

BORDERS GUILD OF ORGANISTS AND
CHURCH MUSICIANS

NEWSLETTER NO 36
SPRING 2014



President's Letter March 2014

Dear All,

About twenty members, friends and relations met for a very happy Annual Lunch on Saturday, 12 February in the MacDonald Cardrona Hotel nr Peebles. We were privileged to have our Patron Lord David Steel with us and enjoyed good food and an enlightened talk by David Elliott, the Director of Music at George Watson's College in Edinburgh. The report by Ishbel Coy will bring back memories of the *Pedalion*, now an almost forgotten instrument, and the somewhat unusual lives and deaths of some of the composers of classical music.

Many thanks are due to the contributors of this Newsletter. This makes it truly our own publication. In a number of music magazines this spring attention is drawn to the internet, its uses for information, a vast database for printed music and also an treasure trough for musical performances (you tube). One of my students, Adrienne Campbell from Fife, is an avid researcher of all things on the internet, and you can read about some of her unusual findings in her amusing piece.

At the time of writing, organists from the Borders are getting ready for playing music for Lent and Easter. In 2013 my organ scholar at St Andrew's and St George's West in Edinburgh, Andrew Carvel, and I prepared a hymn book which contains the most often sung hymns for this time of the liturgical year arranged for piano or organ manuals only. We received good feedback from this, and you find a list of its content in this newsletter. Please tell fellow organists or pianists about this.

Could I also draw your attention to our forthcoming trip around the Borders, when we will visit St Mary's Church, Haddington with its fine instrument by Lammermuir Organ Builders, the recently installed one manual instrument in Channelkirk and Lauder Kirk with the organ by David Stark.

Our Guild AGM in late April will this year take place in Hawick Congregational Church, when we will also host an organ recital by Michael Harris, Master of the Music at St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh.

I hope as many of you as possible will be able to come to these events, details of which you will find in this Newsletter.

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BGO Syllabus 2013-2014

Saturday 29 March 2014

Organ visit to Borders churches

10.30am St. Mary's Haddington

Lunch at Maitlandfield Hotel at 12noon

2pm Channelkirk

3pm Lauder Kirk

Tea and Refreshments will conclude the day.

Saturday 26th April 2014 AGM at

Hawick Congregational Church

2.30pm Recital by Michael Harris

Refreshments followed by AGM

May I wish you all a fulfilling time as musicians, and I look forward to seeing you all again soon.

With best wishes

Brigitte Harris

Organ Music for Advent and Christmas

On 16 December last year about a dozen so members and relations met at St. Andrew's and St. George's West Church in Edinburgh to hear a recital of organ music for Advent and Christmas, given by Brigitte Harris, on the currently being refurbished Wells-Kennedy instrument. We had a most convivial lunch in the Undercroft before proceeding upstairs to the Church, which was a breathtaking vision of light and colour. The Church was hosting its fourth Edinburgh Christmas Tree Festival and forty decorated trees sparkled and twinkled in all their splendour. A most fitting setting for what followed.

Brigitte's playing is always a delight to listen to and we sat enthralled as she went through her programme, a varied one ranging from JS Bach to Wilbur Held.

First we heard a French piece, *Votre bonté grand Dieu* by Claude Balbastre, two pieces from Germany by Max Reger, *Siciliano op 47* and *Vom Himmel hoch Op 135a*, followed by a Bach setting of *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, BWV 659, then the beautiful *Es ist ein Ros' entsprungen* by Brahms, another piece by JS Bach, *Pastorella BWV 590 1 and 2*, which incidentally I am

learning at the moment, a Noël Ecossois by Alexandre Guilmant, Marcel Dupre's *In dulci júbilo op 28*, finishing with two modern renditions of *O little town of Bethlehem* and *God rest you, merry gentlemen* by the American composer Wilbur Held.



Just skimming through the programme thus does not do it, or the performer, justice. Each piece was played beautifully, with the expert touch and feeling we expect from Brigitte. But I have to say, the last two offerings by Wilbur Held were stunning and had us glued to our seats, totally mesmerised; a truly fitting finale to a pre-Christmas concert.

We moved to the organ to explore and admire the work already done, then a camera was produced and lots of photographs taken which can be seen on the website.

A most delightful afternoon.

Mary Shields

The Organ

The instrument was built in 1984 by Wells-Kennedy Partnership, Lisburn. Co Antrim and is positioned on the gallery on the south side of the church. At the time of its installation it was the firm's first church organ in Scotland.

Housed in a case of American oak the case displays the emblems of both St Andrew and St George. At present the instrument is being refurbished and will in the end contain 20 stops, with a 4' Spitzflute (Great) and the divided stop of Cornet into Nazard $2 \frac{2}{3}$ and Tierce $1 \frac{3}{5}$ to be added. For the record the organ has 1331 pipes.

including our annual subscription cheque to the Incorporated Association of Organists, recently sent off, and your subs are our very lifeblood. Thank you.

Mary Shields



Mr Ian McIntosh

Towards the end of October last year, we were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of our own Ian McIntosh. Although not actually an organist, Ian loved organ music dearly and travelled far and wide in his car to listen to concerts and recitals. As well as being a member of ours, he was also affiliated to the Edinburgh Society of Organists, Newcastle and District Organists' Association and Nottingham and District Society of Organists, a remarkable man, dedicated to organ music.

Ian's funeral, at Warriston Crematorium, was well attended, I suspect, looking round, by many organists including some of us from the Borders. The minister spoke warmly of Ian, of his love of organ music, his love of cricket, in particular the Test Match, his proficiency at work in the bank at Colinton and of his perpetual kindness to neighbours and friends. Indeed he was a great asset to our Guild, preparing the Financial Report for delivery at numerous AGM's.

I'm sure you will all have your own memories of Ian, I was tickled that he liked my baking so much! A very kind and generous soul, we have much to thank him for. We will miss him.

Mary Shields

Membership Matters

Our numbers are very healthy, having recently admitted SIX new members, the largest quota in any of the districts mentioned in the Association News page of the latest Organists' Review! One up for the Borders.

We lost two members through relocation and one, Ian McIntosh, sadly died last year. However, at 35 pax we are doing well and it would be lovely to see lots of you at our next meetings in March and April. The recent social lunch was a very happy affair and great get-together.

Could I just gently remind anyone who hasn't yet paid their £12 to send it to me as soon as possible, please. We do have various expenses to meet,

Great

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| Open Diapason | 8 |
| Stopped Diapason | 8 |
| Principal | 4 |
| Spitzflute | 4 |
| Gemshorn | 2 |
| Nazard | 2 2/3 |
| Tierce | 1 3/5 |
| Mixture 19.22.26.29 | IV |
| Tremulant | |

Swell

| | |
|------------------|-----|
| Stopped Diapason | 8 |
| Salicional | 8 |
| Principal | 4 |
| Chimney Flute | 4 |
| Fifteenth | 2 |
| Mixture 22.26.29 | III |
| Hautboy | 16 |
| Trumpet | 8 |
| Tremulant | |

Pedal

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Sub Bass | 16 |
| Octave | 8 |
| Fifteenth | 4 |
| Trombone | 16 |

Full complement of modern playing aids. Mechanical key and pedal action; electric stop action. Compass: Pedal C to f'. Manuals C to a'''

Couplers (both as draw stops and toe pistons)

Swell to Great

Swell to Pedal

Great to Pedal

Social Lunch Saturday 8th February 2014

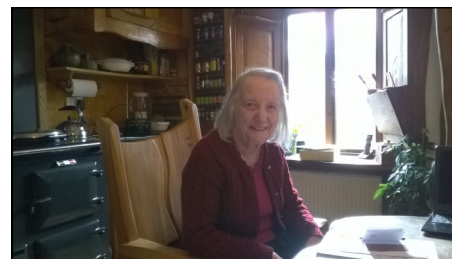
On a very wet February Saturday, about 20 of us made our way to the Macdonald Cardrona Hotel near Peebles for the BGO Annual Social Lunch. Despite the rain, the scenery was rather beautiful, with the surrounding Border hills covered in snow and a light dusting of snow reaching down nearly to road level. Around the hotel itself, the golf course was more like a lake... We were very glad to welcome among our group Lord David Steel, our Honorary President. Some of our members had travelled from as far as Newcastle. After gathering in the spacious lobby, we made our way up to the 3rd floor where we had a beautiful room, like an impressive Board Room, for our lunch, with large windows looking out over the snowy countryside around. The large table was just the perfect size for our group, also making it easy to talk to those on the opposite side of the table. There was a delicious 3-course menu on offer with plenty of choice, the 'Pan Roasted Rump of 21 Day Aged Scottish Beef proving a particular favourite, and the helpings being of typical Borders proportions!

As our after dinner coffee and chocolate mints were served, our guest speaker, David Elliott, Director of Music at George Watson's college, began his talk, illustrated by musical extracts, on a somewhat unknown composer, Charles-Valentin Alkan, whose work, although much admired earlier by Debussy, Ravel and Rachmaninov, fell into obscurity until recordings of it became available in the 1960s. It was while David was an undergraduate in the 1970s that he was introduced to Alkan, and was immediately fascinated by both the man and his music. Alkan was a contemporary of Chopin and Liszt, writing mainly for the piano. He was himself a remarkable pianist and although a few of his miniatures are within the scope of the amateur pianist, much of his music requires extreme keyboard virtuosity. 'Comme le Vent' is an example of this, as we soon heard when David played a recorded extract.

Alkan was born in Paris in 1813, and was a child prodigy, whizzing through the Conservatoire classes at depressing speed, winning all the prizes and, at the age of 15, was appointed joint professor of solfège (music theory). He was a friend of many artists of the day, including Chopin, Liszt, Victor Hugo and George Sand. He alternated periods of giving highly acclaimed public recitals with periods of being somewhat reclusive, involving himself in study

My favourite hymn has to be Stand up, stand up for Jesus, CH3 481. It is a rousing and uplifting tune (morning light). This was one of the first hymns that I felt confident enough to add the pedal part in during the church service.

Another favourite is Love divine all loves excelling CH4 519, and I also enjoy Psalm 23 to the tune Wiltshire.



What piece of music would you take with you to a desert island?

The first piece of music that I would take to a desert island would have to be Rachmaninoff, Piano Concerto No. 2. Also J.S. Bach's two-part Invention in F. This little piece

'opened the door' and caused me to look at the music of Bach in a whole new way.

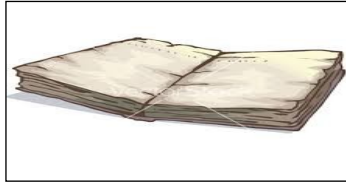
Another piece that I would take is Pachelbel's Toccata in E minor.

Where do you play the organ now?

I currently play the organ at St. Mungo's Parish Church in Penicuik and still have a small choir, which most of the members have stayed with me for all these years. The singers make a contribution to the church service for special occasions.

The interview was conducted by **Sarah Brown**

members??



For a bit of light relief, search out David Barber's book 'Bach, Beethoven and The Boys'. Published in paperback by Sound & Vision Publishing Ltd. (ISBN 978-0-920151-10-5) it has variously been described as 'a bit of a gossip column on long-dead composers', 'short, humorous and factual', 'irreverent, informative', 'how music history should be taught'.

All comments welcome!

Adrienne Campbell

Interview with Eileen Marchant by Sarah Brown

Who or what inspired you to take up music and specifically the organ?

My interest in the organ began at an early age and my inspiration came from my father's eldest brother, who was an organist at a church in Nottingham.

My Uncle gave me piano lessons at the age of nine. By my late teens I had worked through the graded music exams. I was given an opportunity to try the organ out at a Methodist Church but this was not to be due to me being a student at the time.

However, twenty years later when I moved to Scotland I was given another chance to play the organ in my own Church.

Where did you first play the organ?

I first played the organ in 1977 at St. Mungo's Parish Church in Penicuik and it was the first Sunday in Advent. There was a small choir to look after as well.

I began initially playing manuals only for the Hymns and Voluntary pieces. After sometime I realised how difficult it was to play the pedals without help and that is when I decided to get organ lessons firstly from Mr F. Davidson and later Brigitte Harris.

What is your favourite hymn?

and composition. His life was one of many disappointments, including not being appointed head of the Conservatoire Piano Department in 1848. He disappeared almost totally from public life in his later years, and died in Paris in 1888, aged 74. He was buried in the Jewish section of the Cemetery in Montmartre.



One link with the organ world is that Alkan composed for the pédalier – a piano fitted with an organ-type pedal board. Mozart had had such a fortepiano built for him and it seems that Schumann and Mendelssohn also played pedal pianos. Alkan owned an Erard piano made in 1853, now in the Musée de la Musique in the

Conservatoire de Paris. You can hear Olivier Latry playing it on You Tube, which is where this picture comes from. This system only uses the normal keyboard of the piano.

Another version of the pedalier has the pedal board attached to a second grand piano placed underneath, thus allowing deeper notes to be played on an extended keyboard. David then let us hear an extract of such a system, his favourite piece, Alkan's Prelude Op. 66 no. 4, played by Roberto Prosseda, and was impressed by the unusually deep notes that could be played with this system.

Watch Roberto Prosseda coping with the pedalboard and the sustaining pedal as he plays Alkan's Benedictus op 54, on two Fazioli pianos. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aiV8g3KbVkc>

David ended his talk with a fun quizz: 'How they died'. He gave us photos of 18 composers with their date of death, then read out a mini summary of their life, followed later by a description of the way these composers had died, and we had to try to match the description of the death to the composer. Mercifully he didn't ask us what our scores were! It seems that many composers died quite dramatic deaths: Stradella was killed by a hired assassin in revenge for one of his love affairs; Berg died of blood-poisoning

after being stung by a bee; Chausson lost control of his bike while riding downhill and crashed into a brick wall; Purcell contracted pneumonia after being locked out of his house in the rain after he had spent another late night carousing with his friends! As for Alkan himself, the story is that he had reached for a holy book on a high bookshelf, causing the shelf to topple and crush him under the weight of books – Alkan had been immersed in the study of the Bible, and had at one point contemplated setting the whole Bible to music – an extreme project which seemed to typify the man.

So we are very grateful to David Elliott for his stimulating and amusing talk, perfect for the occasion, and also to Maggy Stead and Eileen Marchant for organising a most enjoyable afternoon.

Ishbel Coy

Housework - what's that?

Free music - dontcha love it! To all composers who considerately died sufficiently long ago to let us legally download their blood, sweat and tears, our grateful thanks!

Ever had a passing acquaintance with Johann Nicolaus Hanff? Johann *who*?



Hmmm born in Wechmar in Thuringia a little while ago - 1663 or 1665 depending on which biographical entry is consulted (as is the case with the spelling of his middle name) - we're told he was a German organist, a composer of the North-German organ school, a music teacher in Hamburg and held several posts as a church musician. Doesn't seem to have written much, but

there are seven simple, short chorales in his 'Orgelwerke' and it's a free download!



Remember those welcome 'red herrings' of schooldays? Becoming side-tracked on the internet has to be the modern equivalent, and what's not to enjoy about the availability and accessibility of organ music on the internet and Youtube: performances of all sorts, visions of organs and organists alike from all over the world, unheard-of composers jostling for space with those whose names trip off everyone's tongue, not to mention the ease of reference when unsure as to how a particular piece should be played. Even if performance standard will undoubtedly never be achieved, a good example can fuel aspirations!

For those with internet access and a bit of spare time, have a look at these close-ups of hands, feet, jewellery, hairstyles - and organ pipes! Search on **Youtube** for:

Rienzi Overture Thomas Trotter (in Budapest)

The Mighty Lanquetuit Toccata by all stops out (Siegfried Franke in Melbourne)

Open Dagen Mixtuur virtual pipe organs (Gert van Hoef in Nieuwegein)

Cameron Carpenter & Sarah Willis explore the Berlin Philharmonic Organ

Did you know that in 1937 Vierne died on the organ bench at Notre Dame in the middle of a recital? We're told the organ was caused to make a heck of a din as he keeled over but what a time to go! Some years previously, he had stayed in Hinckley (near Coventry) with the organist of St Mary's Anglican Church, who was a distant relative, and subsequently wrote 'Les Cloches de Hinckley', his response to the bells of St Mary's Anglican Church there chiming every three hours, denying him proper rest. (Youtube again: *Les Cloches de Hinckley*.) Coincidentally, on Good Friday in 1932, an organist of St Mary's had also died on the organ bench!

Have read about an organ 'with pedals so touchy you can play them if you look at them hard enough', and a performance of organ music described as 'a swashbuckling romp'. Any other wonderful descriptions spotted by BGO

