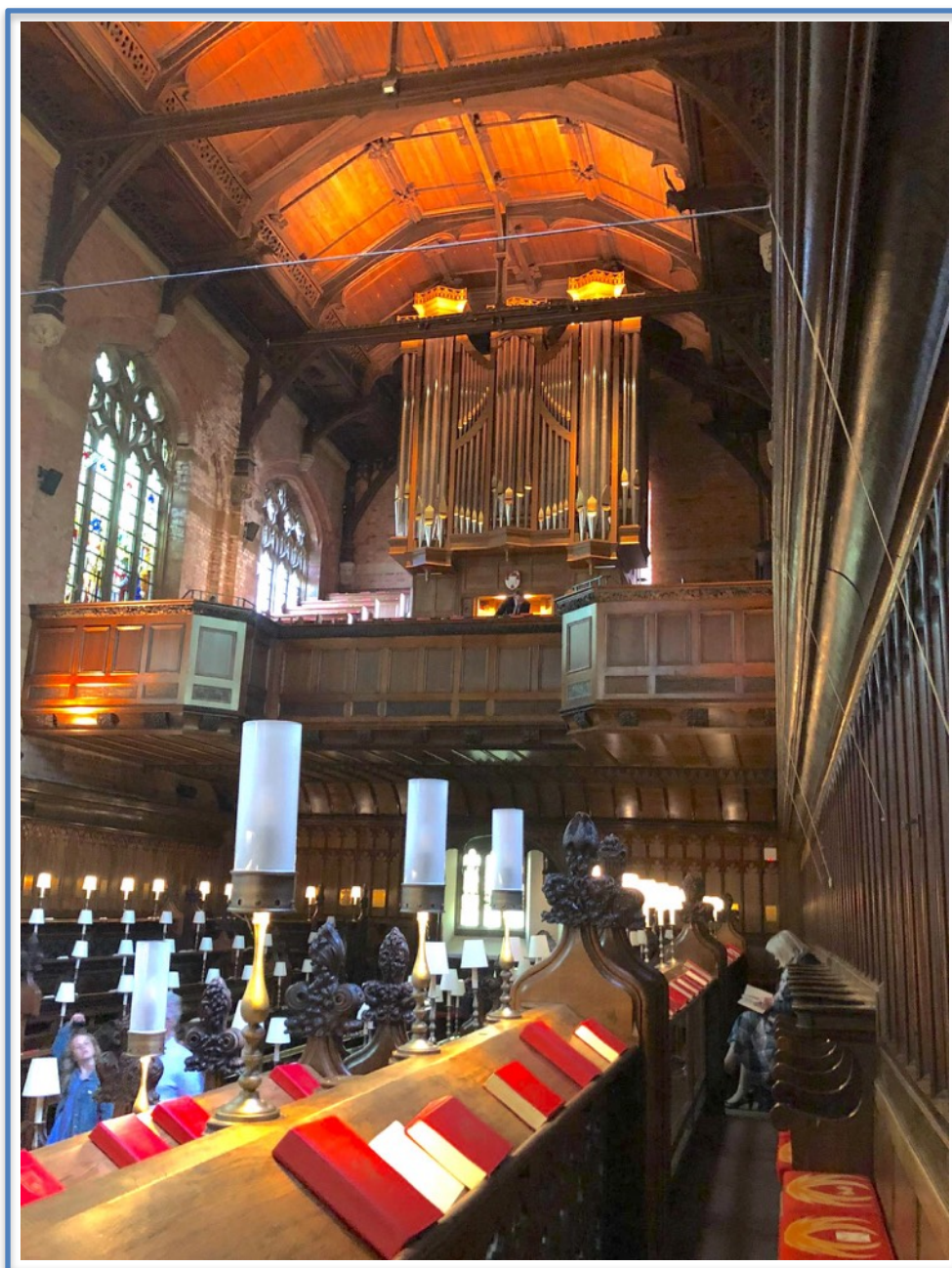




NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

www.nhoa.org.uk

Newsletter 211 June 2023



The new Nicholson organ in Radley College chapel, Abingdon

Programme

Saturday, 17th June: Visit to Boxmoor (Hemel Hempstead):

10.30am: St. John the Evangelist, Station Rd., Hemel Hempstead HP1 1JY

<https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/E01803>

2pm: Carey Baptist Church, Marlowe's, Hemel Hempstead HP1 1LD.

<https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/N14552>

4pm: St. Mary and St. Joseph, St. John's Road, Boxmoor HP1 1NR

<https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/R01854>

Saturday, 1st July: Joint visit with ESAO and SOA to the home of Paul Griffiths and Joanna Marsh. **See James West's notes below.**

Monday 14th - Monday 28th August: Visit to Vienna and Graz.

We are grateful to member James West, also of ESOA, for the following notes on our **visit on 1st July:**

This is a joint trip with our friends from Surrey O A and North Hants O A. The idea for this venue came from Brighton O A who attracted 35 attendees to their visit last year.

VENUE Residence of Paul Griffiths, Arnolds, Nursery Lane, Fairwarp, E Sussex TN22 3BD. **N B Please ignore the address on NPOR**

DIRECTIONS Fairwarp is a small village in the parish of Maresfield. It's just off the B2026, close to the A22, 3 miles north of Uckfield. Advance booking by railway appears to offer substantial discounts

DATE/TIME 2.00pm 1st July

ORGANS The main attraction is the iii/30 2015 Aubertin organ. Aubertin is renowned for his craftsmanship and a testament to the quality of his organs is that volume 11 of Margaret Phillips's complete recordings of Bach's organ music was recorded on the Aubertin organ at Saint-Louis-en-Lille, Paris. There are also Hauptwerk organs and, if it has been returned from Gonville and Caius, a Robin Jennings's house organ. It's fair to say that Jennings's house organs are amongst the favoured choice for house practice organs. Members of NHOA were delighted with the Jennings's organ at St Nicholas, Pluckley on their tour of East Kent. (This organ was chosen, we believe, by Tom Bell, S O A's president)

To ensure these events will be successful, please send an email or phone Gillian Lloyd or Geoff Willis to say that you intend to come.

Contact details are on the last page of this Newsletter.

Copy Date for Next Newsletter

Please send any material for Newsletter No. 212 to the Secretary not later than 15th July 2023

Congratulations to our Vice-President

We are delighted that John Mansfield, our Vice-President, enjoyed a marvellous celebration when he became a Nonagenarian! A crowd of John's friends and relatives joined him on April 15th at the Spire Church in Farnham for a party organised by his daughters. A spectacular cake graced the buffet table looking as if it should be playable! John gave a short speech about some memorable events in his life including being taught by Alan Turing at Manchester University. We presented John with a handmade pen inscribed with "NHOA" on the barrel.



Congratulations,
John!



News of members and friends

We are sorry to tell you that Frances Whewell is very poorly at the moment. Our thoughts are with her, Paul and their family.

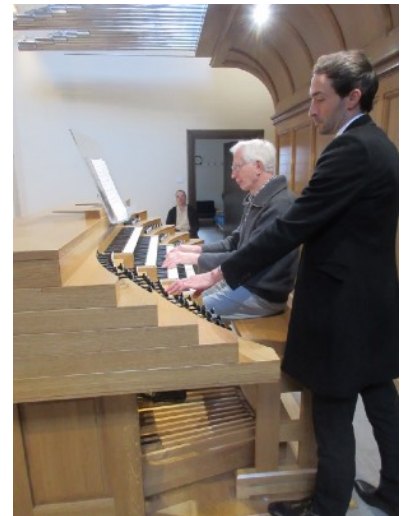
We note the resignations of Ray Fell and Ian Rees. Ray feels that membership is no longer appropriate for him, whilst Ian, having moved to Devon, has now transferred his membership to his local Association. We thank them both for their time with us, and wish them well for the future.

Denny Hunter is now the proud player of a 2 manual Johannus organ previously owned by Rob Goldfinch. It has replaced a Yamaha instrument from a bygone era.

Philip Wells has changed his e-mail address to **philipjwells@icloud.com**

News Roundup

Our London visit on 25th February began at Our Lady of Victories in Kensington, where our host Timothy Macklin introduced us to the 2021 Skrabl organ. You'll have already seen the picture of member Denny Hunter at the console (Newsletter 210), so you'll not be surprised to learn that this is a very exciting instrument to play, if a little overpowering at the console when at full throttle. Skrabl is a Slovenian firm, but this instrument follows the French symphonic tradition, drawing its inspiration from Parisian instruments of Notre Dame, La Madeleine and Sacré Coeur. There are, however, a number of British design features, as well as contemporary elements such as a pedal divide. Some pipework from the previous instrument has been retained. The grand opening recital was given in January 2022 by Olivier Latry.



Tim Macklin assists Geoff Willis with some exciting registrations



St Augustine, Queens'

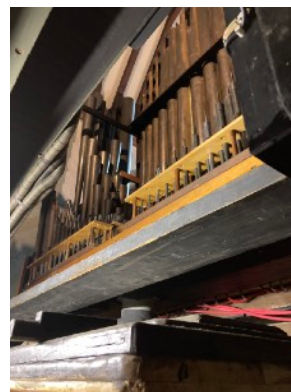
We then moved on to St. Augustine, Queens Gate, which is the high church branch of the Holy Trinity Brompton pastorate. This is a Grade II* listed Butterfield church of 1865, and home to the 1872 Forster and Andrews organ originally built for Wednesbury Town Hall. John Hatton put the instrument through its paces with Walther's Variations on the Passion Chorale and Leighton's Prelude on 'Hanover' before letting us loose on it.

Our final church of the day, arranged at very short notice because of problems at the the original venue, was Christ Church, where we were very warmly welcomed (and fed and watered!) by enthusiastic host Sam Barber, who is in fact a professional trombonist, but also a very creditable organist. This is a lively church which does a lot to cater for young people in the area, but also values its more traditional style. The organ is a substantial 2 man./ped. 1970 Hill, Norman and Beard with, amongst other things, a Trombone, 3-rank Mixture and 4' Shalmei on the Pedal.



The H,N & B at Christ Church, Kensington

On 18th March it was a pleasure to join forces with our friends from ESOA and SOA for a joint visit to Uxbridge and Hayes. John Eagles (ESOA) made us very welcome on his home turf at St. Andrew, Uxbridge, where the 1978 Noterman instrument still retains pipes from the 1809 Elliott organ which came to St. Andrew's from Christ Church, Blackfriars. The organ has an interesting pedigree, progressing from Elliott through Hill, Bonavia-Hunt and Walker to its present incarnation. It was especially good to hear a very capable young Surrey member playing during our visit.



Inside the organ case



West end gallery

At St. Mary, Hayes, we met Stephen Mullins, who spoke about the intriguing history of the 1999 Keith Bance organ. Based on a 1948 4-rank Compton, it is, with its Dykes Bower case, tightly squeezed into a shallow west gallery. However, it still boasts a considerable specification, with the help of electronic enhancement of the Pedal division. Its position means that it speaks out well into the church, and Stephen is very satisfied with it.

Our next visit, on 15th April, was to Dorchester-on-Thames. We began at Radley College, where Rory Moules gave us a tour of the 2021 Nicholson organ. If you had to describe it in one word, 'massive' would probably be that word. It has to support the lusty singing of 760 boys aged 13-18. To do that, it has a monumental pedal department, housed mainly in the old organ chamber to the side of the west gallery which the new organ stands. The Great is based on what Rory calls a 'hefty' Diapason: there is also a **TUBA** (*graphic representation from Secretary's notes*) divided around the side of the case: the Choir is effectively an unenclosed Brustwerk. That's not to say that there are no softer stops, not least some attractive flutes, a fine clarinet and a soft 16' oboe on the Swell. Altogether, this is an instrument of many possibilities, and it is used extensively for recitals as well as for accompaniment duties.



The 'assembled company' at Radley College

Once again, it was good to have the company of friends from SOA, who went on with us to the exquisite little Roman Catholic church of St. Birinus. Birinus was one of the earliest and most influential evangelists to this part of the country, and

one can sense that, standing in the church's lovely surroundings bordering the river. Fr. John Osman welcomed us with a brief history of the church and its extraordinary Aubertin organ, acquired through the influence of renowned conductor Ryan Wigglesworth, who, with his wife, soprano Sophie Bevan, head up the church's music. The sound of the instrument (*specification given below*) is quite specific, and perhaps not to everyone's taste; but it clearly does the job, and our member Joe Stuckey gave an excellent demonstration with his performance of part of a Handel organ concerto.



Jeff Lloyd pulls some stops at St Birinus

Great Principal 8' Chimney bourdon 8' Octave 4' Nasard 3' Doublette 2' Tierce 1 3/5' Mixture III-IV Positiv Bourdon 8' Flûte traversière 4' Flageolet 2' Quinte 1 1/3' Posthorn 8' Pedal Bourdon 16' Bourdon 8' (by extension) II/I, I/II, I/P, II/P tremblant

We then moved just around the corner to the magnificent Dorchester Abbey, with its majestic 1870 3 man/ped. Walker organ. Like the organ of St. Mary, Portsea, about which you'll hear in the next Newsletter, the Dorchester instrument is in a none-to-spacious north side gallery: also like the Portsea organ, it benefits from an ample acoustic, which further enhances its warm and generous sound. Our host was Jeremy Boughton, who explained that Peter Collins had done major work in 2007, lightening the unusually heavy action and adding some welcome modern playing aids. For a number of us, this was the most enjoyable organ of the day, despite the undoubted attractions of Radley and St. Birinus, and, along with the possibility of tea and splendid home-made cake at the Abbey tea-room made for a very happy end to a most successful visit.

Gillian Lloyd

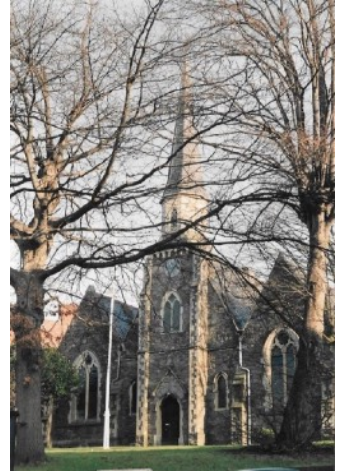
Many of you will have heard or played the organ at St John's, Hartley Wintney. Our member, Martin Barnes, the organist there, is looking forward to the major overhaul which is scheduled to start in mid July. *Martin writes:*

The organ is 127 years old and last renovated in 1977 so the instrument deserves some TLC! The organ has had an interesting life! The organ was built as a three-manual organ by W. G. Vowles in 1898 and installed in the church of St Michael and All Angels, Bishopston, Bristol.

It gave good service until the mechanical action became unreliable and in 1953 Hill, Norman & Beard installed a new tubular pneumatic action and enclosed the choir organ. The specification remained unchanged.



In 1962 Henry Willis cleaned and overhauled the organ, adding a contra oboe and mixture. By 1977 the 1953 action had deteriorated badly, and the original reservoir leathers perished. Percy Daniel & Co rebuilt the organ as a two manual to its present specification. The action was electrified, and a new console built.



In 1991 the church closed due to serious subsidence and the organ was purchased by St. John's, Hartley Wintney. Sebastian Meakin (now J. W. Walker & Sons) removed it and installed it on a purpose-



built balcony at the west end of St. John's. The only change made to the instrument at this time was the installation of the latest solid state electrical connection between the console and pipes.



The overhaul work will include:

- Cleaning and reshaping all 1500 pipes
- Overhauling soundboards and stop actuators
- Eliminating noise in the front pipe valves
- Re-voicing the Pedal Violin and Bourdon and overhaul the Pedal Trombone as only six pipes currently sound
- Replacing the Swell Box mechanism
- Repairing the bellows, reservoirs and trunking
- Cleaning all the electromagnets
- Adjusting the Keyboards and Pedalboard 'speaking' points

I'm sure it will sound brighter and be a joy to play when the work is finished around October. You will be welcome to come and try it yourself!

An Organ Recital at St Lawrence, Alton

Every organ recital I have been to has been unique. Of course that's true of any music programme but in terms of the performer's personality, the audience and the ambience, there is always something new and different.

On Tuesday 2nd May, I went to the Alton Organ Society's last recital of their current evening series at St Lawrence Church. Tony Willman, Director of Music at St Lawrence gave an enthusiastic welcome to Luke Bond, from St George's Chapel, Windsor who was the guest organist.

Luke told us some interesting things about the seven pieces he would play. We were all ears but I think it's a better format to introduce the pieces a couple at a time so we can remember what the speaker actually said when we hear them played.



The console at St Lawrence, Alton

The programme was well balanced and had some good pieces from the organ repertoire. It started with the JSB "Prelude and Fugue in D major" - you know the one that starts with the rising scale in the pedals. At St Lawrence, they have a big video screen hanging over the chancel step so everyone gets a good 'over the shoulder' view of the player AND a window showing the pedalling. Slightly surprisingly, Luke played in his socks which made it easy to see the action. Even so, you had to be paying attention to see how he played that scale - pretty quick and very smooth. Incidentally, for every interval

more than about a fifth, he checked his foot position with the nearest black note. This happened with both feet and looked totally natural and automatic - something he must have learnt from his early years.

The next piece was the calming "O Mensch, Bewein" BWV622 and then Parry's Fantasia and Fugue in G. The latter had a very robust sound but not knowing the piece, I didn't get a good sense of shape and structure. That wasn't any fault in Luke's playing, more likely it's a piece that grows on you with more hearings.

Luke had told us that VW's "Rhosymedre" was among his favourites. It is remarkable how the composer wrapped some lovely progressions and harmonies around what is a very plain hymn tune. I have never had cause to play the hymn but I do like to play this arrangement. The remaining items (Howells' Psalm Prelude set 1 no. 2 and 1st movement of the JSB Sonata V) built the programme to a satisfying end with well-known JSB "T and F in D minor". It's always interesting to hear a top class player put their spin on the

rhythm and tempo on the latter piece and Luke didn't disappoint - the tempi were exciting and he added fine ornamentation.

There were more than sixty in the audience who, like me, had enjoyed being entertained by a fine player in a lovely historic building.

Geoff Willis

Nathan Laube's 'Extraordinaire' at Radley College

On Tuesday 23rd May, I joined two NHOA friends for a Celebratory Recital on the new Nicholson organ at Radley College. Upon arrival and walking through to the chapel, we could hear the college boys robust singing of a hymn. We heard the organ above the voices which provided a perfect introduction of what we were to hear next.

Once we had been marshalled by the college Dons, feeling like 18 year-olds, we took our seats. Looking at the organ in the gallery, with its prominent size, one would think that the sound would be intimidating but once Nathan Laube had played the opening piece and explained his programme, we were given a real treat - which was quite intense.

The symphony of sound was well beyond my belief. Nathan Laube's skills were mightily impressive. The sound of the organ was grand... shimmering strings from different selections - each with a different timbre. I was thinking, "Wow!".



His use of the swell box was quite unique and had its own signature. He made it sound as if the pipes were disappearing into the distance and then returning. His playing skill was tremendous. For each bar he managed to change the registration quickly and smoothly and that grabbed my attention - impeccable skill! The pieces he chose to play were an excellent demonstration of the organ's full capacity. He gave George Shearing's "Sacred Sounds" a classical treatment. His transcription of Mendelssohn's "Variations Serieuses" used beautiful flutes with registrations that were quite new to me.

The chapel in the soft lighting of the late evening complimented the musical extravaganza that we had heard. It was a privilege to support a brilliant organist within the 'organist brotherhood' - an evening not to missed!

Damian Hunter (Denny)

Spinning the Web

When the person who built and over many years maintained NHOA's website decided that he needed to move on to other matters, who better to help with a brand, shiny new website than someone who is technologically rather illiterate? I am well able to negotiate my way around the Web and spend many happy moments surfing, but maintain a site? Naturally, I volunteered!

Now, let me be slightly more honest about my enthusiasm. Whilst I am more than happy to learn a new trick, the main inducement was that learning how to manage this new site (created by our Chairman, Geoff Willis) would mean my having to go to his home where there would probably be some HOME MADE CAKE. Bingo...I'm in!

The only way for me to be able to do help manage the site was to create what I call a 'moron sheet', which is the monkey-see-monkey-do guide to website updating so now I am able to keep things ticking over. But why do it alone when one can go to the Willis household? The NHOA site is now updated over a mug of coffee, a slice of cake/some biscuits, plenty of chat and much laughter.

Our new website is definitely a work in progress and we hope to be able to introduce new elements to it such as videos of member's playing or perhaps articles about local instruments.

If you have any ideas about what you would to see on the site, please let us know by email to nhoa.chairman@gmail.com

Jane Jacobs

School Report

Just before Easter we were invited back to Calthorpe Park School to give a similar presentation to our debut there at Christmas. This time the students were the GCSE Music Technology group. As well talking about the history of the pipe organ through to today's digital instruments, this time we included how organ samples are recorded in the buildings where they are located and then stored in a computer ready to recreate the sound when notes are played (e.g. the Hauptwerk system). We also mentioned some of the technologies that make digital instruments more durable and long lasting. For example, contactless switches for the pedals meaning much less wear and tear.

This time we had twelve students wanting to play our portable instrument in the workshop session. The standard was much higher than in our first session at

Christmas. Ross Walker, Head of Music, put this down to a general increase in the students' confidence as they re-established routines after the disruptive Covid period.

Our offer to arrange for any student to play a pipe organ was taken up by a very musical 15 year old. He has already had three sessions on a big two manual organ in a local church and is hugely enthusiastic. We will arrange different organs in the region for him to experience a wide range of instruments in their different environments.

Geoff W, Martin B and Rob G.

My take on the Lunchtime Menu

In the last newsletter, No. 210, Geoff gave us, rather unusually, a preview of the organ concert he was preparing. He wrote about how he planned it, the pieces he wanted to include and a hint about how he learnt them.

I can add a bit more insight to the practice regime! He takes it seriously and for a new programme, tries to work on some pieces most days. As a rule, the music is confined to his headphones but that means I hear the rhythm from the clatter of the pedals and the squeaky bench - quite an accompaniment if I am watching a good drama on the nearby TV! He occasionally tells me enthusiastically if he's made good progress or more subdued, that some piece has 'stalled'.

After he has got a reasonable handle on them, Geoff plays through all the pieces on the speakers asking my opinion about them and the order in the programme. Sometimes, a couple of pieces sound too similar so a new one has to be found.

On the morning of the concert, Geoff checks several times that he has all the music, organ glasses and shoes and particularly his notes for the 'audience chat'. At a previous concert he had left them on the printer, requiring a quick about turn back to the house.

When we arrive at the church, Geoff sorts out the console - puts the music in the right order, checks the registrations are still set up in the memories. He has a list of the pieces marked up with the number of page turns so there's no guesswork for his pager turner. Geoff likes to have a brief chat to the audience a couple of pieces at a time - interesting facts and stories about them and their composers adding a preview of what the audience can expect to hear.

When I hear the pieces performed “for real” they sound almost new to me. Although the Hauptwerk organ in our sitting room has an impressive sound, it isn’t like being in a big building like St Andrew’s with a real pipe organ.

I’m lucky as I enjoyed all the pieces that Geoff played. My favourite was Cantilene by Malcolm Archer. It’s such a beautiful, peaceful tune. I also enjoyed the March in F - I’m a great fan of Lefébure-Wély. The final piece, “Bring a torch Jeanette, Isabella” had a great story about a whole village tramping across fields to find baby Jesus in a barn. It was easy to imagine the scene when the men sang the tune and slipped in the mud. We were told that, at the end, the whole village gasped at what they saw. Geoff played the final chord with a big pedal run on full organ! What an exciting finish!

Rikki Willis

North Hampshire Organists’ Association

Registered charity no. 275207

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