

BORDERS GUILD OF ORGANISTS &  
CHURCH MUSICIANS

NEWSLETTER NO 35

AUTUMN 2013



## President's Letter October 2013

Dear All,

I hope that you have had a very good summer and a well-deserved rest. The Edinburgh Festival now seems a long time ago: what a marathon of the arts it was!

Before finding ourselves busy with the various projects at the Fringe, we spent part of our holiday being on a Choir tour to the Black Forest, Switzerland and Alsace.

After so many years I was again back in the small village of Gunsbach in the Munster valley (nr Colmar). This year marks the centenary of Albert Schweitzer's journey from Europe to

Lambarene, Gabon, to lay the foundations to his hospital. In the tiny village of Gunsbach, where his father was a pastor, Albert Schweitzer had his own house built in 1928, which he used as a place where he could recuperate when he came back to Europe on furlough. The village remains fairly much the same today. You can see his office, his bedroom, his piano with a special pedal system similar to that of an organ, his Nobel Peace Prize diploma (1952), various souvenirs from Africa... The house is now a museum and holds the archive with all his writing, still used for research. In the church we had a choir concert, attended by so many villagers.

There was still a nurse, who worked as a midwife at Schweitzer's time.

Nearer to home may I draw your attention to our syllabus, which we have planned for the coming Session.

We will start the new season in December with an afternoon event in St Andrew's and St George's West Church in George Street, Edinburgh. Many of you will know, that the church has undergone some substantial refurbishment. Part of this was also a general

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Front and back cover photographs:  
St Brandon's Church, Brancepeth, Diocese of Durham.

## **BGO Syllabus 2013-2014**

### **Monday 16 December at 2.30pm**

Organ Music for Advent at St. Andrew's and St. George's West, George St. Edinburgh, performed by Brigitte Harris.

Listen to the refurbished Wells-Kennedy instrument.

Lunch from 1pm in Undercroft Café at the church.

### **Saturday 8 February 2014 ( 12.30 for 1pm)**

Annual Social Lunch at The Macdonald Cardrona Hotel, Peebles. EH45 8NE

Guest speaker: David Elliott, Director of Music, George Watson's College

### **Saturday 29 March 2014**

Organ visit to Borders churches

10.30am. St. Mary's Haddington

2pm Channelkirk

3pm Lauder Kirk

**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2014 AGM** at Hawick Congregational Church.

2.30pm Recital by Michael Harris

Refreshments followed by AGM

clean and upgrade of the Wells-Kennedy instrument. On Monday 16 December I will introduce the instrument with a recital of seasonal music for Advent and Christmas.

We are delighted that our guest speaker for the **Social Lunch** in the Cardrona Hotel in Peebles on **Saturday 8 February 2014** will be Mr David Elliott, Director of Music at George Watson's College.

Please let Mary Shields know by the **middle of January** if you are intending to come. The cost is £25 per person for a 3 Course Choice Menu with Tea & Coffee. The hotel has been very accommodating to us, and I am sure you will enjoy the venue in its stunning surroundings.

On **Saturday 29 March 2014** we are intending to visit organs in the Borders. Starting off in Haddington in the morning, we will travel in the afternoon to Channelkirk to play the newly installed one-manual instrument in the church there. Our day will end in Lauder, where members can try the organ in the Kirk (II/P).

Michael Harris will be our guest recitalist on **Saturday 26 April**, when he will give an Organ Recital in the Congregational Church in Hawick for us, which will be followed by refreshments and the annual AGM.

I do commend this syllabus to you and hope to see you all in the near future.

It remains for me to thank our friendly Borders' Guild Committee, with whom it is a delight to work, and without their contributions we would not be able to offer such a varied programme.

With all good wishes

Brigitte Harris

## AGM and Organ Recital

On Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> April we met in Stenton Church in East Lothian to hold our Annual General Meeting, preceded by an organ recital given by Brigitte Harris.

There was a goodly turnout of BGO members and friends, plus a large number from the congregation, who came along to hear the wonderful music.

Brigitte began with a March by Thomas Adams, we then heard one of John Stanley's famous Trumpet Voluntaries, Pachelbel's

Fantasia in D, two lovely Brahms Chorale Preludes, three pieces by Daniel Gottlob Turk, two more modern pieces, the first arranged by Jan Janca, the second written by Lieselotte Kunkel, finishing with Piece d'Orgue BWV 572 by Johann Sebastian Bach.

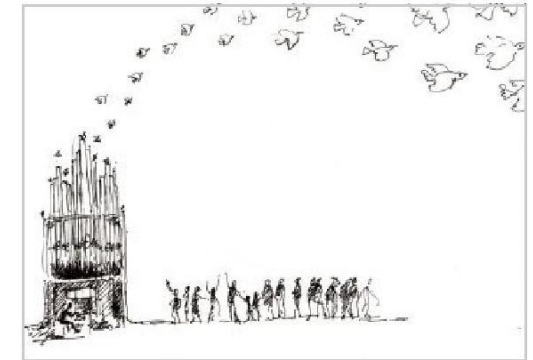
Unsurprisingly, Brigitte gave the recital her all and everyone sat entranced at the beautiful playing, but I have to say that the final piece by JS Bach was absolutely stunning in its performance. We were all sitting on the edge of our seats, making sure we heard every note! Thank you, Brigitte.

There was then a very warm, much-deserved vote of thanks, we all adjourned to the rear of the Church for tea and delicious home-baked goodies, so generously provided by ladies of the congregation. A short AGM followed, and the afternoon declared a great success by everyone

**Mary Shields**



'Holy Family' 21x10cm  
message HAPPY CHRISTMAS



'Flight' 15x21cm message  
SEASON'S GREETINGS

## BGO CHRISTMAS CARDS - limited edition

A selection of Christmas Cards, designed by Maggy Stead, are available.

**PRICE** 5 cards **£4.50**

10 cards **£8.00**

20 cards **£15.00**

40 cards **£25.00**

P&P Free

available from 1<sup>st</sup> December while stock lasts

To order your cards please contact M Shields on 01573 229015 [Mary.shields118@btinternet.com](mailto:Mary.shields118@btinternet.com)



'Choir' 15x15cm  
message HAPPY CHRISTMAS



'Organist' 14x11cm  
message MERRY CHRISTMAS

## SFO Annual Conference 2013

The 53<sup>rd</sup> Scottish Federation of Organists Annual Conference was held in Edinburgh on the 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> May. Nicola MacRae, the SFO President, welcomed us. It was the Edinburgh Society of Organists' Centenary.

The conference opened on the Friday afternoon at the Freemason's Hall in George St. where we were invited to play the three manual Brindley and Foster organ. The organ is 100 years old and was recently restored. Simon Nieminski spoke a little about its history and played to illustrate its versatility. Then the delegates were invited to play. It was good to catch up with familiar faces that I had seen at last year's conference and the atmosphere was very friendly.

In the evening we were treated to a wonderful concert in St. Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral by Olivier Latry (Notre Dame de Paris) and Thierry Escaich (Saint- Etienne-du-Mont, Paris). They played duets, solos and improvisations. Brigitte Harris has written a detailed report of this concert.

On Saturday morning we attended the AGM at St. Cuthbert's Church, Lothian Rd. The meeting included the usual business. Reports were given by Bridget Black (Secretary) and Robin Bell (Treasurer). Robin is standing down and Malcolm MacRae has taken over as Treasurer with Donald Gordon as Independent Advisor. Before the AGM closed Mary Smith invited delegates to next year's conference that will be held in New St. Andrew's Parish Church, Coatbridge on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014.

After the AGM Dr. John Kitchen at St. Cuthbert's Church gave this year's Dr. Alfred Hollins Memorial Recital. The concert programme included music that had been played by William Baird Ross, the ESO's first president in 1913. John Kitchen also included music by

Alfred Hollins as well as a newly discovered 'Suite for Organ' by William Baird Ross. The performance was thoroughly enjoyable and showed the vast range of the four manual instrument at St. Cuthbert's.

After an excellent lunch we were given an informative talk on 'The Edinburgh of 1913' by Rev. Allan Maclean of Dochgarroch. It was fun to hear about the comparisons of the old and new and things that haven't changed at all!

The conference then moved to St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral where the delegates were shown the Traquair Murals in the Song School. Then there was a special conference evensong. It included the anthem by Kenneth Leighton 'Let all the World' and a first performance of the work 'Church Beyond the Stars' by Celia McDowall. It was commissioned by The Edinburgh Society of Organists to celebrate their centenary and performed by John Kitchen at the end of the service.

The conference came to its conclusion with afternoon tea and the installation of Mary Smith as President. So to Coatbridge next year.

Karen and I had a very memorable 2 days meeting and talking with friends and listening to some wonderful music from outstanding musicians.

**Lynda Jeffrey**

### **SFO Conference Recital May 2013 in Edinburgh**

The audience for this recital in St Mary's Metropolitan Cathedral in Edinburgh was treated to a truly amazing evening. Two of the most famous Parisian organists, Thierry Escaich (St Etienne-du-Mont) and Olivier Latry (Notre Dame) were the recitalists for the opening evening of the SFO Conference.

7 The Bulgarian A capella Otche Nash

8 And your favourite was Ludwig van Beethoven Symphony no 9 in D minor 'Choral'.

Looking at (or listening to) your choice, would your list be the same today?

**I think much the same.**

Your book was a D-I-Y manual, but I was thrilled to find out that your luxury item was a cathedral organ, how wonderful!

Did you have a specific organ in mind?

**The new one in St Giles!**

Where did you first play the organ?

**At George Watson's school**

What place is there in your busy life for music? Do you write or read or relax with music?

**I am very a reluctant deputy assistant organist in Etrick and Yarrow parish when they can't find anyone else to play!**

Do you go to concerts?

**Yes, the latest was an organ concert last month in Clermont l'Herault (France)**

This interview was conducted by Maggy Stead

August 2013

was again: the finale – grandiose, totally mesmerising show of sheer audacious and confident expression of one very talented performer.

I am not writing here about the official Festival fireworks concert I am writing about the Organ Recital at St Giles's Cathedral on

Sunday 1st September given by DOROTHEA HARRIS, with the opening piece: Widor's Symphony VI Op 42, and the finale : Fugue sur le nom d'Alain by Maurice Duruflé, and in between JP

Sweelinck Unter der Linden grüne, JS Bach Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C, Hindemith Sonata III (1940).

A memorable performance!

### **M Stead**

*Dorothea is currently studying with Martin Sander for a Masters in Organ Performance at the Hochschule für Musik in Detmold, Germany.*

### **The Profile**

#### **Lord Steel of Aikwood**

You were the castaway on DESERT ISLAND DISCS on 4 May 1985 when you were interviewed by Ron Plumley, and your choice of 8 discs was:

- 1 Eileen Cameron and Ensemble 'The Flowers of the Forest'
- 2 Roger Whittaker 'I'm back'
- 3 Camille Saint-Saëns Symphony no 3 in C minor
- 'Organ'
- 4 George Melly 'Let's do it'
- 5 Julian Lloyd Webber 'Variation no 23'
- 6 GF Händel 'Let their celestial concerts all unite (from Samson)

It was the first time that these two artists appeared together to improvise together.

We witnessed truly stunning music-making: there were pastiche improvisations of a French Classical Suite in the style on a plainsong theme (Lattry), a duet extemporization of a Baroque Concerto, a Fantasie and Fugue on the hymn of *St George's Edinburgh* (Escaich), a late romantic improvisation on the name of *Vierne* (Lattry), then Duruflé (Escaich) and as a final high point a Theme and Variations on a Scots song.

The recitalists interspersed their flights of phantasies by playing French repertoire as well.

It was absolutely wonderful to experience these stunning executions of brilliant minds: it has been a privilege to be there.

And - both players truly enjoyed themselves.

**Brigitte Harris**



## Durham visit

On a bright Monday morning in June some of us met in the grand Nave of Durham Cathedral ready for a day devoted to the organ, listening to the noises of organ tuning wafting through the building.

After a good lunch in the Cathedral Café we set off to visit the purpose-build premises of Messrs Harrison and Harrison. Their managing Director Dr Christopher Batchelor led us through the workshops explaining in great detail all aspects of organ construction.



In the assembly hall we saw at first hand parts of the Royal Festival Hall organ build up, just before being flat packed to their final destination. Some time and workrooms later on we also saw some small symbolic pipes being made for the RFH, which would travel

via a sponsored bike run to London before being handed over as the final parts of this great organ in London. In another room we saw the dismantled nave console of Ripon Cathedral. The firm is justly proud of building everything in house, and we got a very good idea of the variety of tasks and the huge amount of planning involved in organ building and maintaining.

Everywhere we experienced great workmanship and always helpful explanations to our questions.

We ended up in the archive rooms at the top of the workshops, where long rows of file boxes spoke literally volumes of the firm's distinguished history. One of our group was even shown the

contract of the instrument she plays on week in week out.

After our workshop visit we set off to our second destination, St

Brandon's Church in Brancepeth. This is a beautifully light building next to a castle, which had burned down some years ago and has subsequently undergone a beautiful restoration, using many a craftman's skills to make it the peaceful and functional building it is



now. We relished the opportunity to play their c1870 Henry Willis organ, which had undergone restoration by Harrison & Harrison in 2005. It is an exquisite instrument, and the sounds

emanating from it just seemed to float

through the building.

Our thanks go to Karen Kitchen, who has made a huge effort to put together a grand day out.

**Brigitte Harris**

## EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FIREWORKS

It started with a loud colourful burst of sounds – one display following another in a constant stream of stirring music that almost left me breathless. Just as you thought the music had reached its climax, the performance slowed down into a harmonious adagio, the level of intensity calmed down, went through a series of joyful and more serene displays, never abandoning the awesome dexterity and virtuosity of a well rehearsed spectacle. Just as you were lulled into the slower act of a less dramatic display, there it