

**N**ORTHAMPTON & DISTRICT  
ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION



NEWSLETTER—ISSUE 3/2020

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

During the continuing restrictions on musical activity, NDOA members have been receiving much helpful information via *Newsletter Extra* and our secretary Helen about virtual musical activities. There have been opportunities for layered choral singing, events organised by Making Music and the RSCM and live recitals from Wigmore Hall on Radio 3. But there don't seem to have been many live organ recitals in this country, and members might be feeling withdrawal symptoms.

I would like to be able to lighten the gloom by writing a regular humorous piece for the Newsletter, along the lines of those contributed to the Organists' Review for many years by 'Corno Dolce' (an amateur lady organist, we understood.) As it is, I can at least gladden the hearts of members by saying that the outing to Thorpe Underwood House, near Harrington, will go ahead on Saturday 18th July if the government and Church of England rules then in force permit it. Benedict and Katherine Cadbury hope to welcome us to their home from 2pm to 5pm, including a play on the Walker organ, a visit to Harrington church, and tea. As numbers are limited, pre-booking is essential, and places will be on a first-come first-served basis, so do let Helen or me know if you wish to come. If the event has to be cancelled, there will be a virtual event of some kind in its place, so do reserve that afternoon in your diaries.

The news about the Midlands Organ Day is less heartening, as it is being deferred as already announced - but we are aiming to hold it on Saturday 25th September 2021, when it will be a highlight of the NDOA centenary year. Again, though, do keep Saturday 26th September this year in your diaries, as there will be an NDOA event of some kind, again probably virtual.

The Garden Party at my house planned for Monday 31st August might be able to go ahead, assuming the rules then allow, so please keep that date in your diaries also. If we do gather, we will have a talk by Don Kennedy about his career with EMI, a book-sale and a tea. Again, a virtual event is being planned if the live event can't happen.

We hope that our planned October and November events will be able to continue as planned, and confirmation and details will be on the website and on Facebook nearer the time. Members can be sure that in any live event this year the health rules will be observed and the preferences of members will be taken account of. Meanwhile, keep Zooming (in spirit if not in cyberspace).

**John Wilson**

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The NDOA Newsletter is published four times a year. Contributions are always welcome and should be submitted to the Editor, please - by 1st September for the next issue.

### NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

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### ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

**President - John Wilson**

[johnfwilson@btopenworld.com](mailto:johnfwilson@btopenworld.com) 01536 518941

**Hon. Secretary - Helen Murphy**

[secretary@northamptonorganists.org.uk](mailto:secretary@northamptonorganists.org.uk) 01933 680955

**Hon. Treasurer - Glyn Hughes**

[treasurer@northamptonorganists.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@northamptonorganists.org.uk) 07505 798667

**Newsletter Editor - Richard Tapp**

[editor@northamptonorganists.org.uk](mailto:editor@northamptonorganists.org.uk) 01933 664896

Cover: Rachel Mahon, DoM-designate at Coventry Cathedral. The NDOA Interview with Rachel begins on p.3

## THE NDOA INTERVIEW

### RACHEL MAHON

DoM DESIGNATE, COVENTRY CATHEDRAL

*Rachel Mahon is Director of Music Designate at Coventry Cathedral, and will assume the role from Kerry Beaumont in September 2020. Before moving to Coventry as Assistant DoM, she was Assistant Organist at Chester Cathedral, and Organ Scholar at St Paul's Cathedral.*

*Rachel combines life as a cathedral musician with a busy international recital schedule, touring as soloist and as part of Organized Crime Duo. Rachel has won numerous awards and competitions in Canada, including a graduating scholarship from the Faculty of Music, University of Toronto and the Godfrey Hewitt Memorial Scholarship from the Royal Canadian College of Organists.*



*She holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Organ Performance from the University of Toronto, and since moving to the UK, she has studied with Henry Fairs at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire. Whilst pursuing her degree, Rachel was the Bevan Organ Scholar at Trinity College, Toronto, as well as the Principal Organist at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church. She has also held organ scholarships at St James Cathedral, Toronto and Truro Cathedral. In 2014, she was named one of the top 30 musicians under 30 in Canada by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. In 2012, Rachel and fellow organist Sarah Svendsen founded the duo Organized Crime and the two organists aim to entertain audiences with their music and crazy antics. Rachel was speaking to NDOA ahead of her scheduled recital at Castle Ashby, which has inevitably had to be postponed, but we look forward to welcoming Rachel to Northamptonshire just as soon as circumstances allow us to reschedule.*

*NDOA: What made you interested in the organ – and what motivated you to go on to achieve so many ‘firsts’ including your roles at St Paul’s and Coventry?*

I loved playing piano and listening to piano music but I'd also grown up in church choir and so I'd had exposure to the organ as well. I was a teenager and listening to a recording of the Widor Toccata when the idea occurred to me that I could learn the organ. I had attended a workshop for children arranged by the Royal Canadian College of Organists and this too led to my interest in organ. I started taking lessons and everything went from there!

I wouldn't say I was motivated to achieve ‘firsts’ exactly. I just had a goal to be an organ scholar at St Paul's and was lucky enough when this happened. I've been fortunate that interesting posts have been advertised when I was looking for positions! I'm very glad to be at Coventry as I moved to Warwick to be with my husband and this was the perfect place for me to work. When I arrived, I didn't even know about the Canadian connection to Coventry Cathedral, so that was a happy coincidence.

*NDOA: Congratulations on your appointment as the next Director of Music at Coventry – what are your aims and objectives for that role?*

I'm very excited to take over from Kerry Beaumont as Director of Music. I'm excited to programme new music with the choir and to try new things. Coventry is the City of Culture in 2021, so I expect we will have many more civic events to participate in. I hope this will raise the profile of the music at Coventry Cathedral within the city and beyond. There are dozens of devoted choristers at the Cathedral and it will be a privilege to lead them in the future. One of my key objectives is to raise the funds necessary for the refurbishment of the Harrison and Harrison organ, which is a masterpiece.

*NDOA: What have been the highlights - and challenges - of your career to date?*

It's been a highlight to work in the cathedrals I have thus far, particularly St Paul's Cathedral. I've also been lucky to have some of the best organs in the world to play and practise on and to have worked with many other fine musicians. Working in a cathedral has its challenges though, one of which is the gruelling schedule of six and even seven days per week. The payoff is that you get half-terms and holidays, but it is all-consuming otherwise.

*NDOA: How do you maintain your technical skills with all the pressures of your current role? How do you manage the discipline of learning new music?*

I try to be very strict with my practising. I'm not sure I always succeed at this, but it's important to have goals! I try to practise first thing in the morning before getting sucked into other things which end up using the whole day. As far as learning music - I love learning new music! This is one of the most satisfying parts of being an organist. It's not really something I have to force myself to do as I really enjoy it. I have become much more disciplined in how I learn music though. As a youngster, I was rather impatient to hear the final product, and would sight-read pieces many times until I 'knew' them. This is completely inefficient and actually takes longer to really master a piece. I've been learning 'properly' for such a long time now that I enjoy the nitty-gritty parts of learning music (fingering, slow metronome practice etc.).

*NDOA: Do you have a favourite organ?*

No. I can't choose! Some organs are so completely different, you almost can't compare them. I love a good tracker-action organ, but also a lush English instrument with fantastic tubas, for example.

*NDOA: Or perhaps a favourite piece in the repertoire?*

Again, it's hard to narrow it down to just one piece, but here are some of the front-runners: Healey Willan's Introduction, Passacaglia and Fugue; Bach's Passacaglia... or really, anything by Bach!; Widor's 5th Symphonie, 1st movement.

*NDOA: And finally, we have are lucky enough to have a number of student members. What would your advice be for them? And for us in seeking to interest people in the organ?*

My advice would be to learn music properly from the very beginning and to work on keyboard skills diligently as they will come in useful later on. There are so many opportunities for young organists to take advantage of. Furthermore, organ doesn't have to only be for church musicians. It would be great to bring organ music into the mainstream of classical music.

*NDOA: How has the Covid-19 situation affected you, and your work at the Cathedral?*

Unfortunately, the Cathedral has had to shut down completely during the Covid-19 government mandated lockdown. Most of the staff have been put on furlough, including all music staff. This is particularly sad as it is what would have been the current Director of Music's (Kerry Beaumont) last term and it looks like a big send-off won't happen. We aren't allowed to do any work for the Cathedral and so that means no chorister sessions and no administration or planning. At the moment it also means no organ practice as nobody is allowed in the building. Needless to say. I hope this will change very soon (As we go to press, the Cathedral is reopening for private prayer - Ed). I don't have an organ at home and it's the first time in my career I've gone more than 2 months without playing. I'm glad the furlough scheme exists so that I have a job to go back to - the hard part is not knowing when this will happen. On the positive side, it's nice to have time to dedicate to other things like reading and piano practice!

Rachel's websites are [RachelMahon.co.uk](http://RachelMahon.co.uk) and [organizedcrimeduo.com](http://organizedcrimeduo.com). Her new CD, **Canadian Organ Music** Delphian DCD 34234 is available from [delphianrecords.com](http://delphianrecords.com) at £14.99 and **Choral Classics from Chester** with Rachel accompanying, Priory PRCD 1205, from [prioryrecords.co.uk](http://prioryrecords.co.uk) at £11.99.

## THE ORGAN THAT I PLAY

### ST ANDREW'S KIMBOLTON

ROBERT TUCKER

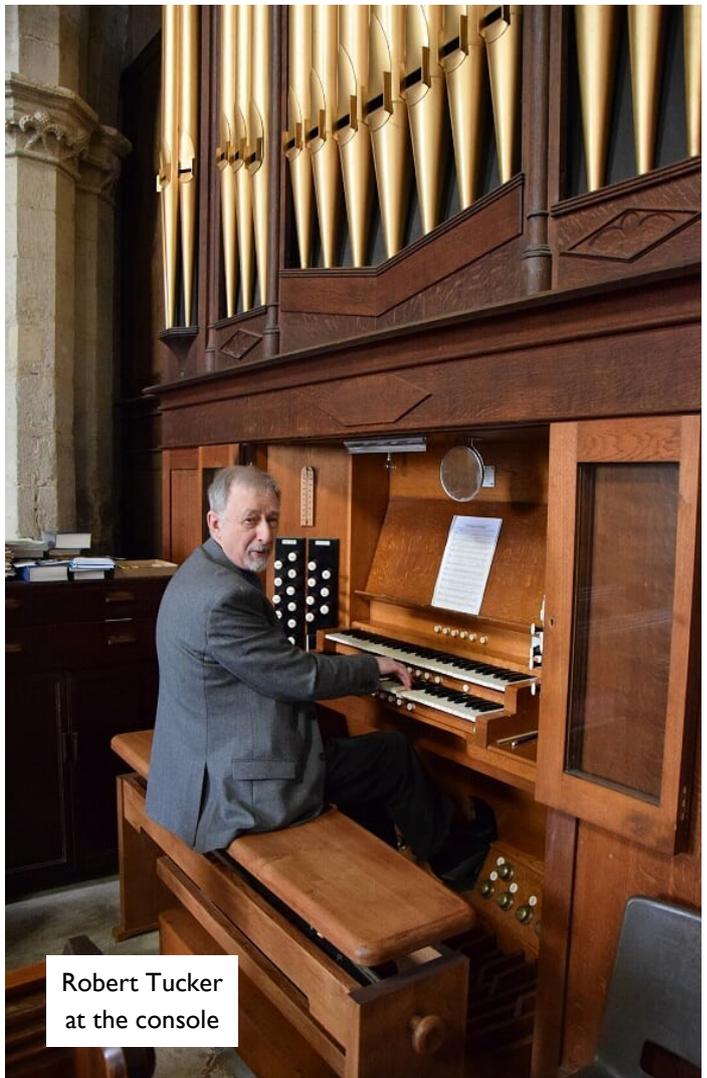
St Andrew's, Kimbolton, stands proudly in the village at the opposite end of the High Street to Kimbolton Castle, now Kimbolton School, for centuries the seat of the Dukes of Manchester and their descendants, the Montagu family. It dates from the 13th century and was heavily remodelled in the perpendicular style in the late 15th century.

The current building was completed in about 1500. It includes a Tiffany window in the south chapel by Louis Comfort Tiffany, son of the founder of Tiffany's jewellers in New York. Made in 1901, it depicts the twin daughters of Consuelo Yznaga, an American of Cuban descent and widow of the 8th Duke of Manchester.

According to a plaque on the north wall outside the organ case, the organ dates from 1825. The inscription states that the organ was opened on 6th April 1825. The organ builder is not mentioned but the plaque next to it informs us that the first organist of the church was Lewis James Ibbs, in 1825. According to the National Pipe Organ Register, the organ builder was Timothy Russell.

The organ has always been at the west end of the church, in all probability because the Montagu family stall is at the east end. In the nineteenth century, according to a local newspaper article, the Revd R. Kater Vinter, who was Headmaster of Kimbolton Grammar School from 1877-1884 and Governor from 1884-1899, reported that 'there was a ponderous organ gallery at the west end of the church on which was placed the instrument. The gallery extended to the cross aisle from pillar to pillar. The choir faced east and looked down on the congregation below.'

When the gallery was removed, the organ was relocated to the south-west corner of the nave. The next plaque records that in 1881 J.D. Dixon, organ builders of Cambridge, rebuilt and enlarged the instrument. It moved twice in this area, with the console first on the east and then on the north side.



Robert Tucker  
at the console





The organ was next rebuilt and revoiced in 1925 by the firm of Rest Cartwright & Son of London N15 at a cost of £420. It was reopened by the Bishop of Ely, the Rt Revd Leonard White-Thomson. The local newspaper reported that Schumann's *Traumerai* was played by the organist, who was, in fact, the organ builder Rest Cartwright. The Bishop in his sermon commented on the fact that, by the merest coincidence, the date of the re-opening of the organ was exactly to the day 100 years since the original opening of the organ.

After the Bishop had pronounced the blessing, Rest Cartwright gave an organ recital, during which the newspaper reporter stated 'he had the good sense to choose a number of bright and interesting pieces and we were spared the pain of enduring the dull stodgy stuff generally selected for organ recitals.' The report then tells us that the organ had been rebuilt with new action and the old pipes had been rescaled and revoiced on a heavier wind pressure. Many new pipes had been introduced.

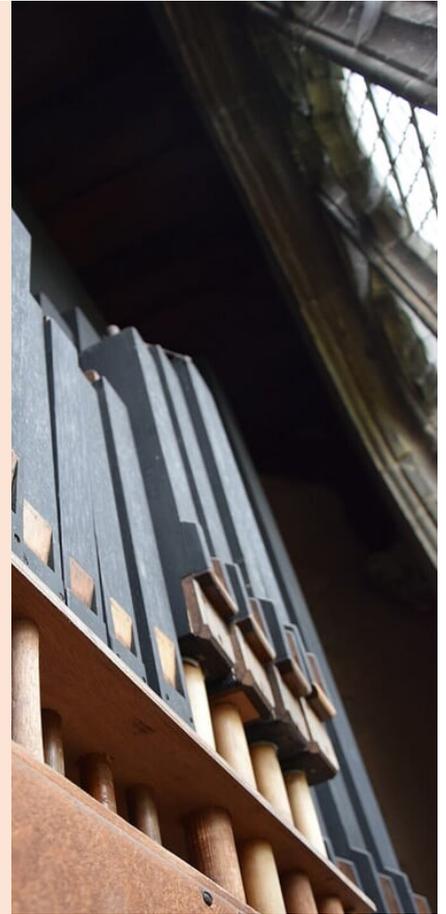
By the late 1950s the condition of the organ had apparently become quite dreadful. Therefore, in 1959 a major, far-sighted, reconstruction and enlargement was undertaken by George Osmond, organ builders of Taunton, Somerset. The scheme was drawn up by the organist of the day, A.W.H. Thomson and financed by the Parochial Church Council and congregation. The organ was moved to its present site in the north-west corner of the church. A new modern draw-stop console was provided, with electro-pneumatic action. A number of new stops were added and the compass of the manuals was extended from G to top C.



In 1987 the Swell Oboe 8' was given a new octave of pipes in the bass to form a Contra Oboe 16'. This was also made available on the Pedal Organ. In 1996 the organ was restored and improved by Michael Latham of Northampton at a cost of £20,000. The Great Clarabella 8' was replaced with a new Stopped Diapason 8' rank, the Swell Mixture was recast, the Great Trumpet was remade from middle C up and the whole rank re-voiced, and a new Pedal Trombone 16' rank was added on the east-facing side of the organ. To accommodate this, the organ case was extended 18 inches eastwards. This work was undertaken by a local craftsman, John Gordon. The top-note chests on the manuals added in 1959 were removed.

Between 2017 and 2019 the organ was cleaned and a new solid-state system was installed by Alan Goulding of Pipe Organ Services, Melton Mowbray, at a cost of £34,200. New top-note chests have been provided, thus bringing the manual compass back to top C; the Dulciana 8' on the Great has been replaced by a Twelfth 2 2/3'; a more characterful Flute 4' has replaced the former 4' Flute and the Great Mixture 2 ranks has been recast. Extra manual and pedal pistons and reversibles have been provided together with General pistons. There is also a new adjustable organ bench. Work on the organ was jointly funded by the Annie Spiller legacy and Kimbolton Church Heritage Fund.

<b>Pedal</b>	Compass-low C	Compass-high g1	32 keys
	Open Diapason	16	
	Bourdon	16	
	Violoncello	8 (from Great Open Diapason no.2)	
	Bass	8 (extension of Bourdon)	
	Hautboy	16 (from Swell Contra Oboe)	
	Trombone	16	
<b>Great</b>	Compass-low C	Compass-high c4	61 keys
	Open Diapason no.1	8	
	Open Diapason no.2	8	
	Stopped Diapason	8	
	Principal	4	
	Flute	4 (2019)	
	Twelfth	2 2/3 (replaced Dulciana 8 2019)	
	Fifteenth	2	
	Mixture	2 ranks (recast 2019)	
	Trumpet	8	
<b>Swell Enclosed</b>	Compass-low C	Compass-high c4	61 keys
	Open Diapason	8	
	Lieblich Gedacht	8	
	Salicional	8 tc grooved	
	Voix Celestes	8 tc	
	Principal	4	
	Fifteenth	2	
	Mixture	3 ranks	
	Contra Oboe	16	
	Cornopean	8	
	Tremulant		



**Console** Console type Integral; Stop type Drawstop; Pedalboard Radiating concave

**Couplers** Swell to Pedal; Swell to Great; Swell Oct; Swell Sub-octave; Swell Unison off; Great to Pedal; Great and Pedal pistons coupled; Generals on Swell toe pistons

**Accessories** 6 thumb pistons to Great and Pedal  
 6 thumb pistons to Swell  
 6 general thumb pistons with 12 positions on piston memory  
 6 toe pistons to Great and Pedal  
 6 toe pistons to Swell  
 Reversible thumb pistons for Gt-Ped; Sw-Ped; Sw-Gt; Oboe 8' (Contra Oboe, octave & unison off)  
 Reversible toe pistons for Sw-Gt; Gt-Ped; Trombone  
 General Cancel and setter pistons  
 Balanced Swell pedal



I have been the organist at Kimbolton since September 2016. My two predecessors each served over 40 years apiece. Unfortunately, I will not be able to compete with this. The organ was good when I came to the church. However, with the recent work undertaken on the instrument, it is even better and more versatile without being made any larger.

It is a pleasure to play, with a wonderful Swell box that has a very impressive dynamic range. It is rare to find such a good instrument in a small village. In five years' time - in 2025 - it will be 200 years old. I intend to see that this fact is well celebrated.

*With sincere thanks to Alan Cufaupe for his photography.*

## A POSITIVE ORGAN IN CORBY

JONATHAN MACK

When we lived in Derbyshire my father decided to demolish the lean-to vinery. I was immediately on hand to convert the lead flashing into organ pipes. Lead solders easily with an iron or small alcohol blow lamp. The first appearance of the organ was of a table-top instrument (see the Van Eyck altar piece at Ghent for inspiration) with open lead pipes from middle G upwards for 3½ octaves. The lowest 3 pipes were polyphonic, speaking 2 notes each using a system of pads and mechanism. Following foot blowing, I made a centrifugal fan blower, using a bought induction motor. The blower was a bit noisy, so it was kept in the next room with a hole through the partition wall.

Following my retirement, the organ took on its present appearance – lead pipes were ‘out’ for health reasons, the compass needed to be at least C to D (4 8ve.) and wood was the obvious choice for stopped bass pipes. I have tried open and stopped wood pipes for middle C upwards, but eventually used copper pipe, in different diameters. Copper is very difficult to solder due to its high thermal conductivity, so the pipe feet and languids are of wood. Tuning slides are of cardboard.

Home-made roller boards tend to have much loose play, so pallets in the wind chest are directly above the key, apart from the bottom 6 notes which needed larger pallets. Pipe wind is conveyed using plastic tube; the bass pipes have 21mm plastic tube, otherwise smaller tube is used, which unfortunately gives a pressure loss. 13 of the bass pipes are upside down; some are 90 degree mitred. There is no bottom C#. Wind pressure is 57mm of water; the blower is by Laukhuff.

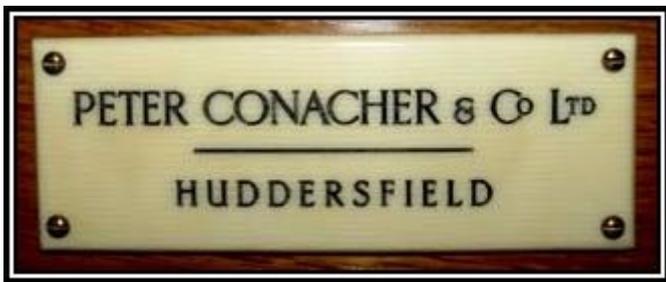
There are pull-down pedals for the bottom octave; the 4’ rank (from middle C) is positioned at the front of the organ for tuning and the slider is actuated by a hitch-down pedal at the treble end. The 8’ is always ON. The organ is good for much organ music of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, including ‘echo’ music, and (with a ‘cello’) for continuo playing in string chamber music. This is NOT an organ built to last; it is made of inferior materials (e.g. home-made keyboard). However, I am quite proud of the oak frame and oak-fronted façade pipes. The organ has been enjoyable to design, make and play, but it is only a ‘fun’ organ!

*(Members greatly enjoyed playing the organ on the recent Corby Crawl reported in the last issue. Ed).*



*Main picture: Jonathan Mack's Corby Positive Organ.  
Below: Positif Organ in Van Eyck altarpiece, St Bavo, Ghent*





## CONACHER CINEMA ORGANS: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE CONNECTIONS

PART 2: FROM PICTURE HOUSE TO  
SCHOOL HOUSE  
PAUL BLAND\*

In 1962, plans for the new Hall for Northampton Grammar School for Boys on Billing Road allowed for the installation of an organ, the building containing two chambers in elevated positions either side of the proscenium with a blower room beneath the right-hand one. The console would be placed on the stage, in front of the curtains.

Teaching physics at the time was Chris King, also an organist having played the Christie in the Granada, Rugby for Saturday matinees. It was agreed that the school would look for a redundant cinema organ. Chris was the driving force, given his technical and musical background. Enquiries regarding the Palace Ballroom, Blackpool, Wurlitzer came to nothing so attention moved to Coventry where the Gaumont's Compton was for sale. The Northamptonians arrived to discover it had just been sold. However, they were told that the nearby Forum had a Conacher for disposal. The cinema was to close in two weeks for immediate demolition and the contractor had been offered £50 for the organ by a local scrap dealer. The school's bid of £100 was accepted on the proviso that it be removed in the two weeks remaining. The Parents' Association funded the purchase with a further £100 made available for installation. Removal would have to be undertaken in evenings and weekends with films showing. Task completed, Conacher No 1740, 3c/8 plus Grand Piano, but minus console ends, made the journey to Northampton.

The Forum had opened on 1st November 1934 with Reginald Foort at the organ. The console boasted an art-deco wooden surround on a lift in the centre of the pit. It was of typical theatre organ design with 3 manuals: Accompaniment, Great and Solo; 8 combination pistons to the first two, but none to the Solo which was, effectively, a Coupler manual. Four pedals offered Swell control for Accompaniment and Solo Chambers, a General Crescendo Pedal and a Sustain Pedal for the Piano. Second Touch was available on the Accompaniment Manual and the Pedalboard. Foot pistons served the Pedal Organ whilst Ventilators enabled ciphers to be silenced. The 8 ranks of pipes - Diapason, Violin, Concert Flute, Celeste, Tuba, Trumpet, Tibia Clausa and Vox Humana - were installed in two understage chambers. The Marshall & Rose Grand Piano was placed onstage.



Occasionally heard on the BBC's Midland Console Series, the organ led an uneventful life. It suffered water damage in the 1950s but this was rectified by the tuner and Manager, Clifford Bayliss, who happened to be an organist, which might explain why it survived for the life of the theatre. Closing on 26th May 1962, the Forum was quickly stripped. By this time the Conacher was stored in various locations around the Billing Road site, including the School House attic, awaiting completion of building works when it could occupy its new chambers.



The Hall opened during 1965. I first saw the console in a corridor, still finished in green and cream but without its decorative ends. Subsequently it was re-clad with mahogany-veneered chipboard, matching the decoration of the Hall, with a new conventional bench donated by a parent. Viewed from the body of the Hall, the console sat stage right, with the Accompaniment Chamber that side containing Diapason, Violin, Flute and Celeste plus Chrysoglott/Vibraphone and one tremulant. The rear part was sectioned-off to house the Relay. Wind travelled from the 5-stage 'Discus' Blower up into the front, immediately behind the Swell shutters, with a branch to a new steel trunk crossing above the proscenium to the Solo Chamber containing Trumpet, Tuba Horn, Tibia Clausa, Vox Humana TC, Tuned Percussions, assorted Traps and Effects and two tremulants. The original main cable entered the blower room, up through the Accompaniment Chamber to the Relay. New cable linked the Relay to the Solo Chamber. Action current was provided from a generator, belt-driven from the blower. Nominally 12-volts, it dropped to around 10 en-route to the Solo Chamber, thus an occasional time-lag was apparent.

The Conacher came into use bit-by-bit, initially with the Accompaniment Chamber. It was to be a further year before the Solo was functional. Eventually re-wiring was complete and the full 8 ranks were available. One exception was the 32' Harmonic Bombarde, a synthetic stop which the architect felt might damage his building!

Architecturally the Hall owed much to a Bus Station! With flat metal and built-up felt roof covering a suspended ceiling it was an acoustic desert with sound disappearing into the void. Each side of the square roof structure consisted of glass panels with roller-blinds below. The glass extended over the organ chambers. Owing to the layout, the Accompaniment Chamber enjoyed mostly shade whilst the Solo baked whenever the sun shone. On occasions there was a 20-degree temperature difference between them which sent the reeds screaming out of tune. One further curved ball was the siting of large hot-water-fed fan heaters beneath the fronts of each chamber as the main heating for the Hall - and hot air rises! Sadly, the Conacher never realised its potential there. Installed by a group of competent amateurs in a less-than-satisfactory building on a shoe-string budget it was prone to malfunctions from the start. Sticky notes, leaking motors and electrical problems associated with that elderly Main Cable were legion. Other than occasional tuning by Michael Harrison of Walkers it received no maintenance.

It was fine for Morning Assembly where it was played by a team including Michael Nicholas, Graham Mayo, Roger Allen, Duncan Faulkner and Keith Mander, but other than that, infrequent use led to the problems associated with an underused organ. I don't think Graham Mayo liked it. Whenever he played, the Stop Keys remained UP; he simply utilised the Crescendo Pedal like a throttle. The sound was, well, interesting! Michael Nicholas, on the other hand, always coaxed some beautiful sounds from it, albeit sans Tibia or Vox!

In 1969, Chris King left. Having been interested for a while, I was told, 'You can look after it as you seem to know more than anyone else; but you can't spend any money!' By 1970, now a Sixth-Former, I was doing part-time work with a local organ builder - John Hardcastle, ex-Walkers, ex-Davies. I called him in and he persuaded the school that serious work was needed in the Solo Chamber. There were too many wind leaks and the chests needed opening. We took that side out, cleaned everything, re-leathered where necessary and tidied up the pipework.

On re-assembly, the trunking was revised with original leaking zinc tubing replaced with flexible. New springs were fitted to the reservoirs. When it was back together we regulated and tuned the whole lot and it was

working well – although that roof continued to challenge, despite my father and I lining it, so it was still difficult to keep in tune. A box of magnets from the Wimbledon Conacher arrived, courtesy of A.E. Davies, supplementing the dwindling stock. I left in July 1971, keeping a connection through John Hardcastle, who continued tuning and maintenance until 1974. After that the organ became increasingly unreliable and, basically, fell silent. When Michael Nicholas was there, a number of pupils played so it enjoyed considerable use, but when he moved to Norwich interest and enthusiasm waned.

In 1991 I was contacted by the school for advice about what might need doing to bring it back into playing order. An organ-minded teacher had undertaken some maintenance with a local enthusiast, Kevin Bygrave. I found it better than I had thought, albeit now without its Piano, removed to the Music School by Malcolm Tyler, then scrapped. Some pipes were missing. Talking to Kevin recently I realise the Conacher's survival owes much to his intercessions with the then Head whose inclination was to put the lot in a skip, the Head of Music having no interest in it, other than to plunder the Chimes and Tom-Tom for the orchestra, whilst the Drama Department objected to the console on the stage. Management changed. By the early 2000s the decision had been made to demolish the Hall and there was no place for the organ. In 2006 it was sold to F.H. Browne & Sons and transported to their works in Kent. An email ascertained they intended to restore it for a public venue in that county.

All well and good? Not really. After unanswered emails, I concluded the Conacher had probably gone - until in 2018, a young organist and professional organ builder, Carl Heslop, apprenticed to Harrisons, now working in Melton Mowbray, got in touch. He'd bought what remained of it and wondered if I might like to be involved in its restoration. Obviously my answer was in the affirmative and I found myself heading into Leicestershire to meet up with it again.



It was something of a shock; the years since 2006 not having been kind. Changes within Browne's saw the Conacher moving from their workshop to a domestic garage with a leaking roof. Avoiding a tedious narrative, I think it better to list what needs doing to restore 1740 to her original state. Most pipework is here, perhaps 20 need to be replaced whilst the majority require repair or maintenance. Everything needs cleaning; rusted tuning slides have to be replaced and many wooden pipes need repairing and surfaces restoring. We are not talking huge expense, simply many hours of work. Nearly all the chests survive but it will take time to ascertain how much re-leathering is necessary and which actions need repairing and magnets replacing. We are looking into re-manufacturing a stock to original specifications. The Relay was, inexplicably, scrapped in Kent. The blower appears in reasonable order but the motor has been declared unsafe and the hydraulic starter has disappeared. The console suffered the worst of the water damage and each manual needs re-covering. It is our intention to replicate the original 1934 surround with the manual cheeks and stop sweeps finished off-white.



Although we have the full set of stop-tabs, time has caused the 1930s celluloid-based plastic to deteriorate. Thanks to digital printing and resin casting, Carl intends to replace the lot. The School for Boys, initially declaring support for us, refused to return the Chimes and Tom-Tom unless we were prepared to stump up around £3000!

Carl has ambitious plans. The Relay has been replaced by an 'Artisan' computerised unit, which opens the door to the second stage. 1740 will be restored as a 3c/8. However, thanks to the electronics we intend to re-create a Model D, sourcing surviving Conacher pipework to make 22 ranks available, and digital samples. Despite the ravages of the 1960s, a significant

amount of pipework has survived. Out on safari, we have located much of it! We have the Flute and Gamba from The Regal, Southampton, rescued from a grain silo in Cambridgeshire. Nottingham's Model D has contributed its Tuba Mirabilis (Carl collecting that from Scotland), Krumet, Musette and Clarinet and we have our eyes on an Oboe. No Conacher Saxophone is presently available so we have that rank from the Christie once installed in Garon's Cinema, Southend. We have the bench and a tremulant from that organ, as the original went on the bonfire at the School For Boys. To replace the missing Chimes we have been gifted the set from Nottingham, and are grateful to Cannock Chase Organ Club for its generosity.

The scheme includes digital samples for the Tuned Percussions and Traps. However, the originals will be restored, mounted in view with the organist able to select which set to use. The Steinway Grand Piano originally attached to the Wimbledon Conacher is available to us when funds permit. Despite attempts to find suitable venues, we have been obliged to create our own with a long-term lease on a secure storage unit just outside Melton Mowbray. Not only will this house the Conacher, but there is sufficient room to create an auditorium with seating for around 75. Our intention is to promote public events, along with offering tuition and practice facilities. At the moment it is one huge workshop with the bulk of the work taking place there. Some of the Tuned Percussions and Traps are back in the county, however, undergoing restoration in my garage. Particularly challenging are the bars of the Glockenspiel, which, like the console, was exposed to the elements in Kent.

For the moment that concludes the story of a rare organ which entertained film-goers throughout its early life, went to school in middle-age and now, as an octogenarian, finds itself being re-generated for the next stage of its somewhat eventful career. We have formed the East Midlands Cinema Organ Association to restore, maintain and promote our Conacher, as well as to establish an archive for artefacts related to the marque, perhaps the most well-known being the Ritz, Nottingham's 4/22 with its long-time resident organist Jack Helyer. We are delighted to have made contact with his daughter who is looking forward to hearing, once again, a large Conacher in full voice.

I should mention the other two surviving Conacher unit organs. One was installed in the Ritz cinema, Southend before being transferred to the Odeon, Blackpool in 1946. Having travelled around, it is now in the hands of Jonathan Ling, awaiting restoration, in his collection in Norfolk. The second instrument was installed in the Regal/Odeon, Rotherham remaining there until 1993. It is currently in Audley Minor, barely playable and in need of significant restoration. We have our eyes on it!

Since I wrote the first draft of this article, events nationwide have compromised many plans. However, Carl and others have been busy with the bulk of the organ in Melton, whilst I have been occupied removing rust from Glock bars, Tambourine 'jingles' and getting to grips with a Snare Drum. Delay is inevitable but restoration of this one-time Northampton resident, designed by a famous resident of Daventry, is slowly progressing towards completion. Finally, I must record my thanks to Richard for allowing me the opportunity to tell the story of 1740 so far....



AT THE first public demonstration of the Northampton Grammar School organ to members of the Northampton and District Organists Association at the school last night, Mr. C. S. King, physics master, at the organ talking with (left to right), Mr. W. R. Gaics, president of the association; Mr. M. Nicholas, the school's music master; and Mr. D. Barford, secretary of the Organists' Association.

**Paul Bland** is a native Northamptonian, born in Far Cotton. Admitted to St. Mary's Church choir on Advent Sunday, 1960, he reckons his enjoyment of organ music harks back to the sound of the 2-manual Walker installed there for many years. He bumped into the Conacher, literally, in a corridor at the then Northampton Grammar School for Boys. That led to his becoming its 'guardian' during his time in the Sixth-Form, thence to part-time employment with a local organ builder. Part 1 of this article appeared in Issue 2/2020 of the NDOA Newsletter.

## MY FIRST CONSOLE

LEE DUNLEAVY

My route to the organ console was the marginally less common one... I was neither a chorister nor an organ fan until Sixth-Form. The piano was my number one love, though I played an assortment of other instruments - flute and piccolo, double bass, percussion. I practised like mad on the piano - hours before and after school, at every break, and on plenty of occasions, when I should have been in a normal school lesson! I was particularly obsessed with Beethoven, and learned all the Sonatas; indeed, I presented my GCSE music practical examiner with the three-volume ABRSM set (the Craxton/Tovey ones) and let her choose which one I would offer for the exam. Yes, readers, I was that kind of teenager!!!



Anyhow, I had noticed for some time that my right wrist was often painful when playing, and it turned out to be pretty severe tendonopathy. This doesn't improve with rest, so the advice was not to advance to Chetham's in Manchester as planned, but to stay where I was, and to compose instead of play. So I began to write... I came second in a composition competition, and in exchange for lessons with the adjudicator, Philip Wilby, I would join his church choir, and perhaps take up the organ.

So I joined the choir at St Peter's Church in Harrogate, and began lessons on the organ, though I didn't ever make it to the composition lessons. The choir was around 25-30 in number, almost all teenagers and adults, and we sang Choral Matins and Choral Evensong every week (as the choir still do, to this day) - Choral Matins was replaced on the first Sunday of the month by BCP Choral Eucharist. I played bass guitar in the church's Music Group at the 9.30 am Family Communion most weeks, though later played at another church at 9 am before cycling furiously to reach St Peter's in time for Choral Matins. There was also an 8.30 am BCP Holy Communion every week, and an informal 4.15 pm Café Church. This pattern of five Sunday services continues to this day, with modern and traditional happily existing alongside each other (but not at the same time!). According to the most recent annual report they have, on average, 497 people attending services each week.

The choir continues to go from strength to strength; had it not been for the lockdown, the choir would have been performing Bach's *Mass in B minor* with soloists including Dame Emma Kirkby as part of their Holy Week offerings. How many church choirs could imagine such a thing?

The church's first organ was installed in 1877, and was a relocated organ by J. F. Schulze from a mansion in Leeds. By 1879 a dispute had arisen between the benefactors of the organ and the then Vicar, and they had the organ removed and it was sold to St Bartholomew's Church, Armley, where it now gloriously resides. Edmund Schulze was then commissioned to build a two-manual organ for the church, which was duly installed. Much of the pipework remains, though the instrument has had rebuilds in 1891 (Abbott & Smith), 1903 (Binns), 1952 (Walker), 1986 (Prested), and 2002 (Peter Wood & Son).

The instrument I knew was before the most recent rebuild with 62 stops over four manuals and pedal. There was a generous supply of mutations on the Choir, two electronic 32s on the pedal, and a splendid solo Tuba. What more could a teenager desire?

A poster for a church service. The top half features a photograph of a choir performing in a church. The text on the poster reads: "St Peter's Church Harrogate", "Wednesday 8th April 2020", "7.15pm", "J S Bach", "Mass in B Minor". Below the photograph, the names of the soloists and the choir are listed: "Aoife O'Connell, soprano I", "Emma Kirkby DBE, soprano II", "Emma Stannard, mezzo-soprano", "James Micklethwaite, tenor", "Andrew Greenan, bass", "Choir of St Peter's Church", "Vocalist (director Alexander Kyle)", "Harrogate Bach Players (leader Fiona Love)", "Simon Lindley, organ", "John Longstaff, director". At the bottom, there is a circular logo for St Peter's Harrogate and ticket information: "Tickets £15 from the Parish Office (01423 568218)", "St Peter's Church, Cambridge Road, Harrogate HG1 1PB or", "Eventbrite [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk) (booking fee applies)".

FROM AN ORGANIST'S BOOKSHELF

## CHOIRS, BANDS AND ORGANS

### BETWEEN THE NENE AND THE WELLAND

CANON HILARY DAVIDSON

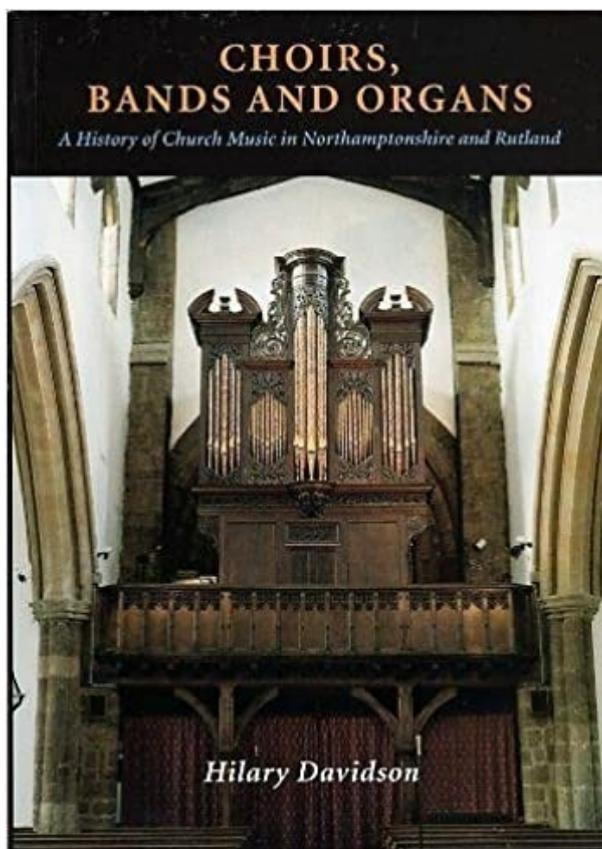
Many NDOA members may already be familiar with Canon Hilary Davidson's two scholarly works: *Choirs, Bands and Organs - A History of Church Music in Northamptonshire and Rutland* (ISBN 090 6894 32 8) from 2003 and *Between the Nene and the Welland - Some East Midlands hymn-tunes from the west-gallery period* (ISBN 978 0 906894 50 7) from 2009; however, I think it's time for a re-appraisal.

The first is a mammoth work, a tribute to Hilary's assiduous research, consisting mainly of a gazetteer of everything church-musical in Northamptonshire and Rutland (roughly corresponding with the diocese of Peterborough, ignoring the county boundary changes in the 1970s and some other minor diocesan boundary changes). We know organs existed in mediaeval times (see my review entitled *Whatever Happened to the Organ?* of *The A B C of a Medieval Church* by Martin Renshaw in Newsletter Issue 2/2019) but the wholesale destruction of Latin manuscripts, church furnishings and records at the Reformation under Edward VI (which Hilary refers to) probably included organs as well - not to mention the more well-known vandalistic ravages of the Commonwealth period - and means that we shall never know just what might have been where.

Although there is some evidence of choirs during the following century, it is not until the Restoration of the Monarchy in 1660 that things got going again musically speaking, with the appearance of bands - though in Northamptonshire and Rutland not until the late 18th century - and it is here that Hilary's story really starts. The book is full of illustrations and diagrams and one thing I find particularly interesting is the number of our churches that had galleries added that are now no longer there. Circumstances alter cases, together with changing demographics and social mores; for a long time, everyone (and their servants) went to church: special family pews for the gentry (sometimes with built-in stoves or fireplaces) and benches up on the gallery for the lower orders. In 'leaner' and some might say more aesthetic times, many of these have now been removed.

And it wasn't just bands of course that helped to bring back music into church. Later, barrel-organs enjoyed a certain popularity during the 19th century if you had no organist (NB not the so-called barrel-organs seen on the streets with a monkey carrying a collecting tin - these had proper pipes, soundboards and bellows, but no keyboard, merely a handle to turn a barrel with set tunes installed which are played by means of a specific mechanism involving 'pins' on the barrel). A whole chapter is devoted to Peterborough Cathedral and its screen organs, and another one to All Saints' in Northampton (with grateful thanks to the 'research work of Michael Woodward on local newspapers' apparently originally written for the NDOA).

The major part of the book is a gazetteer (Northamptonshire and Rutland listed separately), followed by a chapter on house-organs and other chamber-organs. It will come as no surprise that the great houses in this area had organs, but there were many others too, though it seems that, while some remain, quite a few have since been moved elsewhere and others seem to have disappeared without trace. Then follows a chapter devoted to individuals, whether organ builders, composers or others. Finally, a chapter on the music itself - vocal and organ - where Hilary has found four different tunes called 'Northampton' (each with its own associated words). I would think that the only one known to us now is the one usually sung to *Songs of Praise*



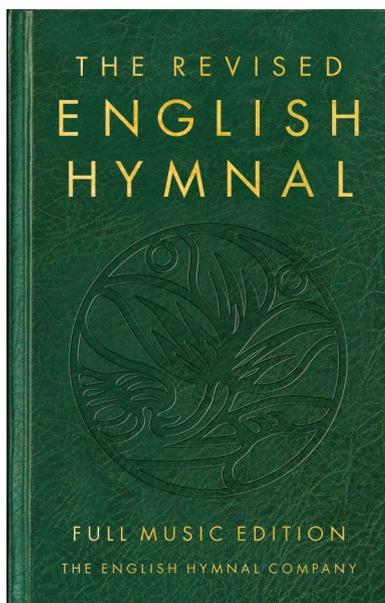
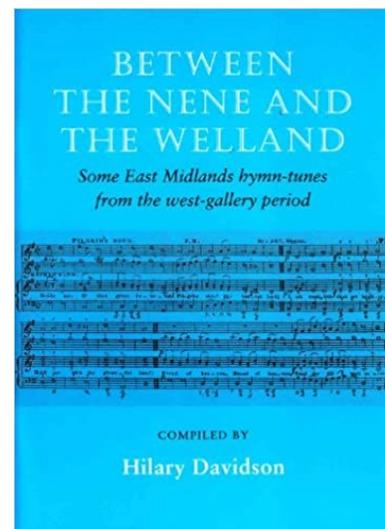
*the Angels sang* by Charles King, the first organist of St Matthew's, Northampton, and the founder of the NDOA.

It was the discovery of these four tunes that spurred Hilary to investigate more tunes with local names ('Abington', 'Broughton', 'Creaton' etc.) by looking into the so-called 'West Gallery' period (approx. 1720-1850) - which grew into his second book, *Between the Nene and the Welland*. After a brief introduction, this small book consists almost entirely of musical examples - mainly in short score, as he found it, and therefore easily playable - but whether sing-able by any modern congregation is another matter, as everything is set very high (probably following the West-Gallery practice of the tenors taking the tune).

In the interests of authenticity, Hilary has left it all as originally written so, as he says, 'broken rules of harmony and the odd discord are copies of what is written or printed in the source books' - and there certainly are some infelicitous harmonies! I was pleased to find two tunes called 'Wellingborough' (where I was brought up), the first by Anon and the second by W Randall who, with his son Samuel (also featured), was active as a teacher in the first half of the 19th century, probably at the Congregational Church (now URC) in High Street.

We must thank Hilary for opening up to us our local history and heritage and note that these books are still available from Positif Press at 130 Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1PA, tel: 01865 243220, fax: 01865 243272, website: <https://bios.org.uk/publications/index.php>.

**Helen Murphy**



## THE REVISED ENGLISH HYMNAL

A completely new and updated edition of the English Hymnal - The Revised English Hymnal - will be published later in the year. Its publishers say that, like its predecessors, it aims to be 'a humble companion' to the Common Prayer of the Church, not only in England, but everywhere the English Hymnal tradition is loved and valued around the world.

Some 185 of the book's 680 items will be new to users of the last edition, the 1986 New English Hymnal. There is an enhanced Liturgical Section with eight settings of the Eucharist. Office hymns are given both for seasonal and ordinary use, and a selection of contemplative and responsive chants. There are suggested hymns for the two most commonly-used lectionaries, as well as ideas and suggestions to assist in choosing hymns for divine service.

The Revised English Hymnal is currently available for pre-order from Church House Bookshop online, at £5 off retail price.

## SEATED ONE DAY ON THE ORGAN...

Many of us will have been honing our skills during lockdown. Few, though, will have been able to match the achievement of former Winchester assistant organist Richard McVeigh in playing a virtual recital to the highest of standards on his excellent *Beauty in Sound* YouTube channel (do check it out, by the way - it's great) with the family cat sitting contentedly atop the console. She was clearly very much enjoying the music, too - see photo, *right!*



# THE ORGAN IN GRASMERE PARISH CHURCH

MARK GIBSON

Some of you are aware that when we first met, my wife's family were living in South Lakeland where my father-in-law was Headmaster of a large secondary school. It is not surprising therefore that we have a love for that part of what is now Cumbria, and in recent years we have stayed several times in Grasmere village, which is an ideal centre for exploring the central area of the Lake District, with numerous walks within easy reach and wonderful scenery to enjoy when it is unsuitable to get onto the high fells.

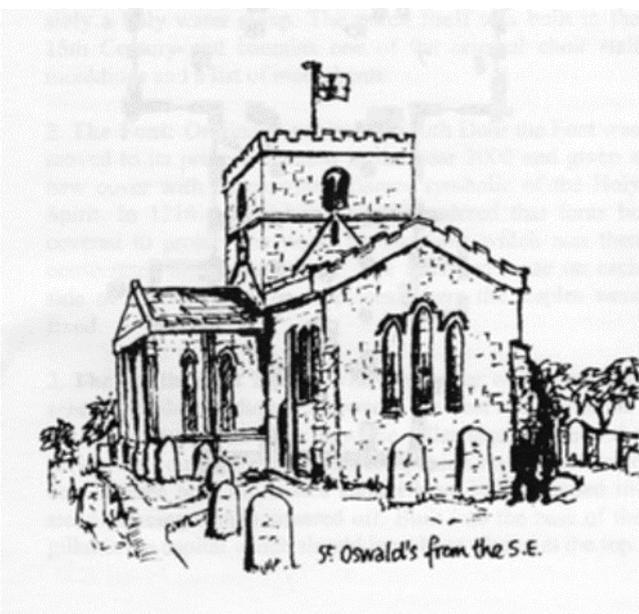


In the middle of Grasmere village is the Parish Church of St Oswald, nestling in the trees and on the banks of the River Rothay. It is perhaps best known as the burial place of probably the best known of the residents of the village, William Wordsworth and his family, and the tourists drift through the churchyard on a specially-made footpath to look at the headstones that stand there. Thankfully not so many venture into the church itself.

St Oswald's Church was being built during the reign of Henry II, probably founded by the Augustinian Friars of Bridlington who started the building on the site of an older church that had been damaged or destroyed in the Viking incursions of the early eleventh century. Like most ancient foundations it has been altered and added to over the centuries. There is no evidence of an organ or other musical instrument in Grasmere church before 1872; however in the accounts of 1829 there is an entry for the purchase of a pitch pipe to be used by the clerk who led the singing, presumably from a gallery at the west end of the nave, and may have been accompanied by a small group of instrumentalists.

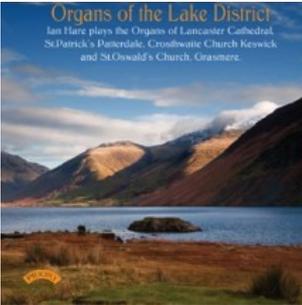
In 1872, a two-manual organ by Wilkinson was installed. It is reported that this was an instrument of good quality with a total of 16 stops. In 1923 it was removed to Lancaster Baptist Church, and in 2000 moved again to All Saints' Church, Boltongate, south of Wigton, where it is still in service.

In March 1923 an order was placed with Binns of Leeds for a new organ funded in memory of Nellie Taylor, daughter of Mr J Taylor of Helmside, Grasmere. A fine musician, she was attached to the 10th Motor Ambulance Convoy, British Red Cross, during the First World War, and died in France on 27th June 1918. The organ is a three-manual, originally with tubular pneumatic action, later changed to electric action, and both technically and artistically of a high standard. The *Westmorland Gazette* of 6th October 1923 reported that 'the solo and softer registers have a rich and delicate quality'. The casework, of Austrian oak, was made by local craftsmen, and the organ was installed at the eastern end of the northern aisle, close to the choir. In 1964, renovations were carried out by J W Walker & Sons of Ruislip. The Great received most attention, with the Trumpet being replaced with a Tromba, the Flautina moved to the Choir, the Medium Open Diapason softened to a Small Open Diapason, and a new Fifteenth and Mixture were installed.



The Choir's original Gamba was removed to make way for the Flautina. In 1994 the organ was overhauled and in 2004 a new humidifier and bellows for the Tromba were fitted.

The current organist and Director of Music is Ian Hare, who has recorded a CD of organ music on a number of Lake District organs, including Lancaster Cathedral, St Patrick's Patterdale, Crosthwaite Church and St Oswald's Grasmere (Priory: PRCD 1177). Ian is a former organ scholar at King's College Cambridge under David Willcocks, and a former Organist and Master of the Choristers at Cartmel Priory.

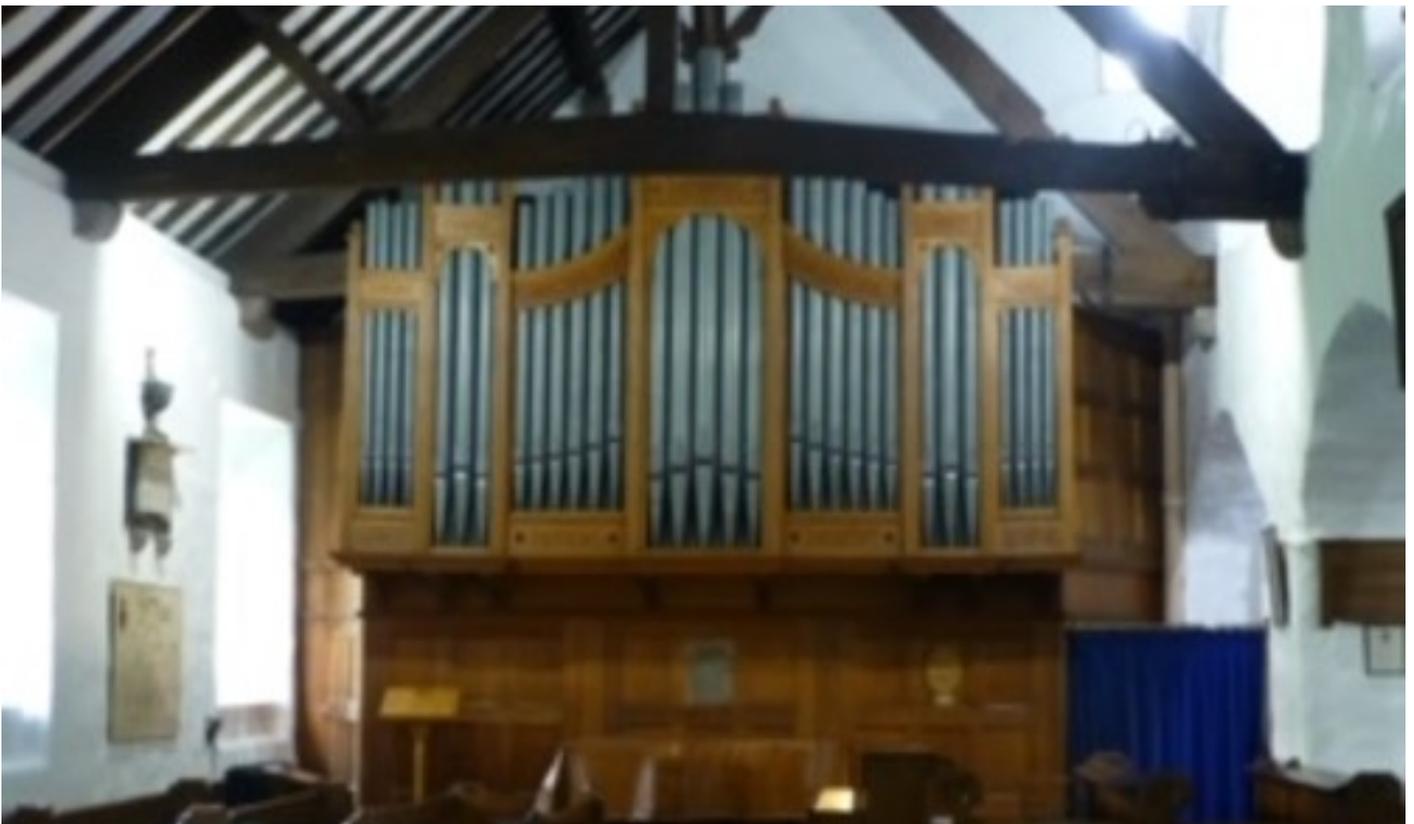


We last visited the church in September 2019 and found it a place of peaceful sanctuary away from the tourist crowd thronging the streets of this tiny beautiful village of almost Alpine quality. I found it quite astounding that in this relatively small place of worship in this community in the middle of this beautiful countryside there should be such a magnificent instrument tucked away in a corner. It is well worth a visit.

But avoid the high season for tourists looking for Wordsworth's grave and Sarah Nelson's Grasmere Gingerbread Shop!

## SPECIFICATION

<b>Choir</b>		<b>Pedal</b>	
Tromba	8	Octave Diapason	8
Clarinet	8	Bass Flute	8
Flautina	2	Bourdon	16
Flauto Traverso	4	Open Diapason	16
Lieblich Gedackt	8	Harmonic Bass 32	
Dulciana	8		
Tremulant		<b>Couplers</b>	
		Swell to Choir	
		Choir to Great	
<b>Great</b>		Swell to Great	
Tromba	8	Swell to Pedal	
Mixture	19-22-26	Great to Pedal	
Fifteenth	2	Choir to Pedal	
Principal	4	Choir Octave	
Flute Harmonic	4	Choir Sub-Octave	
Hohl Flute	8	Swell to Great Sub-Octave	
Small Open Diapason	8	Swell to Great Octave	
Large Open Diapason	8	Swell Sub-Octave	
Bourdon	16	Swell Octave	
<b>Swell</b>			
Oboe	8		
Cornopean	8		
Dulciana Mixture (2 ranks)			
Salicet	4		
Vox Angelica	8		
Viol d'Orchestre	8		
Rohr Flute	8		
Geigen Diapason	8		
Tremulant			
<b>Accessories</b>			
4 adjustable thumb pistons to each of Great and Swell, 3 to Choir.			
4 adjustable toe pistons to Great and Swell.			
Reversible thumb pistons for Great to Pedal and Swell to Great.			
Reversible toe pistons for Great to Pedal.			



# LIFE and LIVESTREAMING

HELEN MURPHY

**The end of an era?** The last time I sang properly in a choir in a building was on 19th March for the installation of David Oakley (former Rector of Oscott College) as Bishop of Northampton. Because of the circumstances of impending Coronavirus legislation, it was advertised as a private event taking place behind closed doors. From the west gallery I counted about 20 people in the nave, as far as I could see, consisting of family and some cathedral staff; at Communion, there were perhaps 30 as a few more were sitting at the back. The singers were a combination of some of the regular cathedral choir, plus a few extras (like me) and the Oscott Schola - in total fewer than 20. It was a very odd experience - I've sung at previous episcopal installations and they were packed to the rafters. And of course the very next day, the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales announced the end of public Masses - though, at that stage, churches were to remain open for private prayer.

**In the beginning was lockdown...** That was not to last - as we know, on 23rd March the whole country went into 'lockdown', with churches closed, though our clergy assured us that they would be celebrating Mass and the Holy Office every day on our behalf. Which indeed they have. However, while RC clergy have adapted and introduced livestreaming, where technically possible, in their churches and cathedrals, Anglican clergy have not been allowed to enter their buildings until more recently - as a consequence many have gone to great lengths to ensure livestreaming from their studies, their kitchens and their sitting rooms - anywhere but their churches. I commend them all for their gallant and imaginative efforts, but feel very sorry that they were put in this position, which was not required by the government legislation. However, at the time of writing (mid-May) it seems that common sense has finally broken out at last, as it is reported that the C of E bishops have met and reconsidered this and so Anglican clergy may now celebrate from their own churches. In the meantime, the Catholic Bishops of England Wales saw fit simply to comply with the Government's regulations and not to take them any further. As a result, I've been sampling Mass from all over the place (during Holy Week I was variously at Northampton, St Anne's Leeds, St Chad's Birmingham and Westminster cathedrals) and generally 'visit' Leeds every day.

**What about music?** One concern on the various discussion groups/forums one visits is what to do about music - in particular, singing? All of us are involved in the music-making in our churches, whether as organist, singer or conductor (or a combination of all three) and are concerned with producing the best music that we can under our individual circumstances, whatever they are. And now we are in these most extraordinary times, what can we do? Without choirs and organs, we are reliant on singing clergy - which is where, for me, Leeds cathedral has come up trumps. Throughout Easter Week, someone sang the *Victimae paschali laudes* (the Easter Sequence) every day - and not only that, but the *Missa de Angelis* as well (not to mention all the usual prescribed parts to be sung: Psalm, Gospel Acclamation and Great Amen).

**In the olden days...** At this point, a bit of background information would be helpful. There are 18 Masses in all, each with its own number, name and season: for example, No 1 *Lux et origo* is for the Easter season; No 2 *Kyrie fons bonitatis* for Solemn Feasts; No 8 *Missa de Angelis* is for Double Feasts (not applicable these days); No 9 *Cum jubilo* for the BVM and No 18 *Deus genitor alme* is for Advent and Lent (i.e. without a Gloria). At some point in the early 20th century when the idea of active singing from the congregation was being promoted, it was decided that *Missa de Angelis* should be the 'standard' that everyone knew and so, along with a number of familiar chants, it was taught in schools, so that everyone was supposed to know it. And this continued pretty well until the early Sixties. So it's in the memory banks of everyone over a certain age. Even now, it's still familiar up to a point with those a bit younger, though probably not children, unless they are very lucky in where they live. (And, contrary to popular misunderstanding, the Second Vatican Council didn't ban Latin or plainsong, rather, it encouraged it - but that's another story!)

At the introduction of the new translation in 2010/11 (and I have written more fully about this in an article published in the March 2013 Newsletter - still available on the website), a simple setting was needed for what are known as the Missal chants, in English, that everyone is supposed to know as a bare minimum - and for simplicity No 18 was chosen as a basis. But those still awake at this point will say - 'Hang on - isn't that the one for Advent and Lent with no Gloria?' Quite right. So, supposedly in the interests of simplicity, the Gloria from No 15 *Dominator deus* was chosen. Big mistake - it's so simple (it ranges over only a fifth), is very

repetitive and therefore, contrary to what one might expect, rather than being easy, it is quite tricky to remember when and where you go up or down a note (unlike *Missa de angelis* which has lots of little tunes, very sing-song but easy on the ear) – and it went down like a lead balloon. Since then, however, lots of new settings have become available.

**Back to the present.** So, on a daily basis from Leeds, at the moment, depending on who is celebrating, we can get either *Missa de Angelis* (no Gloria in a weekday Mass) or the Missal Chants, together with the psalm, Gospel Acclamation, and the *Regina caeli* at the end – the traditional Easter chant known by all. On a Sunday, as well as all this, we get four hymns, all sung by the celebrating clergy. Some Anglican church musicians have put in much imaginative work in producing recordings of their choir all singing individually from home in order to provide practice, togetherness and an end result for the benefit of all those following worship from home. They are to be congratulated for their efforts, particularly in negotiating all the regulations regarding copyright with recorded music – not an easy task!

At the time of writing, although the government has proposed a gradual relaxation of some of the current restrictions, there is no knowing exactly when churches will be open again for public worship, although there seems to be some light on the horizon. Partial re-opening is happening abroad (Germany for example) with careful place-marking to maintain social distancing. So we have to wait and see.

**Science and physiology.** This is all very well, but there are serious concerns about the possible dangers of singing in an enclosed space. Scientific studies demonstrate the mechanism of inhalation/exhalation (for greater detail, see <https://www.drheathernelson.com/>). While most people use only the top third of their lungs, singers (and wind-players) breathe deeply, filling the whole lung capacity with air, clean or contaminated, reaching to the farthest parts. Likewise, exhalation is much more forceful, consisting of droplets (small, but often visible and measurable) and aerosol (minute and invisible); while droplets fall locally, aerosol is spread widely over a much larger area. Of course, this is also true of runners and cyclists, but no one seems to be bothered about them and the effect they might be having on others. And it is this aspect that presents problems with group singing in close proximity. However, two German scientists, as a result of experiments with singers and orchestral players seem to have come to a slightly more encouraging conclusion (see <https://slippedisc.com/2020/05/>) and suggest a safety cordon of 1.5 metres (I think between performers and audience, though it is not clear), as well as distancing between singers, to prevent droplet infection.

**‘...What’s to come is still unsure.’** So, what of the future? At the moment, it is looking very grim to me as a singer as well as an organist. There is talk of churches being opened up for private prayer, but if and when they are allowed to open again for public worship, I may be playing the organ but probably with no singing (whether from the choir or the congregation); we shall probably be able to receive Holy Communion under one kind only, but quite how the logistics will work out is anyone’s guess.

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**NTCG NORTHAMPTON.** Just before lockdown, our member Philip Bricher was in his usual stamping ground at the New Testament Church of God (ex-College Street Baptist Church to those of us of an older generation). Those who go to Philip’s recitals know that they are nothing if not imaginative, inventive and relevant (to whatever or whoever) is current. We were entertained to a well-balanced programme, including two pieces by Clifford Harker (of whom I knew nothing), Vierne, Jeanne Demessieux (one of her Twelve Chorales on Gregorian Themes, which are favourites of Philip’s), Rheinberger, Colin Mawby (who died last year), JS Bach (of course!), Rossini (the Largo al Factotum from *The Barber of Seville*, of all things!) and, last but not least, a thoughtful and reflective *Chorale Prelude on Herzliebster Jesu* by Margery Moore (another one I’d never heard of) which I think was the one I enjoyed the most. We look forward to Philip’s recitals resuming in due course.

Helen Murphy

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**RESOURCES FOR RE-OPENING.** The Church of England website <https://www.churchofengland.org/> now includes extensive resources for the re-opening of church buildings, as that becomes possible, and noting that national guidance about music, singing and worship is being issued, quoting aptly from Isaiah 35.10:

***‘The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away’***

## A HALF-REMEMBERED DREAM

JOHN WILSON

By the time you read this, the rules about social distancing and lockdown will have eased so that people can meet in small groups and go to open spaces. But they will probably still mean we can't yet go to church services, or to choral events or other concerts - or to organ recitals. Organists might be able to go to their instruments in empty churches to check that they have not been attacked by mice or other invaders; tuners can probably be called in to effect repairs where needed. But attending a regular series of organ recitals, which was a real possibility in the early days of 2020, has become only a 'half-remembered dream', in the evocative phrase used in the movie *Inception*. (According to Wikipedia it is a phrase 'said by the aged Saito when Cobb finds him in Limbo'; so now you know...).

The regular mid-day organ recitals in prospect in our district included the first Saturday of the month at St Mary's, Wellingborough; first Thursdays at All Saints', Northampton, by several of our Association members; third Thursdays of most months at the New Testament Church of God, usually by Philip Bricher; and first Fridays at St Mary & St Giles, Stony Stratford. What a wealth of good things to look forward to once our lives get back to something more normal. Meanwhile, as a reminder of that half-remembered dream, I can report on the recital at St Mary's, Wellingborough on Saturday 29th February – one of the last events before lockdown, apart from our Corby and Great Oakley Crawl reported on in the last edition of the *Newsletter*. The St Mary's recital was the Fourth Annual Roger Smith Memorial Recital, given in memory of the long-serving Secretary of our Association, who was also organist and then organist emeritus at St Mary's for some years. It was given by Kathe Wright Kaufman, a young American organist who is currently Organ Scholar at Peterborough Cathedral. She has an Episcopal background and loves the Anglican choral tradition; let us hope she has been getting some opportunity to indulge it by 'layered' singing or by other means during the lockdown period.

Kathe's programme began with Bach's Toccata and Fugue in F, and included Mulet's *Rosace*, Widor's *Praeludium circulare* and Mendelssohn's Prelude and Fugue in D minor, all performed with great aplomb. Perhaps even more interesting were the three pieces by modern American composers, which were probably new to most of the large audience. One was by Dan Locklair, *The peace may be exchanged*, from his *Rubrics*; another was a *Lullaby* by Calvin Hampton from his Suite no.2. The recital ended with the Final from *Suite for Organ* by Gerald Near. Written in 1965, this was an effective ending to a most interesting and accomplished recital. The event was enhanced by having Lee Dunleavy's video system showing the organists' nimble fingers; and by the presence of Roger Smith's widow, Diana, who graciously said she would be glad to attend the bank holiday Garden Party at my house at the end of August (if it goes ahead).

The collection after the recital was to be shared between the Motor Neurone Disease Association and the music fund at St Mary's. Let us hope the music fund will be needed again before long and that the Saturday morning series there, like other local organ events, can soon start again and become new and vital experiences, not just half-remembered dreams.

### NORTHAMPTON AND DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

[northamptonorganists.org.uk](http://northamptonorganists.org.uk)

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*The Midlands Organ Day and St Matthew's 125th Anniversary Recital have been postponed, and we are now aiming to hold them on Saturday 25th September 2021 as part of the celebrations for NDOA's 2021 centenary year. We hope to resume our remaining 2020 NDOA programme as Covid-19 restrictions allow - see the President's letter on p.2 for details. Online events are planned in their place if necessary.*

*Details will be announced as available in Newsletter Extra, and on our website and Facebook pages, and members will also receive email updates as usual directly from Helen Murphy, our Secretary.*