



# NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

[www.nhoa.org.uk](http://www.nhoa.org.uk)

Newsletter 213 December 2023



*Our President, Malcolm Archer, with NHOA members David Markby, Chris Dew, Geoff Willis and Martin Barnes at the Improvisation Workshop held at St Andrew's, Farnham on 21st October. Rob Goldfinch also joined the players.*

# Programme

**Saturday 16th December at 11:15 am**

Not NHOA but carols as you've never sung them before with a cup of coffee and splendid company, hosted by Martin Barnes. It's the annual Carol Extravaganza at St John's, Hartley Wintney RG27 8ED

**Saturday, 27th January, 2024:** AGM at St. John's Church, London Rd. Hook RG27 9EG.

12 noon, followed by buffet lunch and talk by member Mike Keays, of Mander Organs. See notice below.

**Saturday, 24th February:** Pimlico visit. 10.30am: St. Gabriel, Warwick Square, Pimlico, London SW1V 4QF. 2pm: St. Saviour, St. George's Square, Pimlico, London SW1V 3QW. 4pm: St. Barnabas, Pimlico, London SW1W 8PF.

**Wednesday, 20th March:** Joint visit with East Surrey OA to Westminster University, 309 Regent St., London W1B 2HW (2pm) and another venue TBC.

**Saturday, 6th April:** Joint visit with ESOA to Arundel Cathedral, London Rd, Arundel BN18 9AY (11.30am) and other venues TBC.

**Saturday, 18th May:** Joint visit with ESOA to Magdalen College, Oxford OX1 4AU (12 noon), and another venue TBC.

**Saturday, 15th June:** Visit to St. Paul's, 1 St Pauls Ct, Chipperfield, Kings Langley WD4 9BQ (10.30am), and venues in Chorleywood and Rickmansworth TBC.

**Saturday, 20th July?:** Joint visit with ESOA to Horsham, including Christ's Hospital, St. Mary, Horsham, and Horsham URC (10am?) Date TBC.

**Summer visit:** West Country. Dates and venues TBC.

**September:** Joint visit with ESOA to Croydon and Shirley. Date and venues TBC.

As you can see, there is some uncertainty surrounding our visits! However: please make a note of the dates where fixed or likely. Further details will be sent out by e-mail as soon as they are confirmed.

Our joint events are likely to attract more members to attend so to ensure everyone has a reasonable amount of playing time, please let us know if you are intending to PLAY at any of these events. Thank you!

Gillian: [nhoa.secretary@gmail.com](mailto:nhoa.secretary@gmail.com) or Geoff: [nhoa.chairman@gmail.com](mailto:nhoa.chairman@gmail.com)

**Copy date for next Newsletter:**

Please send any material for Newsletter 214 to the Secretary not later than  
15th January, 2024

## *Annual General Meeting*

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the North Hampshire Organists' Association will be held at 12 noon on Saturday, 27th January, 2024 at St. John's Church, London Rd, Hook RG27 9EG. Items for the agenda should be notified to the Secretary not later than 20th January. Jane Jacobs, Jeff Lloyd and John Mansfield all come to the end of their terms of office on 4th February. They have all expressed willingness to serve for a further term of two years if re-elected. Martin Barnes, Ian Harrison, Gillian Lloyd and Geoff Willis have a further year to serve. Members will find a form either enclosed with this Newsletter to enable them to nominate any other member of the Association (including themselves!) who has agreed to serve if elected as a Committee member. This form also contains other necessary returns, so, for everyone's convenience, please could you all fill it in as required and post it (not forgetting to enclose or pay your **subscription** - see below) **in time to reach Jeff Lloyd by 31st December**. Please will you also note any changes to your Members' List entry clearly on your return slip (i.e., changes to your address, including postcode and e-mail, telephone/fax/mobile number, membership status and availability to teach and/or deputise). The meeting will be followed by a buffet lunch and a talk by Mike Keays of Mander Organs.

**Subscriptions** remain unchanged from last year:

**Individual:** £15 with electronic Newsletter and other correspondence, £20 if you require the printed version.

**Family:** £20 (electronic), £25 (printed).

**Country:** £10 (electronic), £15 (printed)

However, as in previous years, your Committee will be asking the AGM for a mandate to increase subscriptions for 2025 if they feel it to be necessary.

## *News of Members and Friends*

We are delighted to welcome into membership James Bryant and his son Zach, both of whom contributed to our Composers' Anniversary afternoon on 18th November. James is Head of Music at Bishop Challoner School in Basingstoke, has recently been 'filling in' at a number of local churches and he is keen to promote our Schools Project.

Zach, aged 13, is already a very capable organist, and we look forward to encouraging him in his studies. We hope you will both enjoy your membership of NHOA, and look forward to seeing more of you.

Contact details: Mr. J. Bryant, 21, Inhurst Way, Tadley, RG26 4DF: 07834 638800:

[jamespatersonbryant@gmail.com](mailto:jamespatersonbryant@gmail.com)

Carole Chamberlain, one of our loyal, long standing members, has recently started to refresh her organ skills. She tells us about her musical experiences...

I was a late starter at the organ. Peripatetic piano lessons at school helped me to pass Grade 2, but then exams, work and family life took priority. Years later I resumed lessons and progressed slowly, eventually passing Grade 8 piano and music theory.

I sang in All Saints church choir in Fleet for many years, and always loved listening to the organ, so I looked for a local teacher and found the inspirational Robert Dickinson, (who is sadly no longer with us). My lessons were at St John's church in Hartley Wintney, (which was always very cold and still had the old wooden pews), then later at St Thomas on the Bourne. I have happy memories of him playing Bach for me as a reward after a good lesson. I achieved

distinctions in Grades 4 and 5, but found organ exams very nerve-wracking because the examiner sat next to me on the bench and watched every move at close quarters.

I later resumed full-time work and study, so organ lessons had to stop because getting practice time at church was impossible.

When I retired, I decided to learn the flute and spent a few years playing in a small concert band. I passed Grade 5, but I'm still trying to improve my tone. I also joined a ukulele group, where I was introduced to chords such as Gsus2 and a half-diminished flat 4.

In 2015, a fire destroyed All Saints church, including the organ, so services were held in the church hall for seven years. I occasionally played flute and piano with friends for church services and other events using a Clavinova with a very unpleasant 'organ' sound.

In December 2022, I broke my ankle in three places. After two operations and eight weeks in bed followed by months of recuperation and physio, I was back on both feet, just as the church was finally re-built and the purchase of a 2-manual Viscount Envoy 35F digital organ was complete. Unfortunately, there was not enough money to replace our pipe organ. In the hands of a good organist, most members of the congregation can't tell the difference, but I still prefer the 'real thing'.

I have been trying to get to grips with the rocker switches. Some of the stops I remember, such the Vox Humana, Gedackt and Salicional are nowhere to be seen, but there are some clever buttons such as SWS & AP. Using the foot pedals is great physio for my ankle. I've discovered that if I press the pedal to the right of the swell by accident, the noise is incredible, so it's not a good thing to do during a hymn! Apparently, this is aptly named the 'crescendo' pedal. The organs I remember only had swell pedals.

After so long, I'm having to re-learn how to play legato on the manuals, and cope with the left hand and pedal, so I've put away the Orgelbüchlein, and gone back to exercises from Percy Buck's 'First Year at the Organ'. The church is only open for two hours on two mornings a week, so practice time is limited and improvement is slow.

After a chance meeting with Geoff Willis at one of the lunchtime concerts in St John's church, he offered to give a guided tour of our Viscount. He has very kindly helped with registrations and given lots of useful advice to me and two other aspiring organists.

I have set myself a goal to learn Lefebvre-Wely's Sortie in Eb. It may take some time ...



*Carole at the console in the rebuilt All Saints church, Fleet*

## *News Roundup*

Our work with local schools is making steady progress. In September, we explored an unexpected opportunity to acquire a small pipe organ. It was in a large residence near Winchester and the current owners wanted it to go to a good home. It's a challenge to find a safe environment for a pipe instrument in a school with 1500 students. We measured up a music practice room but an email exchange with the original organ builder highlighted a couple of show stoppers. The pipes had come from a church and with no swell box to moderate the volume, a player would be deafened in the confines of a practice room. Also the wind system had been designed to be installed in a straight line so any rearrangement of the soundboards would need a significant rebuild. Regrettably, this instrument was not destined for Calthorpe.

In October, Rob, Martin and Geoff hosted a real organ experience for Calthorpe Park student Thomas Bagshaw. Here is his account:

Back in March, the NHOA came to my school (Calthorpe Park) to run a workshop with their digital Hauptwerk organ. This introduced me properly to the instrument, which I had aspired to play for some time. I learnt many things that I hadn't known before, and playing the organ became less of a dream and more of a reality. A couple of weeks later, the digital organ was brought back for our Spring Concert. I performed the Solemn Voluntary by Caleb Simper, using the pedals, and with a change of registration for the reprise.

Following the NHOA Organ Workshop, I was given the fantastic opportunity to tour various different organs, having a go on all of them, during October half term. Geoff Willis, Martin Barnes and Rob Goldfinch took my mother and me to the different organs, and I got to discover first-hand the many types of organs that exist, including a fully mechanical organ. Having never played on one before, it was a very exciting experience, and taught me that the term 'organ' can actually mean lots of different things! Our trip also included one truly dreadful organ, which we all disliked with a passion, due to its poor tuning and other registration issues.

From my trip, I have been introduced to the wider world of organ playing, and a door of opportunity has been opened. I will be playing the organ at the Christingle service at the URC in Fleet (my first time playing at a service), and I know that without the wonderful support from the North Hampshire Organists' Association, both from the schools workshop and the trip in half term, these things would never have happened. Thank you NHOA!

*By Thomas Bagshaw, age 16*

In December we have been invited to give another demo / workshop and concert at Calthorpe Park with the new GCSE student class. This time, at the Christmas Concert, the organ will be accompanying a trumpet duet with an arrangement of the carol "Joy to the World".

We have been introduced to James Bryant, Head of Music at Bishop Challoner school in Basingstoke. James has been a colleague of Gillian's and has requested our demonstration and workshop for his GCSE and younger students on 16th January. We have already checked out the layout of the music room and connected our console to their large monitor screen which gives a great view of the stop jambs.

## *Music in the Borders*

At the beginning of June we stayed in Lauder near Melrose in the Scottish Borders. I saw a poster advertising an organ recital in the village kirk. I had the pleasure of practicing on this instrument some years ago when I was preparing to take an organ exam so I was keen to hear it again.

I walked to the kirk where I met some of the local congregation waiting outside in the sun while the Borders Guild of Organists (BGO) took the opportunity to hold a short AGM in the kirk ahead of the recital.

The kirk takes the form of a Greek cross with all four transepts of equal length. The central crossing is square and above it an octagonal spire makes for a striking view in the town.

When things were ready to start, Brigitte Harris, the recitalist, came out to greet us with great enthusiasm. She is the BGO President, a music lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University and teaches organ in the region sometimes on the organ in this kirk.





We went inside the 17th century building to join the folks who had been at the AGM making some forty people in total. A pretty good turnout for a village on a very warm, sunny Saturday afternoon!

I met Brigitte's husband, Michael Harris, President of the Edinburgh Society of Organists (ESO), who was her page turner for the event. Of course, he knows our member John Riley, who edits their in-house publication "Console".

I was delighted to find I was sitting next to the organ builder, David Stark. The instrument has an interesting history

(see details in NPOR). It was originally built elsewhere by E H Lawton in 1903 and installed in this kirk by Rushworth and Dreaper in 1912. It is a 2 manual, straight pedal, 12 stop instrument. In 2003, David Stark did a major rebuild including soundboards, action, keyboards, some pipework and a new case.

It is sited in one of the four galleries with a steep sloping floor from front to back. Of course, he liked to hear the organ being played and particularly the Sesquialtera which made the swell (having a total of four stops) a flexible division.

Brigitte made a brief introduction and then made her way up to the open organ gallery to play the programme. Unfortunately she didn't tell us about the pieces or their composers but maybe this isn't common practice north of the Border? In any case, there was enthusiastic applause for each of the pieces.



*The organ in the steep-floored gallery*

The programme had a good format with the compositions moving from the 17th to the 21st



*The console at Lauder kirk*

century. It included works by Adams, Byrd, CPE and JS Bach and Mendelssohn, ending with two pieces in a much more contemporary style. The beautiful J.S.B 'Liebster Jesu wir sind hier' was followed by a charming jazz interpretation with the same title by Lieselotte Kunkel. The harmonies were full while the rhythm and timing kept me guessing! The finale was Praeludium by a German composer, Gunther Gottsche which romped along.

Brigitte played with careful phrasing making the melodies sing with a good variety of 'colours'. The Great chorus produced a full sound in the building and contrasted well with the swell which had a good dynamic range. I chatted to some of the audience afterwards and it was good to hear that the event had been greatly appreciated.

*Geoff Willis*

## *A Modern organ in an Ancient place*

The medieval church of St Mary's is a hidden treasure on the south east side of Hartley Wintney.



*St Mary's, Hartley Wintney*

The thriving village built the more spacious St John's in 1870 and gradually St Mary's was used less frequently. In 1975 it was vested to the Churches Conservation Trust to maintain as a Grade II\* Listed Building. Now, among the occasional weddings and other events there is an Advent service held every year. Unfortunately, the church has never had an organ installed. In recent times, a digital instrument has been hired but this is a significant outlay for 'one-off' events.

Could this be an opportunity for the organ we built for our school visits. It's (relatively) portable but would the sound be big enough to fill the church?

A couple of weeks before this year's service (on Sunday 3rd December), Martin Barnes and Geoff and Rikki Willis took the organ and speakers to check the viability.

Martin had already earmarked one of the larger box pews in south transept to house the console. The small gallery above looked an ideal place for the three speakers. While the "Friends of St Mary's" cleaned the church, our gang assembled and connected the organ. Speaker cables were routed as inconspicuously as possible up to the gallery and mains power connected to the solar / battery / generator supply.

It was very gratifying to hear the organ burst into life and make a big sound throughout the church!

The downside of setting up this test was that, before the actual Advent Service, the whole organ had to be disassembled and returned to its home (actually Geoff and Rikki's house) ready for another outing to Calthorpe Park School.

In the next Newsletter, read about how the organ performed in this beautiful, historic church.



*Looking toward the East end, the console is in a box pew at the front on the left with the speakers in the balcony above*

## *Unrehearsed but Well Prepared*

Does the thought of having to improvise scare you witless? There's no reason it should ..... as was ably demonstrated by our President, Malcolm Archer FRCO, at a workshop on 21st October. Using the splendid organ at St Andrew's Parish Church, Farnham and with the help of four volunteers, Malcolm took us through the basics of improvisation and showed how impressive sounds can be created from fairly minimal material.

Malcolm made the point that however "off the cuff" improvising might appear, it actually takes practice and forethought. He mentioned four aspects of improvising that must always be utilised:

1. a melodic fluency
2. a harmonic fluency
3. a rhythmic fluency
4. a structure

So you have to know in advance what you're going to do, how you're going to do it and how it fits together. Basically, it's composing on the hoof.

Malcolm showed that an easy way of familiarisation with improvising is to harmonise a scale – any scale, major, minor, chromatic and up and down. Then add some simple decoration.

In the same way, take a hymn tune and – playing slowly – decorate the melody. Keep a steady rhythm, perhaps using a repeated pedal note as reinforcement. And voila! you've got a chorale prelude.

Malcolm had provided some scripts for the helpers to play. **These are on the NHOA website in the "More / Recent Events" tab.** Coming at this blind, the volunteers (Geoff Willis, Chris Dew, Rob Goldfinch and David Markby) did exceptionally well to make it all sound very polished.

Moving on, Malcolm recommended using a "trio" format with the manuals in 3rds, 6ths or 10ths against a pedal ground. He demonstrated how our French cousins achieve big sounds in toccatas by use of the "bricage" technique, which is basically repeated broken chords on the manuals. He said that the ultimate accolade of improvisation is when someone comes up and asks "what was that piece you were playing?"

Finally, if you wish to read more, he recommended the following book by Gerre Hancock

**"Improvising How to Master the Art"**

**Oxford University Press**

**ISBN 978-0-19-385881-7**

Your scribe recorded the whole event on video and once edited, we hope to make it available on DVD to members.

*Ian Harrison*



## *The Value of Improvisation*

I enjoyed the Improvisation Workshop at St Andrew's church, Farnham on Saturday, 21st October, given by our President, Malcolm Archer, at a very well attended session. As he explained, you've got it right when someone comes up to you afterwards and asks what piece you were playing.

The first professional improvisation I ever heard was at the inauguration of the Royal Festival Hall organ in 1954 when a sealed envelope containing a theme by Sir George Dyson was handed to the blind organist Andre Marchal who proceeded to astonish the audience with his ten-minute virtuoso performance ending with a triumphant double pedalled octave of the theme. I still have the motif in my head after all these years.

The improvisation workshop brought back to me some incidents in my boyhood days at Norwich School during World War II when the number of pupils was only 300, and morning assembly was held in the small school chapel in the Cathedral Close. Very many years ago, it was the main school classroom where Horatio Nelson was taught. In my day, the chapel organist was the English master, Mr. Henry Blakeney ("Bee Wee") who lost a leg in the first World War and his wooden leg used to clatter over the pedals when he played.

I soon realised that he used to improvise on the chosen hymn for the day, before assembly began. My father was a local organist (later to be one of the early members of the NHOA) and I therefore grew up knowing all the more popular hymns in the English Hymnal, and when I recognised the first line of the source of Mr. Blakeney's improvisation I was able surreptitiously to look at the General Index of the Hymnal to find out the number of the hymn. I would then, to the amazement of my school friends, in a whisper passed along the pew, pretend to predict the hymn number before it was announced by Canon Clayton who took the service. The kudos I gained from this subterfuge encouraged me to pursue a lifetime interest in the magic arts and I have now been a member of The Magic Circle, for seventy-three years!

I understand that the number of pupils at Norwich School has increased to over a thousand, and the morning school assembly is therefore now held in the Cathedral itself, erstwhile home of our President as Sub-Organist. In passing, I cannot resist relating two further pieces of trivia: (1) that it is just 77 years ago that I took the Associated Board of the RSM's Pianoforte Examination Grade V (Higher) and my examiner was the then Organist of Norwich Cathedral, Dr Heathcote Statham, and (2) in April 1938, uniquely, whilst Dr Statham was playing it, the organ caught fire and, I assume, he made a rapid and improvised escape!

*Walford Taylor*

## *The organ(s) I play*

Although now retired, I still help at Wyvern Organs from time to time but am also an External Advisor on Electronic Organs to the Diocese of London. This often brings me into contact with John Norman who is the Diocesan Organ Advisor, a mine of information and a very interesting character.

The organ I first cut my teeth on at age 15 was at St Michael's Church, Yorktown, Camberley. The church is quite large, seating around 350, but with a dry acoustic. The 3-manual instrument of 22 speaking stops, installed by Norman & Beard in 1903 was originally built for a residence (possibly by Bishop) and as such, the scaling is quite small. The two 16' pedal stops are stopped 8' and one of those is in the Swell box! A complete rebuild by HNB in 1972/3 improved tonal flexibility considerably; drawstops replaced stop tabs and a sub-octave coupler

added. I enjoyed it very much, especially for accompanying the 30+ choir, but it needed more weight on the pedal and was still a small organ trying very hard to be something bigger! My good friend Stephen Lacey used to help me out on numerous occasions, particularly the Carol Service, when he was organist just down the road at Holy Trinity, Hawley. I used to conduct the choir and he would play – we had a lot of fun! Interestingly, he took a shine to one of my choristers, Jane! Happy days!



*The Boston organ in the chamber above the choir*

In 1985 I moved to Hook. The two manual instrument at St John the Evangelist, was installed by Boston of Winchester and came from Amersham Free Church. It has 18 speaking stops and may have included some ranks from the earlier instrument by W. Noble of London, which came from Aldershot. Despite what it says on NPOR, this organ is still in place and potentially playable. However, after some discussion with Henry Willis & Sons about a second-hand instrument that ultimately would not fit the space, it was decided to purchase a two manual digital organ from Wyvern. This was installed in 2002, incorporating an early version of Phoenix technology with 28 speaking stops and speakers positioned in the pipe chamber. This was probably the instrument I enjoyed playing the most – possibly because the church was always a comfortable temperature with a pleasant acoustic. The organ is not perfect by any means and suffers from a lack of quality samples, but it has done excellent work over the past 21 years. Sufficient scope is available to accompany the choir and yet, will accompany a large congregation with authority. The Vicar at the time of purchase asked about having three manuals with

a solo reed for fanfares and the like!!! I said no, two manuals were fine for a church seating around 200 but, in the design, I included a one stop solo department playable from the Swell manual. When the Posaune is drawn, any selected Swell stops are muted, but will couple through to the Great and Pedal in the usual way. With a designated reversible piston, the Posaune can be selected and de-selected quickly and has proved extremely useful. The Vicar was thrilled and so was I!



*Paul Wren at the Wyvern console*

In 2017 I moved to Funtington near Chichester. The organ at St Mary's Church was installed in 1971 by F H Browne & Sons using (I understand) some of the previous Henry Jones instrument. Tonally, it is a tad on the bright side, but fills the acoustically dead church and accompanies the congregation perfectly well. It is sited on the northern side of the chancel and Sanctuary with very little in the way of casework and what there is, is cheap and cheerful. The stop-list offers little inspiration, but it does a remarkably good job, except for the Pedal 10.2/3 - totally useless!

#### St Mary's, FUNTINGTON

<b>PEDAL</b>		<b>GREAT</b>		<b>SWELL</b>	
Bourdon	16	Open Diapason	8	Gedackt	8
Quint	10.2/3	Stopped Diapason	8	Salicional	8
Bass Flute	8	Octave	4	Principal	4
Salicional	8	Harmonic Flute	4	Flageolet	2
Octave Flute	4	Twelfth	2.2/3	<b>Larigot</b>	1.1/3
GT-PED		Fifteenth	2	Trumpet	8
SW-PED		Mixture	II	SW Octave	
		SW-GT			

Stop key console

Previous instrument by Henry Jones  
1971 F.H. Browne & Sons, Canterbury

*Paul Wren*

# Restoring the Winchester Willis

How do you restore a cathedral organ? Of course, the answer is 'Carefully!'. That word covers a multitude of activities. On Tuesday 3rd Oct I joined about 250 people in Winchester Cathedral where we were educated and entertained about their massive project.

The first installation of this Willis organ was at The Great Exhibition in 1851! It was bought for the cathedral and installed in 1854. Various changes were made in the following years but the organ was last cleaned in 1988. Harrison and Harrison Ltd's (H&H) recent inspection of the state of the organ for this restoration project largely met their expectations: 35 years of dust, dirt and grime; damaged pipes, escaping wind and various worn and gummed up mechanics.

The project started with an incredible effort to raise the £1.1m needed. Apparently, the first £100k came within 6 weeks which shows the level of commitment from individual patrons and charitable donors.

Andrew Scott, H&H CEO, was an engaging presenter aided by some great pictures on two big screens and anecdotes about the practicalities of working in a busy cathedral. Scaffolding was erected in the north aisle with only a small footprint to minimise disruption. Pipes were removed through an opening in the back of the case. Many were cleaned using soapy water and repaired on site while the more seriously deformed, leaking and otherwise damaged pipes were carefully packed and sent to the H&H workshop in Durham. We were told that the transport was only a large van rather than the pantechnicon usually associated with this scale of works.



Newly gilded pipes back in position

Leaking leatherwork in the corner joints of the bellows units were patched on site. The shutters on the swell and solo boxes had become very lazy - only starting to move when the expression pedals were halfway open. The mechanics driving the shutters have been replaced.

The console needed some good TLC and has been refurbished at the workshop. Issues included clattering keys and pedals and the 'speaking depth' very low on the keys making fast playing very tiring.

A new Vox Humana rank has been added to the Swell to increase the flexibility of the instrument particularly for some French repertoire. Its soundboard is right behind the facade pipes of the Swell division so the sound will project well.

On the evening of this presentation, the majority of the pipes, including the new Vox Humana, had been replaced in the organ case. Tuning was well underway and the major task for the remaining month or so of the project is voicing. It's done at quiet times so extraneous sounds like footsteps and jangling keys have finished for the day. Andrew Scott explained that an experienced team of voicers used codes to communicate from the console to the pipe case across the expanse of the cathedral. Scales are played many times to identify notes that are too loud, too quiet, speak late etc. A suspect note is then pressed twice if it needs to be quieter, once for louder, legato or staccato for other changes - a clever type of Morse code!

There was a lovely surprise from Claudia Grinnell who told us about a new chamber organ being built by Renatus, a West Country company specialising in console design and construction. A specific

**WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL**

## Organ Voicing

Please help us by keeping noise to a minimum

You are visiting Winchester Cathedral at a very special time. After many months of restoration, the pipes of our organ are now being tuned and voiced. This is the final part of the project before we can begin using our organ again.

Our organ has nearly 5,000 pipes. Voicing is all done by ear, requiring very quiet conditions. During the voicing, a Voicer makes an assessment of each pipe and tests each one repeatedly to ensure that the speech and volume level are correct; this process is then applied throughout.

donation made this new portable digital one manual instrument possible. It will replace the existing heavy instrument and is expected to be used in all parts of the cathedral. It will use the best-in-class Hauptwerk system, with the pipe sounds yet to be chosen.

Andrew Lumsden gave us a sparkling sample of the restored organ sound with the Guilmant Grand Coeur alla Handel. We were reminded that the restoration was far from finished but the sound was much brighter and louder than we remembered.

The organ is expected to be back in regular use in November and there will be an inaugural recital on the restored organ by Olivier Latry in April 2024.

*Geoff Willis*

## *Our Squadron Leader*

The rays of the sun shone brightly upon the little town of Alton on September 14th this year. The British summer finally got through: the air was warm, the sky was blue, the birds cheerfully sung their song. There was a cheerful anticipation of what was what about to be heard.

With the blower switched on at Mr Willis's command, air rushed through the pipes and St Lawrence's Church was filled with a beautiful noise. Geoff had eight pieces to play in forty minutes, and that time was filled with lively, joyful and melodically inspiring pieces from various composers.

Before each piece was played, Geoff told us about the music and the story behind it. All eight of the pieces had a pleasantness to them, none of them were dreary or dull. The pattern of a lively piece followed by something calm kept the attention of the audience. Four of the pieces particularly caught my attention:

**Trumpet Fanfare II** written by Paul Fey the youngest composer on the list and probably one of the most modern fanfares around. He is a German organ student who made his debut on Youtube during the lockdowns of 2020. This fanfare is extremely bright and cheerful. Looking at the sheet music you can tell pretty quickly that it was composed by a frisky, and energetic young passionate musician. Throughout the six pages of music, there are varying instructions to change the registrations specifically, from the loudest trumpet to softer trumpets if available. With the *Vivace* instruction it certainly is a piece that grabs the attention of the listener. Geoff's fingers were working and the liveliness provided an uplifting, cheery and energetic feel. In my not so humble opinion I think our recitalist played it better than the composer!

**Narcissus** is a piece written in 1891 by American composer Ethelbert Nevin. It is part of his suite, "Water Scenes", written for the piano. The piece is inspired from Greek mythology, about a very good looking man who was found attractive by both genders. Geoff wrote this arrangement for the organ. His choice of stops complemented the melody and it was an easy piece to follow and listen to. An interesting combination of a Contra Fagotto 16' with a 2' flute added a brightness to the sweet melody played. The rhythm could be associated to the image of a bird hopping around on the grass. The applause given made it very evident how greatly it was enjoyed!

**Shenandoah** is a traditional American folk tune. Shenandoah was a native Indian Chief, he lived along a river that was used for trade. A fur trader came past one day and married the Chief's daughter. The piece is based on this event and the arrangement had a very good dynamic range on the organ. Geoff started with a deep rumble from the lowest Eb pedal using the 32' Harmonic Bass to envision distant thunder, followed by an unaccompanied melody. He then brought in a set of sweet harmonies that left the listener with a feeling of peace and ease. Geoff said that the tune needs to graduate from a soft start to a fortissimo. The progression of

the melody, harmonies, along with the changing registrations choreographed the changing moods and the feeling of the story very very nicely. We were asked to imagine standing by a river looking up into the mountains with the wind rushing through the valley. This image suited very well this beautifully played and popular tune.

**Our Squadron Leader** was written by Nigel Ogden as a tribute to Reginald Dixon who served in the Royal Air Force. This is one of his more recent compositions. The rhythm is very much a march which has a military sequence to it. It is a piece one would imagine to be heard on a village green at a summer event or by a marching military band. It would leave you with feeling that you wanted to clap along to the rhythm, as many military marches tend to do. Geoff used a loud registration for the opening march to set the atmosphere. The piece then turned into a feeling of a charge and gave the feeling that an individual was on a determined mission, Geoff's selection in the registration gave a great annotation to this feeling. It briefly went to the march again, then to a feeling like you were at a funfair that had a gracious and more relaxed feel, giving Geoff a break before returning to a full fortissimo march! It was certainly was a great piece to listen to. However, with the rhythmic changes, it can't have been the easiest piece to play. Nevertheless, "Our Squadron Leader" was played very well indeed by our Squadron Leader!



*Geoff 'on the screen' at  
St Lawrence, Alton*

The three manual organ is due for restoration and overhaul in the foreseeable future and the lunchtime concerts help to raise funds. Huge congratulations to Geoff "our squadron leader", your playing, was fantastic. Also, thanks to Martin Barnes, for being the page turner. If you weren't there, you missed a real treat!

*Damian Hunter 'Denny'*

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**North Hampshire Organists' Association**

Registered charity no. 275207

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