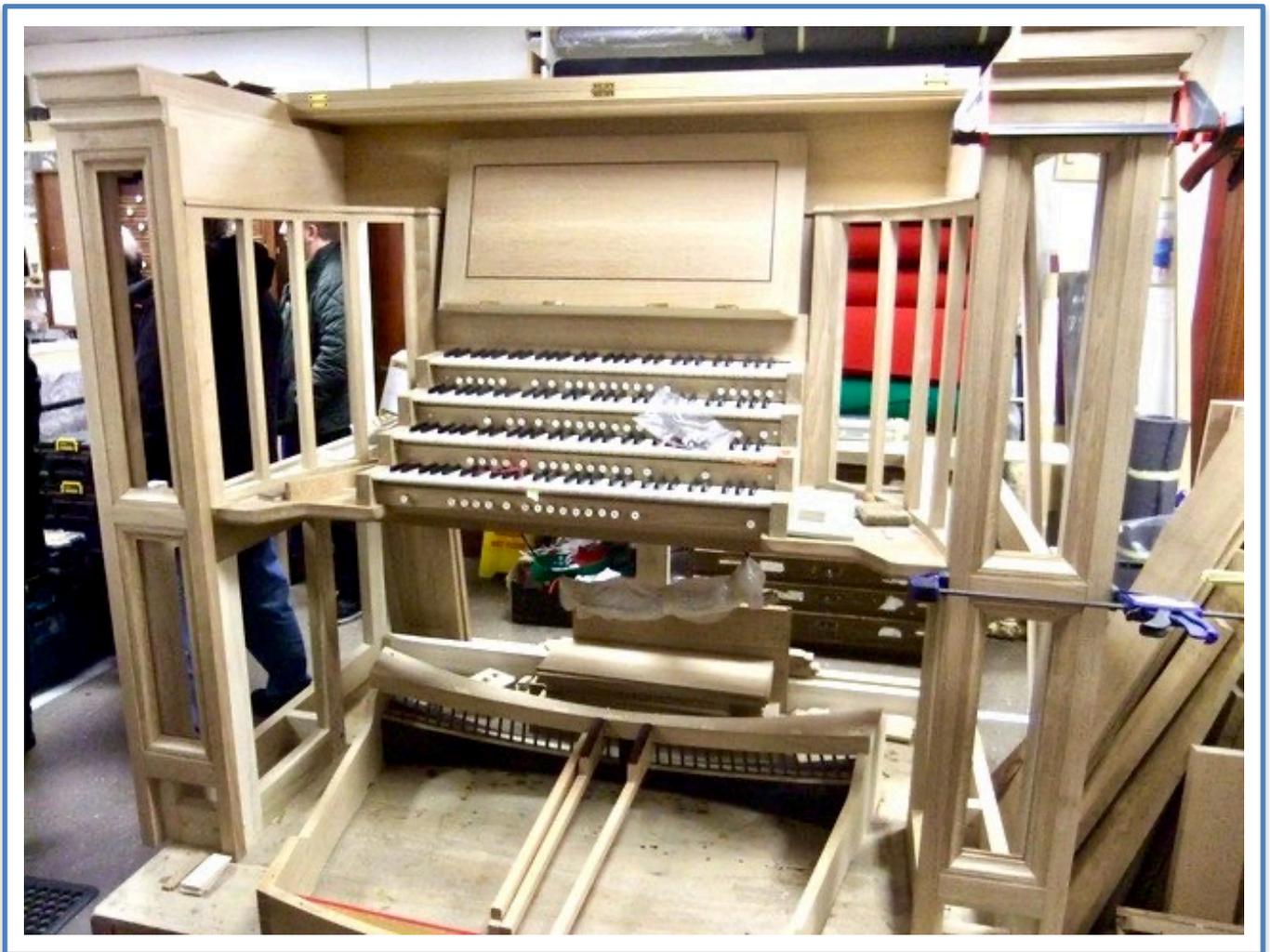




NORTH HAMPSHIRE ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION

www.nhoa.org.uk

Newsletter 2 | 8 March 2025



The 104 stop (including chimes) console for Leeds Town Hall which will be returned from the lower stage to just in front of the restored and redecorated 32 ft organ case.
See more about Nicholson & Co. organ building on page 8.

Programme

Saturday, 26th April: Goring-on-Thames. Joint visit with ESOA and SOA. 10.30am: St. Thomas of Canterbury, Manor Rd, Goring-on-Thames, Reading RG8 9DP (NPOR N09545). 2pm: St. James the Less, Pangbourne Hill, Pangbourne, Reading RG8 7AX (NPOR D02114). 4pm: St. Mary, Whitchurch-on-Thames RG8 7DG (tbc) (NPOR D02131)

Saturday, 17th May: Sussex. Joint visit with ESOA and SOA (it is suggested that you bring your own lunch which we are invited to eat in the church hall). 10am (please note earlier start time): St. Mary, Pook Lane, East Lavant, Chichester PO18 0AX. 12 noon: St. George, Donnington, Chichester PO20 7PN (NPOR V00310) 2.30pm: St. John the Evangelist, 5 St John's Street, Chichester PO19 1UR (NPOR N1555). 5.30pm (for those who wish): Evensong at Chichester Cathedral, Chichester PO19 1PX (see NL 217)

Saturday, 21st June: Joint visit with ESOA and SOA to Hanworth. 11.30am St Mary's, Bedfont, Hatton Rd, Feltham TW14 8JR. 1.00pm St George's Hanworth, Castle Way, Hanworth, TW13 7QF. 3.15pm All Saints, Hanworth, Uxbridge Rd, Feltham TW13 5EE. ***Please be aware that All Saints church is in the ULEZ zone.***

Saturday, 19th July: Burgess Hill. Joint visit with ESOA and SOA. 10.30am: St. John the Evangelist, Civic Way, Burgess Hill RH15 9AQ (NPOR E00543). tbc 2pm: Hurstpierpoint College, College Lane, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks BN6 9JS. Holy Trinity, High Street, Hurstpierpoint, Hassocks, West Sussex, BN6 9TS.

Wednesday, 27th August - Friday, 5th September: Sweden visit. Information being circulated by e-mail to those wishing/intending to come. *Others are welcome to join, please contact Jeff Lloyd on 01483 570586 or jeffreyllloyd@talktalk.net ASAP*

Saturday, 13th September: Cheam visit. 10.30am: St. Andrew's United Reformed Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam, Sutton SM2 7BZ. Two other venues tbc.

COPY DATE FOR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

Please send any material for Newsletter 219 to the Editorial team at geof.willis@btopenworld.com no later than 15th May 2025.

News of Members and Friends

We are very sad to announce the death on 17th January of Pete Currie, an active and enthusiastic member of NHOA since 1985. Pete was a stalwart on Saturday visits and other events, and also on longer trips, when his sociable nature, organisational skills and unfailing care for other members of the group were much valued. A keen organist and pianist and a warm-hearted friend. He will be greatly missed. NHOA members were able to attend his funeral on 25th February and a tribute to him appears later in this Newsletter.

We are delighted to welcome into membership John Maclean and student member Boqing Wen. John is part of the 'organ circuit' for his area; Boqing is a sixth-form student at Tormead School in Guildford, and one of Gillian Lloyd's pupils. We wish them both a long and happy membership of NHOA. Contact details:

John Maclean, Ivy House, Tunworth Road, Mapledurwell RG25 2LG. 01256 460707, 07760261119. Jkmaclean1@btopenworld.com

Boqing Wen (student member under 18) c/o wenping418@hotmail.com

It was especially good to see both our President, Malcolm Archer, and long-standing member Paul Wren, at the AGM. We very much appreciate the active support that Malcolm gives to NHOA alongside his busy professional life. Paul has been a member since 1969; he now lives in Chichester, so is not able to come to many meetings. Thank you both for making the effort to be with us!

Pete Currie

Pete, as he was known to us in NHOA, was born on 29th July, 1941, in Farnborough. An early move to Tongham was dramatically cut short when a nearby ammunition train exploded, destroying the family home (fortunately without injuring the family!). Pete, with his parents and sister, eventually moved back to Farnborough, to the house near St. Peter's Church, which would be Pete's home for the rest of his life. His working life was spent at the Royal Aircraft Establishment, where he worked on weapons; but, as many of us know, he was a man of wide interests.

Chief amongst these was his lifelong commitment to the Army Cadets, whom he served with distinction. He was also a keen and accomplished swimmer and an energetic member of his walking group. As we know, music was a central part of his life.

Apart from his Hauptwerk organ, of which he was justly proud, he owned a Steinway grand piano *and* a Knight upright, as well as numerous other instruments (including a mouth organ and a ukulele) which continue to surface as the family deal with the inevitable house clearance. He also had a somewhat gory interest in the Medical Film Society, and, it emerges, an addiction to car boot sales!

We, of course, knew him as a loyal and active member of NHOA. As well as regular attendance on Saturday visits, during his long membership (he joined the Association in 1985) he took part in a number of overseas and other longer trips, where his convivial nature, bottomless fund of anecdotes, and, above all, his kindness and care for other members of the group, endeared him to his fellow travellers. This concern for others clearly extended to his neighbours in Farnborough and his friends in the walking and swimming groups, all of whom, along with those of us in NHOA who counted him as a friend, will miss him greatly. May he rest in peace.

With many thanks to Ralph Walter (cousin) and Sue Evans (neighbour) for their helpful notes

Gillian Lloyd



News Roundup

What comes to mind when hear the term “A.G.M.”? If it’s sitting, wondering when you will be released from soporific speeches, then you weren’t at St John’s, Hartley Wintney on Saturday 1st February for our NHOA AGM! Twenty four members gathered in anticipation of an entertaining afternoon and they weren’t disappointed. Of course, there was the formal business. Gillian gave a comprehensive report of the year’s activities, Jeff updated the meeting about the state of the finances (which are in good shape) and Geoff reminded the members about our range of communications, the educational events and planned activities for the coming year. The committee was re-elected. With the prospect of a buffet lunch, prepared and provided by Jane Jacobs and Rikki Willis, the formal meeting was wrapped up in 45 minutes.

After lunch, Martin Barnes gave us an entertaining and instructive talk about bellringing. He told us about how ringing had developed over hundreds of years. Who would have thought that some of the bells in our local church towers were cast 700 years ago? Martin showed how “ringing the changes” is done using number sequences. It all looked so easy in the videos that he showed!

The last part of the afternoon required audience participation. Martin had brought a set of beautiful handbells. Geoff explained how a set of numbers on the large TV screen represented four part harmony: each number relating to a note on a musical scale. The tunes were well known: a round of Jubilate Deo by Pretorius, Joy to the World and the

Skye Boat Song in four part harmony. Geoff “conducted” using a pointer to the columns of numbers on the screen and the vibrant sound of chiming bells filled the room.

Afterwards, some members enjoyed trying out the newly refurbished pipe organ in the church (see update on page 10)

The image displays a handbell score for the hymn "JUBILATE DEO". At the top is a keyboard diagram with 13 numbered keys (13-1) and two additional keys labeled X and Y. Below the diagram, the title "JUBILATE DEO" is centered, with "Page One" to its left. The score consists of two staves of musical notation, each with 8 measures. The notation includes numbers 0-9 representing fingerings and rests. Some numbers are color-coded: blue (e.g., 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9), green (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9), and red (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9). The score is presented in a grid format with vertical bar lines separating the measures.

The handbell score, left to right in two rows (staves).
The colour shows the repeated melody in the musical round.



Full concentration on the score displayed on a large TV screen where the conductor (Geoff) pointed to each column (beat)

My Organ Scholarship

I remember, at the age of 12 years old, the first time I walked into the Radley college chapel.



I was there for a music pre-audition, and, as part of the tour, I got to see the gallery, where the organ is located. The first thing I heard played on it was John Rutter's *Toccata in seven*, and I was so inspired by it, I learnt it and it remains one of my favourite pieces of repertoire to play. It is such a beautiful organ, and after the pre-audition, I was hooked.

Skipping forward to a little over a year ago (January 2024), I was, once again, back at Radley, this time for my music scholarship audition. After my piano piece, two trombone

pieces, and a couple of aural – related tests, I was back up in the gallery, this time not to see the organ, but to play it.

Funnily enough, the piece I ended up playing for the scholarship was none other than the *Toccata in seven*, in the presence of the Precentor (Head of music), Sam Gladstone, and the Succentor (Deputy Head of music), Tim Morris, who is also the head organist.

After a week or two of tense waiting, I got the news back that I had been awarded a music scholarship to Radley. After a celebration with my parents, it was back to patient waiting for my last two terms at Papplewick, my old school, to end quietly.

Skipping forward to last September, and I find myself once again at Radley, finally, a student there. The music school was in the process of being demolished, and I was sceptical as to where I would be doing my music. The answer? Everywhere around the school; in a rugby pavilion, in a temporary building, and even in someone's house on the school site that had been converted! The organ, however, was perfectly untouched by the music school refurbishment, and I found myself enjoying playing it, and I learned a lot of new repertoire.



The organ itself was completed in 2022, and before then chapel services must have been a lot less impressive! The organ sounds truly magnificent and has a wide range of stops to use. It has the stops for quiet repertoire – sometimes so quiet that you can't hear it over the indistinct chatter of the other students during the voluntary at the end of each service. On the contrary, it has stops that let you play out to your



heart's content (or even blow off the roof of chapel in some cases!)



The organ has a very refined and high-quality look. Its magnificent sound goes very well with its dignified appearance. For any hymn, the pedals are especially important for setting the bass line, and the Radley college organ definitely takes the biscuit in this respect! There are contrabass stops (32') which really add that extra 'oomph' to performances.

For each student, you get your own library on the organ (mine is Library 6 200-299, for example), and with eight different settings for each number, this means that you can save 800 possible different combinations of stops! This makes arranging hymns really easy, and this feature has helped with stop arrangements for my performance pieces, including a hymn I am due to play soon in a chapel service - *O Jesus think on me* - on Friday 14th March, and I very much look forward to it.

Zachary Bryant, 14



The Nicholson organ in Radley College chapel

A visit to Nicholson & Co.

Our member Philip Wells lives in Berkeley, Gloucester and is a member of the Gloucester Organists' Association. He tell us about there recent visit to a well-known organ builder....

The Gloucestershire Organists' Association (GOA) visited Nicholson & Co. Ltd., Lower Interfields, Malvern, Worcestershire, WR14 1UU last Saturday, 11 Jan 2025. We were shown around by their MD Andrew Caskie (who arrived by bike) who was pleased to answer questions from the goodly crowd present.



Visitor entrance. Only Bishops organ builders have been in business longer than Nicholson - 1795.

The two big jobs being worked on were Manchester Town Hall (with Flentrops) and Leeds Town Hall, but we also saw some work on the organ for Gloucester Cathedral. Described as "Refurbishment and renewal" this instrument has been controversial ever since the Downes/HNB work of the

1970's which has now all been assigned to the melting pot. It remains to be seen whether the new work will become as iconic as previously.

The specification of the new Gloucester Cathedral organ is available from their website:

<http://www.nicholsonorgans.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/GC-website-spec.pdf>



Gloucester C. front pipes awaiting repair. Only 23 old case pipes are to be reused in the 'new' organ



Gloucester C. pipework close up. The painting will be retouched/restored by specialist art



Part of the pedal organ for Leeds Town Hall in the Nicholson erection shop.



A new wind chest (Echo Choir organ) for Leeds Town Hall.



No, not woodworm but grooving on the plywood table of a wind chest to enable all the pipes to fit on the chest. Another ply layer will go on top of this.



The Head pipe maker Kelvin Deeming-Kent (on LHS) soon to take up a new position with the Ortloff Organ Company, a pipe organ building, restoration, and maintenance firm based in greater Boston, Massachusetts.



A demonstration of different kinds of embossing on a spotted metal pipe.

Philip Wells

The 'long haul' at St John's, Hartley Wintney

In our March 2024 Newsletter (NL214), Martin Barnes wrote about the organ overhaul at St John's, Hartley Wintney. How has it gone? Martin gives his verdict...

Well, here we are, 12 months on from the last report on the organ overhaul at St John's, Hartley Wintney, and it is still not completed; but it is working!

It has been a very painful slow journey, but Bishop & Son have paid attention to detail and the quality of the work is high, when they are working. The new brackets that were made up to support the new banks of slider solenoids are clearly made by a craftsman and are of a quality that would not be out of place in a drawing room.



The pipework is clean and looks good. The slider solenoids are in and working, but did cause some problems to Bishops. They connected the electrics into the existing solid-state installation but not all the solenoids were working. They spent a considerable time trying to trace the problem and were on the phone to the solid-state electric manufacturers. All were baffled. Eventually it turned out that the electrics had been connected incorrectly when they were installed in 1991 and then the wiring 'altered' to make things work. All has been fine for 30 years until the solenoids were reconnected into the system. So, the wiring had to be installed correctly, and the 'alteration' removed.



The new swell engine is installed and has completely changed the operation of the swell shutters. They are no longer erratic and intermittent in operation, or bang shut!



The regulation and tuning has been carried out, but they were not happy with the initial speech of the new trombone pedal pipes. Those of you who played the organ before will know that these pipes have never really worked as they go so badly out of tune within hours of being tuned. Bishops have renewed the reeds and associated parts. They have taken the boots away to adjust the reeds.

We are now waiting for the return of the trombone boots and a retune of the organ as there are several things that have now settled down and need attention. When will this happen? I have absolutely no idea.

Martin Barnes

The Organs I Played

Michael Keays reminisces on some of the organs he has played, particularly in the last 10 years, for the North Hampshire Organists' Association.

In my nearly ten years at FH Browne / Mander Organ Builders I have had the pleasure and privilege of playing well over 400 organs, all quite different (from single manual continuo organs to some of the largest in the country, the 5-manual Rushworth & Dreaper in the Chapel of Christ's Hospital being the largest), all carefully logged, of course!

It is a well-known fact that most organ builders cite the building as being the most important stop on the organ; this is certainly true, and pertinent, when it comes to designing a new instrument. Often an organ which is already in position has had various changes over the years, or the building itself has changed – I know of one church which is now one third of its original size yet the organ itself has remained unaltered, presenting a huge maintenance headache for something which is now the wrong size anyway! Or there is my own church (Aylesford), where a significant proportion of pews were replaced with acres of carpet, instantly deadening the higher harmonics (an issue finally resolved in the 2015 rebuild when we reinstated a bold 3-rank Great Mixture, removed in 1894).

One of the most memorable occasions I recall was playing one of our continuo organs – just three moderately-scaled ranks – which we had loaned-out whilst working on the organ at St John the Baptist, West Byfleet. The nave roof is barrel vaulted and the



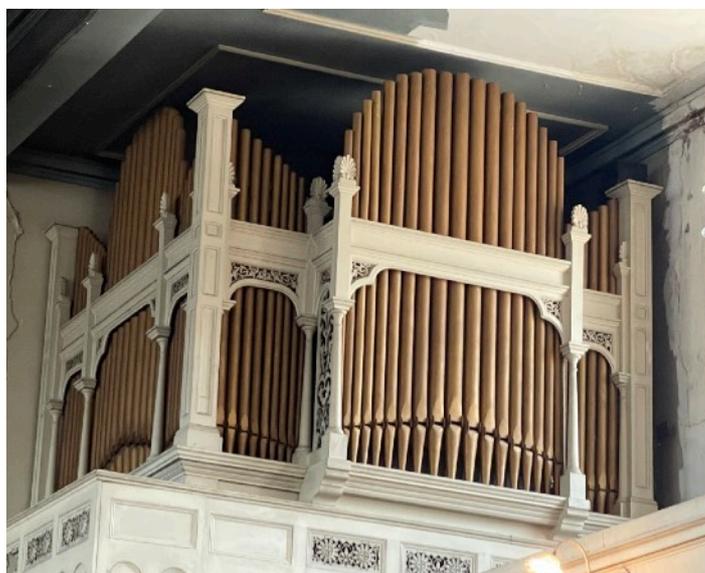
Continuo organ by FH Browne
at West Byfleet



organ sounded magnificent in the resultant reinforcing acoustic; a similar experience also at the huge (and largely unknown) church of St John of Jerusalem, Hackney this time with a Peter Collins continuo hinting at the potential splendour of a good full-sized organ, so much needed in that building.

But what of the challenges of playing instruments? So many organists (unless armed with a good digital recorder) never hear their performance in the way that others do, buried under the Great division as its sound floats away well above them. The joys of a detached – and (even better) – mobile detached console. At Aylesford, the 1965 rebuild provided a detached console and electric action, but the console remained in the Lady Chapel whilst the organ itself was moved into the nave; it took yours truly some considerable time after I arrived in 1985 to avoid drowning-out the congregation, and even more time to get used to the delay which in faster pieces was quite disconcerting; both problems solved in 2015 with the console placed on a mobile platform. Deep joy!

And then of course there are those ‘gotcha’ moments. St John’s Church Chatham (an impressive Waterloo church) had been closed for 30 years before we received a call to tune the organ, to which I responded that I thought maybe it would be wise to pay a visit first to see how the organ had fared without use for all those years. Apart from the low voltage electrics (which took some coaxing to work – considerable corrosion on contacts), I was flummoxed by what I had heard previously was the most superb Pedal Trombone. Sadly, it was no longer working, or so I thought until I found a handwritten note inside the back of the console advising that the ‘ventil’ switch was under the keybench: Indeed it was, but well hidden – and the advice about the quality of the Trombone was if anything understated, what a superb sound!



St John's at Chatham

On the more challenging front was one superb, but sadly ailing, Hunter. I was called-in to play for the annual service of the Maidstone branch of the Royal Naval Association only to find two problems. First, no matter what I did, nothing changed the registration ... until it dawned on me that one of the pedals was a crescendo one, which had been left about a quarter on. Problem solved ... eventually! Worse though was that there were several notes off, forcing some on-the-spot transposition in order to get as many notes in the hymns as possible ... Sadly, this problem got worse each year (and was also accompanied by cyphers and a quick dash inside the organ before the service); one only hopes that the church will realise the value of what they have and do some serious fundraising ... We live in a world of hope!

In my rambling ‘tour’ of organs, I recall a number of occasions when, judging by comments in the tuning book, organists have had to deal with such problems as “bottom octave of the Celeste isn’t working”; the comment that there are no pipes for

this octave usually solves that problem. Back in the last century (September 1995 to be precise), when everything was going metric, I noted in our tuning book at Aylesford that “I suppose we’ll have to refer to the Great 2.436m Stop from now on”, only for David Wintle (our long-standing tuner at that time) to respond wittily with the advice “Organ not to be used after 1st Oct until new metric ‘EEC stop tabs’ have been fitted ...”!

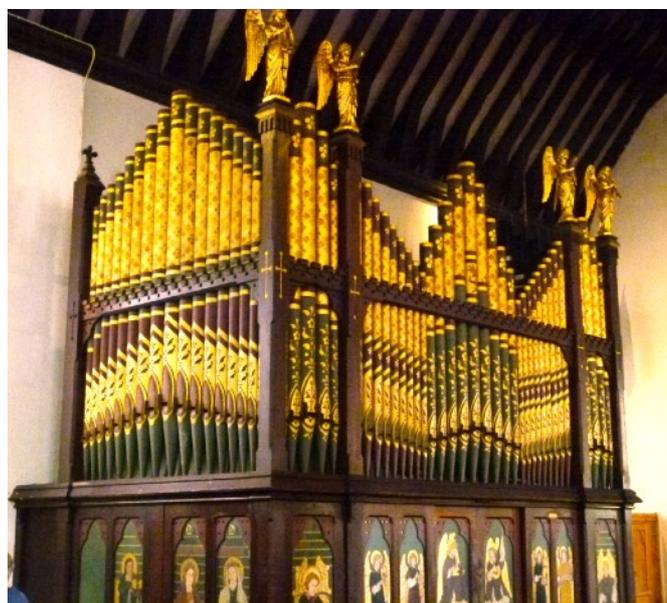


St Peter & St Paul at Aylesford



One of the biggest issues I have encountered (apart from people who delight in trying to hold a full-scale conversation with you whilst you juggle with a voluntary of some fiendish Bach) is related to heating.

Ignoring the severe damage that can occur with over-heating the church, the huge fluctuations of temperature are of course an ever-present challenge for any organist, uncertain of how far reeds and fluework have drifted and indeed if the prepared voluntary has to be jettisoned in favour of peace and goodwill towards the (largely talking) congregation. My challenge these days is more one of keeping the fingers from seizing-up as we regularly have temperatures on a Sunday morning between 8 and 10 Celsius at this time of year; must be some sort of penance for musicians!??



Those then are a few of my reminiscences, issues / challenges faced or noted, and how handled ... and a 'virtual' tour of much of the South of England! I eagerly await other members' observations and recollections!

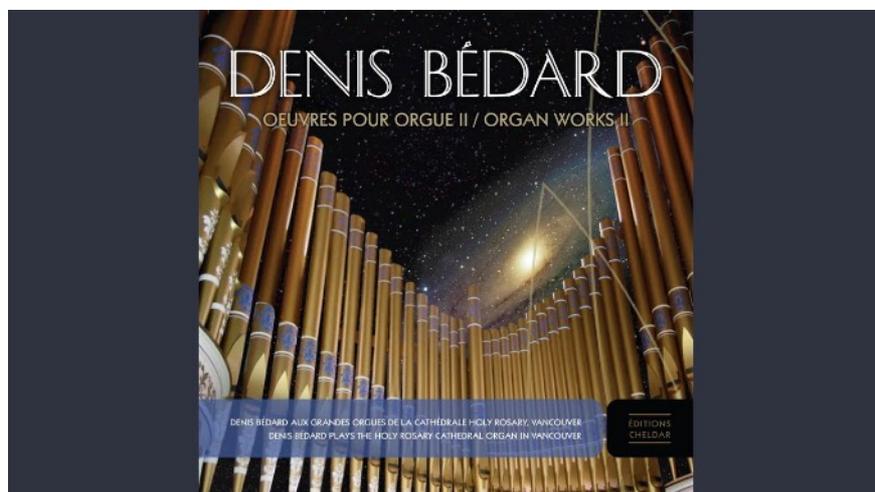
Mike Keays

Hidden Gems

Bob Batchelor now lives in Yorkshire but manages to join us on some of our visits and summer tours. He has found a beautiful piece by Denis Bedard which he tells us about here.

Denis Bedard was born in Quebec in 1950 and was appointed organist and music director of Holy Rosary Cathedral in Vancouver in September 2001. In 2007 he composed a series of eight pieces based on musical phrases from the Merbecke *Pater Noster*.

This link below takes you to the first phrase *Pater Noster, qui es in caelis*. Each phrase is preceded by the relevant sung section. Click on the picture below. (YouTube search: *bedard Pater Noster, qui es in caelis* then look for this picture)



The composer writes about the complete work:

“This major organ work (26 minutes of music) was commissioned by Holy Rosary Cathedral on the retirement of the Most Reverend Adam Exner, OMI, Archbishop Emeritus of Vancouver, to whom the work is dedicated. It is divided into eight pieces, each one being based on a musical phrase of the Gregorian chant *Pater Noster* (*Our Father*). The composer’s challenge was to create appealing and varied pieces, organised in flowing succession from a chant written in a recitative style.

This "Hidden Gem" is *No.1 Pater Noster, qui es in caelis* which is described as "Written in ABA form, this piece is quiet and majestic with a more animated central section".

The printed music is contained in *Denis Bedard Organ Works Volume 2* published by RSCM.

Bob Batchelor

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