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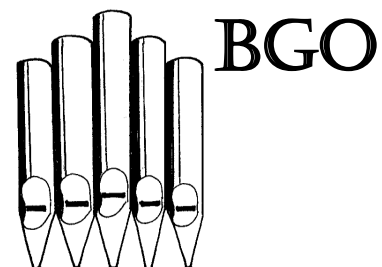
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Front cover photograph: Lauder

Kirk, by Brigitte Harris



BORDERS GUILD OF ORGANISTS &
CHURCH MUSICIANS

NEWSLETTER NO 38

SUMMER 2015



President's Letter

Dear All

Welcome to Newsletter no 38.

I am happy to welcome our new committee member David Stark. Most of you know David, who has come back after a short break from his post as a long-serving treasurer.

This year's AGM took place in Blainslie, at The Steading. It was a great platform for an excellent musical performance by Vintage Twelve, a group of five young singers: baritone Andrew Carvel, tenor Stuart Mitchell, alto Sarah L. Penny, soprano Emily Walker, mezzo soprano Anna Wright. The group performed a variety of styles, including jazz, classical, pop, and traditional music. It was a treat to listen to the beautiful voices in such a special setting.



Cocktails and nibbles were served. With the raffle and donations we managed to raise over £100! A great event, in spite of the restricted audience. I can't help but express my disappointment that such an interesting double bill – music of great quality and the opportunity to visit a very special house - did not entice more members and friends to join us. What can we do to attract more members and friends? We welcome your suggestions for the next AGM concert – don't hesitate to get in touch.

I take the opportunity here to thank the Borders Guild of Organists Committee for all their hard work that makes the BGO a successful organisation. And we have increased our membership this year to 34 members!

As usual we have an interesting programme for 2015-2016: a music marathon organized by Brigitte Harris in St Andrew's and St George's West Church in Edinburgh; a Praise Workshop hosted by St Peter's in Peebles in October; by popular demand an Advent Recital in Stow Parish Church in November. Our social lunch will take place in March, at the Macdonald Cardrona Hotel in Peebles: it is central; the food is good and the venue is perfect for a private party!

Binns organ which has recently had an historic restoration by Sandy Edmonstone.

David Stark



David Stark at Coldingham

SFO Conference 2015

“Turn left at the Co-op” This was part of the lengthy instructions to find your way to Stenhouse and Carron Church. But what a find when you got there. An Arts and Craft design building which is interesting from the outside but a gem on the inside. Indeed the first item on the day’s programme was a talk by Iain Galbraith about the stained-glass by the eminent artist, Douglas Strachan. Iain discussed the subjects of the windows and pointed out specific details with the help of photographs which he circulated. We were then invited to promenade and have a close-up view while Matthew Beetschen improvised on the organ using themes from the windows.

The AGM followed in its usual format and amongst other matters Brigitte Harris was installed as vice-president. Norman Marr was elected as president for the coming year as the conference is in Aberdeen next year, but very sadly passed away in June. It will be the BGO’s turn to host it the following year, 2017. One item that stood out for me were two instances of ministers’ all-consuming desire for power over organists regarding the music in services. A sad situation.

There then followed two talks, before and after lunch. The first was by a rector of the Episcopal Church which is hard to capture in a few words but was entitled “ *Music of the spheres*” and got in as deep as Pythagorean ratios!

The second contribution was by Nicola MacRae on the life of J J Binns , the Organ builder, who built the instrument in the church. His firm thrived in the second half of the 19th century and still existed into the 20th. Her focus was on Binns the man and his social context rather than the technicalities of his contribution to organ building. This was based on her work for her PhD.

The climax of the day as ever was the organ recital. The recitalist was Sarah Baldock, formerly of Chichester Cathedral and now at Cheltenham Ladies College. Her delightful personality shone through in both her introductions and playing. The console is placed to give a good view of the player and her formidable technique; it looked so effortless! The programme ranged from Buxtehude (Prelude , Fugue ,and Chaconne in C) to Franck (Op 18 , no 3) and included a Bach Vivaldi transcription and a number of chorale preludes. These all showed the range of colour available on this modest 2 manual

We are planning an annual outing for June – read about it in our next newsletter!

I hope you will find this season’s activities of interest and I invite you warmly to join in.

Visit our website on www.bordersorganists.org.uk. We look forward to your comments, articles and photos.

I wish you a happy summer season, with lots of sound and music!

Maggy Stead



Vintage Twelve arrive in Blainslie

Syllabus for 2015/16

Saturday 5 September 2015 10am to 10pm

St Andrew’s and St George’s West Church, Edinburgh

Music Marathon

Come and play or listen to non stop music making

(details from Brigitte Harris. E mail: mharris@waitrose.com)

Saturday 31 October 2015

Praise Workshop in Peebles Old Parish (all day event)

Details from Sarah Brown

Saturday 28 November 2015 at 2pm

Members' Recital in Stow

Saturday 5 March 2016 12.30pm for 1pm

Social Lunch at the Cardrona Hotel, nr Peebles

Guest Speaker: Steven Griffin

Saturday 23 April 2016 at 3pm

AGM in Lauder Kirk, followed by a

Recital by Brigitte Harris

6-7 May 2016

SFO Conference in Aberdeen

June 2016

Summer outing, details will follow

this stone building. The resident organist, Julian Bonia, has done a huge amount of work over the years in restoring the action etc of this fine instrument.

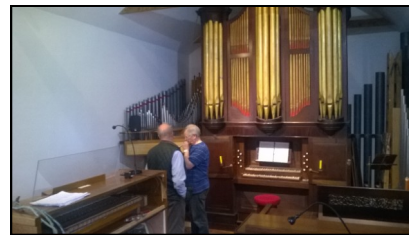
After much enjoyment playing this organ we were invited to Julian Bonia's home - a real treat.

Julian's skills as a craftsman are much apparent in his house where in the music room he has restored a chamber organ of about 1810 by Samuel Letts. This is one of only two instruments known by this maker in Britain. In the same room is also a small post-war Walker extension, which is still in the process of being rebuilt!



Norham: Molly Pringle

We ended our tour in his study where he has built a splendid copy of Baroque three- manual console, on which we played music which is electronically sampled by the *Hauptwerk* system. To experience this renowned computer programme was just amazing. Closing your eyes transported you from a small room to many a great European cathedral organ.



This was a great day with many new impressions in lovely surroundings, in great company and a very happy atmosphere.

David Stark and Brigitte Harris

Our thanks for all the arrangements are due to David Stark, who guided us expertly throughout the day (Editor).

BGO Visit to Coldingham and Norham

23 May 2015

Coldingham

On a bright Saturday in May some of our BGO members had a very full day exploring instruments. Our destinations this year were Coldingham very near the east coast, and Norham, just over the border in England.

First on our itinerary was Coldingham Priory, a very historic place, which has its very early origin in the 7th century. The existing church is the Choir



Arrival at Coldingham

section of the medieval priory, which is still showing original stonework by Durham masons on two of the walls. Derelict by the 19th century it was then rebuilt as the parish church. The Binns organ of 1896 came here c1955 from other church in the village. Recent work to modernise the church interior meant the organ had to be dismantled and removed, then rebuilt on a gallery over the new kitchen at the west end of the building. The action is now electro-pneumatic with a new console at the front of the church while the business end of the organ remains at the west end. Two additional stops (a 12th and a 15th) are prepared for.

Our thanks go to the ladies from the parish, who welcomed us with refreshments on our arrival.

Lunch and lively conversation was had in a local restaurant serving us (mostly) fish and chips.

We then set off to Norham, where its church of St Cuthbert is also an early building. It houses a Binns organ of about the same date. This is a much larger two-manual instrument, which has a cathedral-like sound in



Coldingham: Mary Shields

Harvest Praise

Saturday 11th October dawned a typical, misty Autumn morning, and we set off, myself, husband and Border terrier, to make the beautiful drive along the Tweed to Peebles, where members of the Borders Guild of Organists were to share in a Harvest Praise in the Old Parish Church

We started our morning session at 10.30am with a wide variety of music for Harvest and Thanksgiving, including two Anthems, Mozart's *Jubilate Deo* and Maurice Greene's *Thou Visitest the Earth*.

Lunch was taken, then we resumed our practice in the afternoon, culminating in a short service of worship and praise led by Sarah's father, the Reverend Charles Aitchison. This service began with the singing of the Jubilate, followed by *We Plough the Fields and Scatter, God, whose farm is all creation, Praise God for the Harvest of Orchard and Field, Psalm 65, Praise Waits for Thee in Zion, Lord*, then the Anthem followed by *Pears and Apples*, a short reflection by the Minister, finishing with the wonderful Harvest hymn, *Come, ye thankful people come*. There were also some appropriate readings for Harvest.

Although we had never sung together before as a group, the choir, conducted by Brigitte and accompanied on the organ by Sarah, truly made a joyful noise and the afternoon was much enjoyed by all.

We finished with tea and home baking, then it was back along the Tweed for us, this time in glorious Autumn sunshine.

Mary Shields

Social Lunch Saturday 7th March, 2015

On Saturday 7th March on a windswept day, around fifteen of us met for our Annual Social Lunch at MacDonald Cardrona Hotel. The lunch was of its usual high standard and the staff made us feel very welcome and comfortable during our time there.

Our guest speaker this year was James Robertson, former Music Therapy Course Leader, Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh and practitioner in Music Therapy.

James is a familiar face to many of us through his church musicianship connections at Inverleith St Serf's Church of Scotland and he has recently taken over as Musical Director of the Lauderdale Community Choir.

James spoke with sensitivity, passion and enthusiasm about his variety of experiences in his field. Along with musical examples, he provided a very informative and thought provoking power point presentation which gave us a fascinating insight into how music can facilitate positive changes in emotional wellbeing and communication through the engagement in live musical interaction between client and therapist. Maggy's warm vote of thanks reflected the mood of those present and we all came away with a clearer idea of the importance of Music Therapy in today's National Health Service and beyond.

James himself commented on how much he enjoyed meeting BGO members and was delighted with the welcome he received. Before we left for home, we conveyed our thanks to the staff of the hotel for the excellent lunch and service provided.

Mairi and Robin Leach

Interview with Mairi Leach

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

The organist in the East Church, Inverness Bill Devlin inspired me with his organ playing and I decided at the age of sixteen to ask him to teach me. This was the church where I worshipped with my family for many years.



Where did you first play the organ?

I first played the organ in the East Church, Inverness when I would first of all have the chance to play for a hymn or a couple of hymns during the services.

Which is your favourite hymn?

My favourite hymn is *Lord of All Being Throned Afar* as I think the tune and words are absolutely lovely.

Which is your all-time favourite piece of music?

I like a lot of different styles of music and composers, but one of my favourites is *Wachet Auf* by J.S. Bach.

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

Definitely Wachet Auf by J.S. Bach!

Where do you play the organ now?

I am now a relief organist and I love this as I have the chance to play some wonderful instruments and meet a wide variety of people within different churches.

The interview was conducted in April 2015 by **Brigitte Harris**.