getting ahead of his many communications with me. In 1940 Philip was called up to serve in the RAF as a wireless operator where he became the founder and conductor of Signals Command Band. He never returned to St. Matthew's even though his post had been kept open for him by Walter Hussey. It was during Pfaff's absence that Hussey commissioned *Rejoice in the Lamb* by Benjamin Britten in 1943 for the 50th anniversary of the consecration of St. Matthew's. He was followed as organist and choirmaster at St. Matthew's in 1946 by Alec Wyton. In one of his letters to me, Philip recalled being asked around 1937–1938 by the Rev Brodie, a former curate at St. Matthew's and now with a church of his own, to audition a schoolboy who had applied to be organist at his church: "I did this for him and found a very talented youngster – Alec Wyton!"

From 1960 to 1975 Pfaff was head of music at Trent Park College which later became part of Middlesex Polytechnic, where he also became tutor for overseas commonwealth students. During the autumn term of 1974 Pfaff toured Columbia for the British Council lecturing on music education at universities and conducted his own carol suite: Christmas in Spain, in Spanish, with an orchestra and choir of school children in Bogota. Pfaff was also in great demand as an examiner for the Royal Schools of Music which from 1973 to 1984 took him to Singapore, Hong Kong, South Africa, New Zealand, the Caribbean, Iceland, Germany and Holland.

Pfaff wrote two pieces of music whilst at St. Matthew's Church (although they bear no dedication). The first, an unaccompanied, modal communion service is in manuscript form in the choir library; however, his anthem *O Thou the Central Orb* was published by James Pass & Co Ltd in 1939. Pfaff also composed and arranged the music as well as providing a small orchestra for an eighteenth century Italian play performed at the Northampton Repertory Theatre.

Philip Pfaff retired in 1984 aged 70. In 2002 he moved to Dorchester where his wife, Angela, died in 2005. They had two sons, Malcolm who played French Horn with the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra (1968 - 1996) and Graham a free-lance oboe player who was Chief Executive of English Sinfonia from 1982 - 2003.

The passing of Philip Pfaff brings to an end a part of Northampton's musical history when churches and chapels were the musical locus of every town and city. Church and chapel choirs were the training grounds of many amateur and future professional musicians; even large choral societies, though secular in appearance, churned out a regular programme of religious works. Philip Pfaff was the third in a long line of professional musicians appointed by St. Matthew's to maintain a choir of cathedral standards. Many of us who gained our early musical education from this period have reason to be grateful. Above all, it is inspiring teachers like Philip Pfaff who influenced so many young musicians over the years in his role as teacher and champion of their early careers that we should never forget. A long life, well done!

By the Editor

BANK HOLIDAY ORGAN CRAWL 2014

by Helen Murphy

The horizontal angel surging forward, Superman-style, over the porch should have given me a clue, but it was raining and we were very late in arriving at All Saints' church, Thorpe Malsor. So it took a few minutes to take in its significance. What a church! What an organ! But I'm getting ahead of myself. It's because I'm writing this as soon as I got home and it's all so fresh in my mind.

That morning, Monday 25th August, about 16 of us had assembled at St Peter's church, Raunds, to be greeted by Peter Whittle. But before being let loose on the three-manual Conacher (restored in 2006), we stood for a minute and listened to a tribute to the late Ken Tickell delivered by Peter Collier. Peter then gave us a brief résumé of the organ's history and its restoration project (in which he had played a significant role), and reminded us of the CDs available and the new one in preparation. And this wonderful instrument needs someone to play it! We have already posted details of the vacancy on the NDOA web site, so if anyone is interested (or knows of anyone), please contact the Churchwarden on 01933 622220 - the vicar (who was also there to welcome us) would be very pleased. Although Raunds is part of a four-church benefice, it is only at St Peter's that an organist and choir-leader is required.



The three manual Conacher organ at St. Peter's Church, Raunds. *Picture: Alan Cufaude.*

Apart from its interesting organ, Raunds is also well known for its surviving wall-paintings, some of the best in the county. However, the bad news is that the building is suffering from severe subsidence at the west end (particularly the north-west corner), with the stained glass having been removed and put into storage, the windows boarded up and wooden frames supporting the stonework. The 15th c clock and painted angels on the west wall are partially hidden by more support work across and over the archway through to the tower. Let's hope that the much-needed massive dose of Heritage Lottery funding is forthcoming in the not-too-distant future!

And so on to Park Road Baptist Church in Rushden. This for me was a giant step back in time. The father of one of my friends at Wellingborough High School was the Minister here, and so, from time to time, a group of us would go over on the bus from Wellingborough to sample the unusual (for us, at least) experience of being upstairs in church. Apart from a new glass door, new chairs instead of the old pews, and redecoration of course, not much had changed. We were welcomed by Michael Starck (who modestly claimed not to be an organist, though he plays there). Peter Collier (who has already written at length in the June Newsletter about this organ) delivered an introduction to this truly

unique instrument: there used to be three of them in the UK - now this is the sole survivor. It all looks fairly normal for a non-conformist set-up - organ high up at the back (three towers of handsome pipes painted charcoal and gold alternate with five flats of silver-coloured ones in between), with choir benches on a gallery in front overlooking the Minister's table and chairs below at ground level, with the organ console to one side. But what about the Universal Air Chest, special to this organ? As Peter has described this in detail in his article, including a photo, I will not attempt anything technical here. However, Michael led us, the first five volunteers, to the wind chest - or, more accurately, a room -



This conventional pipe-rack style case hides a remarkable secret: a walk-in windchest.

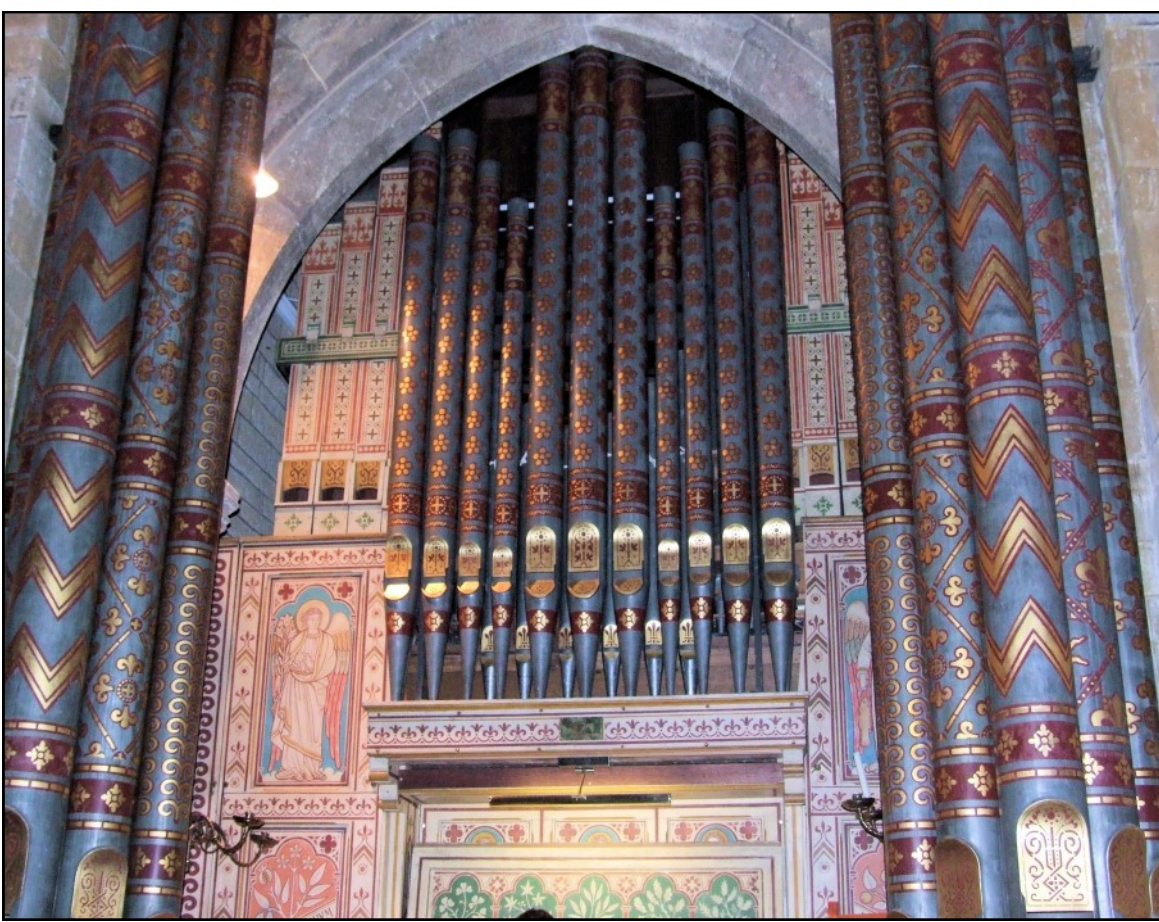
across the choir gallery, through a door at the far side, round three sides of the back of the organ, climbing over pipes, ducking under ladders, stepping over buckets of water (necessary for hydration purposes), round to the other side and through a small door into the chamber itself. The door was closed on us and our ears adjusted to the changing pressure and, as Lee played something not too loud, we could see the various bits of the mechanism above us moving accordingly and sounding like synchronised clapping - as though all four parts of a choir had been asked to clap their lines in rhythm rather than sing them. Michael had warned us that once we were inside with the door closed, it could not be opened again until the pressurised air was fully discharged (by switching off the blower and playing to let out any residual air). But we did get out, back over the obstacle course, to allow the next brave five to experience the phenomenon.

And so to lunch at the Olde Victoria at Burton Latimer - which was lovely when it finally arrived - but the delay (only one chef on a Bank Holiday) put us effectively an hour behind schedule for All Saints' at Thorpe Malsor. But it was worth the wait! The building itself (more of which later) is a typical Northamptonshire small parish church, built of warm ironstone, mainly late 13th c and early 14th c, with a 19th c restoration. However, tucked

into the west arch under the tower is the most amazing sight: a richly decorated organ - and I mean richly! Two towers of 16' open metal pedal pipes, painted with golden zig-zags enhanced with dark red on a charcoal-grey ground (each mounted on a stencilled, square box-like base), flank the console; a row of small shiny metal pipes sits above the music stand; the opened-up manual cover boasts a row of sage-green stencilled plants (shamrock, ivy, willow, oak and holly) each in its own frame; the small, square wooden pipes on either side are similarly stencilled with a neat, repeating rust-coloured pattern; rust-on-cream framed angels cover the panels below them, all interspersed with Latin texts. It seems that this magnificent beast was originally intended for the east end of the south aisle, but the pedal pipes were too big for the space (not surprisingly!) - so the west end it had to be. And what a visual success! It would seem that the whole church had a 'makeover' under the influence of the Oxford Movement around the same time that the organ was installed, as the same stylised Pre-Raphaelite-type decoration crops up on the pulpit and elsewhere. There is a harmony in much of the stained glass too, particularly in the clerestory windows - soft amber, gold and dove-grey saints, clearly conceived as a 'set', look down beneficently. The force behind this renewal/restoration was the Revd C H Maunsen, Rector and Lord of the Manor, who later gave the advowson (i.e. the right of presentation of the Living) to Keble College, Oxford (where it remains) - which explains why, among the newly embroidered colourful hassock covers, several depict Keble's coat of arms.

Back to the organ - the purpose of our visit. Built by Casson in the early 1880s, unusually it has two manuals but with three divisions - Casson's idea being to have the Choir and Great share the lower manual, with small pistons to control which one you want to use. There was even a Choir to Great coupler. It was restored by Wood of Huddersfield in 2010, but is clearly in need of more attention. The touch is very heavy, but if you are used to mechanical action, as I am, it's not so bad. Mind you, I wouldn't like to have to play all the verses of Hail thee, festival day...

Having fallen in love with Thorpe Malsor (both the church and the organ) I came away determined to go back at the earliest available opportunity, preferably on a sunny day! And the next time I am greeted by a large angel at the door, I shall be ready for whatever transpires. So - thanks, Lee, for coming up with such an interesting selection of organs for our 'crawl'. *[More pictures on the back cover—Ed]*



Top left: NDOA President Lee Dunleavy at the console of the Park Road Baptist Chapel organ.

Top right: Inside the wind room.

Middle left: Shanna Hart at the console of the Casson organ at Thorpe Malsor.

Middle right: The 16' pedal pipes close up.

Bottom left: The stunning, eye catching case and front pipes of Thorpe Malsor's organ.

*Pictures:
Barry Wadson*