



Kent County Organists' Association

August 2019 Journal



Kent County Organists' Association

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Photographs

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THE KENT COUNTY ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION welcomes new members with an interest in the organ and its music. Also those who enjoy visiting churches with appreciation of architecture and heritage. Membership of the Association is not based on the ability to play; we welcome equally those who enjoy listening, as well as those who enjoy playing.

President's Notes

By Michael Cooke

THE LAST FEW months have seen some interesting visits. In February we visited the recently restored St Augustine's Abbey at Ramsgate, and its rebuilt organ. Benjamin Scott gave us an excellent recital, after which, some of us were delighted to play ourselves. The organ was built by *FH Browne* in 1952 as a three-manual organ (the only stop peculiar to the Choir manual being the Dulciana – all the rest were borrowed). It was rebuilt as a two-manual instrument by *Willis* in 2018.

Our KCOA organ competition took place in March at its usual venue – All Saints' Parish Church, Maidstone. The winner was Ondřej Smolík from the Czech Republic who was later to give an astounding recital on the organ of Rochester Cathedral – more of which later.

In May we visited the Garrison Church at Brompton, after which we went to the Baptist Church in Gillingham. There the organ is a *JW Walker* instrument of 1855, purchased from St John's Church Deptford, and then rebuilt and installed by *W Walmsley* of Maidstone.

June saw our annual coach outing to the Abbey of St Mary and Ethelflæda at Romsey and then St Mary's, Southampton. The earliest mention of an organ at Romsey is 1782 by *Henry Coster* of Southampton. The present organ is by *JW Walker*, built in 1858 it received major attention in 2015 and is in as good a voice as it ever was. An interesting feature is the single manual detached (mobile) console, by means of which the Nave division can be played with the console in the Nave, thus enabling it to be used for Nave services.

The organ of St Mary, Southampton is a large three-manual *Willis* dating originally from 1883, but installed in St Mary's Church in 1956. It speaks well into the Chancel and Nave (which has been adapted for modern worship with music group), but requires a major overhaul, although it performed the *Widor Toccata* very well, my registering the softest combination for the *PP* middle section and using the General Crescendo Pedal for the rest!

And so we come to July with our visit to Rochester Cathedral to hear Ondřej Smolík's recital. I wonder how many people considered the Thalban-Ball variations a bit simple for such an excellent player – not realising that they were being played by pedals only!

We come up-to-date now, because afterwards we adjourned to the Crypt for the AGM, during which I became your President for the next two years.

An organist should, if possible, be an organ 'First-Aider', provided he knows what he is doing. There are various amusing, and otherwise, situations where I have been able to correct a fault, (particularly in Gibraltar where a fault would have entailed a return air fare before any work could be done). I was able to tune, particularly reeds, to the humidity and heat experienced during the hot summers, and to make purses out of rubberized canvas for the St Andrew's Church-of-Scotland organ.

I hope I will enjoy my presidency as much as I enjoyed my last (2003-2005), and that I can guide the KCOA from strength to strength in the next two years.

On her retirement as Secretary, after eighteen years, we must thank Rosemary Clemence for her unstinting service to our Association. Also we must congratulate Gerard Brooks, one of our most distinguished members, on his recent election as President of the RCO.

Review of recent Meetings

Canterbury, St Paul's & St Stephen's

VISITING ST PAUL'S CHURCH, Canterbury in January, the hymn, *There is a green hill far away, without a city wall*, words by Cecil Frances Alexander (1818-95) came to mind, as St Paul's full dedication is: 'St. Paul's without the Walls'. Situated in Church Street, just outside Canterbury's boundary wall, there is, alas, not a green hill in sight, as St Paul's stands within the maze of medieval streets that once gathered close around the City of Canterbury.

The church is early 13th century and originally consisted of just its present north aisle. Later that century the first tower was built, followed by the addition of a new nave. In 1847 the ubiquitous Sir George Gilbert Scott undertook major alterations and additions, which included a new south aisle, incorporating decorated style windows, a new vestry, and substantially raised the height of the tower.

Entering the church via its main north door, one is struck by its spaciousness, like Dr Who's TARDIS, it appears bigger on the inside than it does on the outside. We were greeted by Organist & Director of Music David Rees-Williams who began his musical career as a chorister at New College Oxford, where he was greatly influenced by the rich variety of styles performed by the choir and organ.

Moving on to Cranleigh School, he studied the piano, then organ and oboe, before taking his degree at the Royal College of Music. He was therefore eminently qualified to demonstrate St Paul's 1900 *Forster & Andrews* organ, which has been restored and enlarged by *Brownes* since the *KCOA* last visited St Paul's some fifteen years ago.

The organ, with its colourful Victorian painted and stencilled front pipes, stands at the east end of the north aisle with its console at, what is ostensibly, its side, next to the chancel. Its modest specification is: *Great Organ, 8 8 8 4 4 2 8; Swell Organ, 16 8 8 8 4 11 8 8 tremulant; Pedal Organ, 16 16 8 8 16, with usual couplers*. Its manual



Forster & Andrews 1900, Canterbury Photo C.Jilks

actions are charge pneumatic and its pedals, following the installation of a new 16ft trombone, are electric. Its original 'Old Philharmonic sharp pitch' was lowered to standard A 440 during its most recent overhaul, and there is a suspicion that wind pressures could have been raised a little, although this has not been documented.

David Rees-Williams enjoys improvisation and started with whispering Swell strings over a purring Pedal 16ft bourdon; then, on opening the very effective Swell box, revealing their full lushness, used several solo stops to good effect. The organ's voicing is bold yet warm, each department well balanced, with colourful reeds. David ably demonstrated the organ's full melodic range, before embarking on a set of four variations on a *Gigue* by Scarlatti, then a *Toccata* by Paradisi.

Members were then invited to try the organ for themselves, although there was an initial reluctance, following David's spectacular demonstration. However, this was overcome and it was interesting to try the organ's individual ranks. All was well balanced, although the Great diapason appeared unusually prominent. The new Trombone was ideally voiced to support full organ adding crispness to the Pedal department, reflecting the colourful Swell corneopean. The actions were very prompt and responsive eschewing any feel of pneumatic delay.

Members were a little reluctant to leave this interesting church and organ, but St Stephen's Church, Hackington, a mile from Canterbury City Centre, awaited us. Welcomed to the church by Organist and Director of Music, Stephen Barker, we were invited to sample and enjoy their quite recently rebuilt, *F H Browne of Canterbury* organ.



Case pipe decoration detail Photo C. Jilks

However, before we were allowed access to the organ, Stephen presented a well prepared illustrated talk on the history of hymn composition and singing. Originally, only biblical texts were permissible, and Stephen's first illustration was *In trouble and in thrall, unto the Lord I call*, words from *Ravenscroft's Psalmes 1621* sung to Old 120th, the melody from *Este's Psalter 1592*.

Audience participation was required as we sang several verses of hymns from this earliest example, to Herbert Howells' *All my hope on God is founded*. Hymns included were: Charles Wesley's *Come, Holy Ghost, our hearts inspire*; C F Alexander's *There is a green hill far away*, to the tune by W Horsley; and another familiar C F



F H Browne console, St Stephen's, Canterbury Photo C Jilks

Alexander hymn, *Once in royal David's city*, to the tune by H J Gauntlett. *All things bright and beautiful*, yet another well-known hymn by C F Alexander was sung to *Royal Oak*, a traditional English tune adapted by Martin Shaw. Although many early hymns survive, many that form the foundation of our hymn books are Victorian, a prolific time for the church and its music.

All this singing required refreshment and tea was served in the south transept. Of course, the organ played by Stephen for our hymns, was of much interest. The organ makes use of the north transept with a connected case set either side of the transept window. Stephen had mentioned two earlier organs in the church: an 1843 *James Eagles* organ and an 1879 two-manual and pedal *J W Walker* instrument. This was replaced in 1903 with an *F H Browne of Canterbury* organ, on which the present organ is based.

Following a generous legacy in 2014, the organ was rebuilt by *F H Browne of*

Canterbury with updated electric actions and a completely new three-manual and pedal detached console. There are several new stops, including a vox angelica in the Swell and an impressive Solo tuba and clarion. The three-manual and pedal console of fine oak has extensive playing aids, allowing the new solo manual to act as a coupling manual as well as for its new stops.

The organ does have a number of stops derived by extension, providing a generous specification of: *Great Organ*, 16 8 8 8 4 4 2 2/3 2 and two mixtures, a 12/17 and 19/22; *Swell Organ*, 8 8 8 8 4 4 2 2/3 2 2 16 8 8; *Solo Organ*, 8 8 8 4; *Pedal Organ*, 32 16 16 8 8 4 4 16 16 8 4, with usual couplers. The console is particularly comfortable and a goodly number of members were able to slip on to the stool to sample the organ's delights. We must thank Jim Bryant for arranging the afternoon as well as David Rees-Williams at St Paul's and Stephen Barker at St Stephen's.

Ramsgate, St. Augustine's Church

OUR FEBRUARY meeting was held on the 16th in a windswept Ramsgate at the Shrine of St. Augustine and the National Pugin Centre, which we last visited in May 2011, as reported in the August Journal of that year. The new visitor centre has some striking illuminated glass panels telling the story of St. Augustine and Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-1852), who designed his home, The Grange, and St. Augustine's Church, which he considered to be his greatest achievement. The Grange can now be booked for holiday breaks through The Landmark Trust and is only open for guided tours on Wednesday afternoons.

We were welcomed to the Church by

Benjamin Scott, who was appointed organist last year, and studies with Neil Wright of Farnborough Abbey. He spoke enthusiastically about the organ and showed slides of its interior and new console. Apparently, Pugin had no interest in organs, so there is no case-work, but a 6 stop organ was installed for his daughter to play. A history of the organ is in preparation, but many changes have been made to it over the years. In recent times it had three manuals, but has been rebuilt as a 2-manual by *Henry Willis & Sons* under the direction of Dr David Wylde. The console has carved gothic style panelling in keeping with the rest of the church, with the drawstops arranged in two rows over the keyboards. Room in the organ chamber is very limited so the Swell and Pedal are extended units with a straight Great giving a specification of: *Great organ, 16 8 8 4 4 2 2/3 2 IV 16 8 4; Swell organ, 16 8 8 8 4 4 4 4 2 2 11/3 III 16 8*



New Henry Willis console, Ramsgate, St Augustine's

Photo B Moore

8 4; Pedal organ, 32 16 16 16 8 8 16 8 4.
Further work is planned on the Great
soundboard.

Benjamin then gave a splendid demon-
stration of the resources of the organ by
playing: Bach *Sinfonia from Cantata no 29*
arr Dupré, Vierne *Clair de lune*,
Dupré *Cortège et Litanie*, Langlais *Fêtes*.

In the Bach we heard the full chorus
and reeds with a bright swell contrast,
clear flutes and strings of character in
the Vierne, a fine build up in the Dupré,
and everything in the brilliant playing of
the joyful *Fêtes*. The overall effect of the
organ is most impressive with the
bright chorus work very much in the
Willis style. Our President, Andrew
Cesana, warmly thanked Benjamin for
his introduction and playing.

Members had the opportunity to play
and a very welcome tea of sandwiches
and cakes was served in the Visitor
Centre by ladies of the Shrine. Father
Simon Heans, the Administrator of the
Shrine, and Father Christopher Basden,
Rector and Parish Priest, also came to
meet us during tea.

Our thanks go to Matthew Young for
arranging this most interesting after-
noon for us.

Kingsnorth Parish Church (Ashford)

Organist wanted to play for the 4th &
occasional 5th Sunday Holy

Communion at 9.45am –

Usual rates and travel expenses. One
manual mechanical action instrument.

Please contact: Rev. Caroline Mansley

01233 629279

vicar@kandschurches.org.uk

Front Cover

THE FRONT COVER picture is of the
organ at Romsey Abbey, the
imposing 1858 *J W Walker* organ with
its spotted metal front pipe display,
set on a substantial wooden case. The
organ's Swell organ speaks through the
smaller arch above the main case.

*Photograph by Colin Jilks. (Canon EOS
5DSR TS-E 24mm rising front lens
f/16 15sec ISO-100)*



Romsey Abbey, Walker organ Photo C Jilks

KCOA Organ Competition - March 2019

By Dr David Flood

ENCOURAGING young organists is so important. The instrument has so many roles to play and the repertoire is so wide and varied but the number of students setting out on the journey is decreasing. In offering significant enticement for young players, the KCOA is doing a splendid job. The organ competition offers a platform to any organist at whatever stage of their development and is built in the spirit of mutual encouragement and respect. The committee is to be warmly congratulated for setting up the competition with such strong support and such determination.

In the setting of All Saints' Church, Maidstone, which has become the welcoming home of this event, six young organists gathered to take part. Playing in front of an audience who are focussed on the performance and the performer, not coming into or going out from a church service, is something which demands confidence and steady nerves. Not only were the organists commanding attention to be heard but also to be seen, as the console was set prominently at the front of the church, in full view of everyone. Control of a big instrument, especially when one is young and perhaps still quite small, can be daunting but for these competitors it was completely taken in their stride.

The competition offers classes at Elementary, Intermediate and Advanced levels and there were two candidates for the Elementary and four candidates for the Advanced class. The two players in the Elementary class chose the set piece,

Flor Peeters's chorale prelude on *Of the Father's heart begotten*, to which they added a piece of Bach of their own choice. Samuel Sheath chose the famous *Toccata in D minor* and Thomas Winrow-Campbell the *Prelude in F*. Both these talented players gave assured performances, with lively rhythm and well-chosen registration. They demonstrated their confidence at the organ and well-grounded technique. It is good that the KCOA have made the prizes in this section quite closely matched, since the two performers were just that. Very little separated them but as a choice had to be made, Samuel gained the first prize and Thomas the second. I will look forward to seeing them for some lessons which are part of their prize and to giving them even more encouragement on their way. Congratulations are of course also due to their teachers who had done such a good job in preparing them and supporting them in their study.

There were no candidates for the Intermediate class, so the four entrants for the Advanced class played next, having drawn lots for the order in which they would play.

Each of the candidates chose a section of the *Prelude and Fugue in G major* by Bach which was prescribed on the syllabus and added a further choice of their own from the romantic or contemporary repertoire. Two of the players had travelled significant distances to take part: Ondřej Smolik from the Czech Republic and Lewis McGoldrick from the north of Scotland. The two other players were closer to home: Alexander Trigg and Ben Markovic.

The standard of playing was high and the performers all gave confident performances. Once again, their teachers



*Ben Markovic, Lewis McGoldrick, Samuel Sleath, Alexander Trigg,
Thomas Winrow-Campbell, Ondřej Smolík, Dr David Flood* Photo C.Jilks

are to be thanked and congratulated for giving them such good support and training. Details of phrasing and rhythmic control were the elements which were discussed about the Bach performances, while the wider variety shown in the free choice gave opportunity for discussion of interpretation, technical control, registration and other details. Ondřej chose the *Chorale Fantasy "Amen, es werde wahr"* by Petr Eben; Lewis chose *Postlude No.6* by C V Stanford; Alexander chose *Hymne d'Action de Grâce – Te Deum* by Jean Langlais and Ben *Improvisation sur le Te Deum* by Charles Tournemire. A wide variety of repertoire, each demanding skills of technique and interpretation, always remembering the performance situation which required confidence and nerve.

Whilst only two prizes were available, the reward for each player in having the opportunity to perform in this context and amongst such worthy colleagues was tangible. It will help them in performance situations in the future and build

confidence and security. All of these players showed solid technique and burgeoning talent, controlling the unfamiliar organ with ease. The second prize was awarded to Ben Markovic, with Ondřej Smolík being the winner. His recital in Rochester Cathedral is eagerly awaited.

I am sure that plenty of discussion and celebration continued over tea, generously provided for candidates and audiences. The competition had a true sense of collaboration and mutual respect, with plenty of encouragement and celebration. I am sure each of the organists will continue to inspire and delight congregations and audiences throughout the years to come and I congratulate each one of them, not just for having taken part, but also for the hours and hours they have spent involved in such a wonderful activity. They each showed tremendous promise and potential. Enormous thanks and appreciation are due to the members of the *KCOA* who give so much time and energy to ensure the continuation of this competition. Long may it continue!

The Temple Church & St Martin's-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square

GATHERING ON 6 APRIL 2019 at The Temple Church in the City of London – an oasis of calm in a busy city – a dozen members found there is much history relating to this church. It is well-known as the home of the Knights Templar who took monastic vows and protected pilgrims to the Holy Land during the 12th century, and these effigies here are in one of the few round chancels in England. They include William Marshall, who was one of the most famous, as he was instrumental in the sealing of the Magna Carta in 1215;

subsequently, many years later at the Reformation, the church passed to the Crown.

We were greeted by Roger Sayer, Director of Music since 2013 who was well known to most of us, having previously been DOM at Rochester Cathedral. Roger gave a talk about the present organ having been given to the church in 1954 by Lord Glentanar after he no longer wanted it in his home, Glen Tanar House, Deeside. It is described as a Victorian romantic organ and looked after by *Harrison & Harrison*. Back in time, there had been an organ in the church since the 14th century and then, the church having narrowly missed being destroyed by the great fire in 1666, two organs were installed: one by *Father Smith* and one by *Renatus Harris*. This was because the Inns commissioned one and the Treasurers the other! The contest between them was



Roger Sayer, Director of Music, at The Temple Church organ

Photo C Clemence



The Temple Church, City of London

Photo C Clemence

judged by the infamous Judge Jeffreys in favour of the *Father Smith*. A later organist was the blind organist John Stanley, who was appointed when he was twenty-one, and stayed in post for fifty-two years. It was not uncommon for up to fifty organists to be in the church to hear him play (including Handel). In 1843 the Inns confirmed the formation of a choir and this continues to this day. Unfortunately, the church received a direct hit during WWII and a fire spread to the organ when it was completely destroyed and not replaced until 1954 when the present organ was installed. It is a 4-manual and pedal *Harrison & Harrison* romantic instrument with electric actions, and was refurbished in 2013: it has sixty-six stops with some 3,828 pipes.

Other organists at The Temple have included E J Hopkins, Sir Walford Davies and George Thalben-Ball, and it was under the latter that the famous

1927 recording of *Hear my prayer* was made by Ernest Lough, which went on to sell some five million copies! Born in 1911, young Lough was all of sixteen years old at the time: boys' voices seem not to last so well today. Lough went on to sing, with a warm baritone voice, in the Temple choir for many more years; he died in 2000.

Roger demonstrated the organ by giving a masterly rendering of Reger's *Fantasia on BACH*, a piece ideally suited to display the wonderful colours of this quite glorious instrument. Members were then let loose and we enjoyed a lot more music whilst studying the church and its history.

After a short bus ride we were greeted at St Martin's-in-the-Fields, another oasis of calm in one of the busiest areas of London, Trafalgar Square. Polina Sosnina holds two Organ Scholar posts, one at The Temple Church and the other at St Martin's. We sat in the bal-

cony and listened while she played part of the *Trio Sonata No 4* by J S Bach and his *Prelude in G major*.

The organ is a 3-manual and pedal instrument by *J W Walker* built in 1991 and installed in the west end gallery. Its tonal design and voicing is classical and has mechanical action. It is interesting to note that at the time it was built it proved difficult, owing to changing fashions, to decide whether to install a standard radiating concave pedalboard or a straight Continental board. This was solved by providing two interchangeable boards which could be easily slipped into place: a Continental or a radiating-concave. Apparently, the standard board is used most of the time, with the straight board little used.

What a privilege it was to hear and play these two great organs! We must thank Andrew who had such difficulty in planning the day, as most churches in London are closed at weekends; consequently, it has been many years since members last visited St Martin's, twenty-six years ago in 1993.



St Martin's-in-the-Fields, J W Walker Photo C Clemence



The Temple Church, Harrison & Harrison organ Photo C Clemence

St Barbara's Garrison Church, Brompton & Green Street Baptist, Gillingham

IT IS UNUSUAL to find a mid- to late-Victorian organ with an unblemished pedigree and, as one might expect, the two instruments we visited at Gillingham last 11 May were no exception. Although these organs were originally built by notable organ builders, they have both been radically changed to fit the requirements of their present locations.

While the 1874 *Forster & Andrews* at St Barbara's Garrison Church, Brompton, does still retain a good foundation of original work, its last rebuild, by *Henry Willis* in 1977, introduced many tonal changes in addition to electric action and a new console. The Swell organ now includes a two rank sesquialtera with the Great organ boasting a 4ft spindle flute and a generous 8ft posauene, which is extended to the Pedal organ as a 16ft trombone. The full organ specification provides a coherent musical whole, with *Willis* clarity blending with the warmer *Forster & Andrews* foundation. Its specification is now: *Great Organ, 8 8 8 4 4 2 11 8; Swell organ, 8 8 8 4 2 11 8 4; Pedal organ, 16 8 8 4 2 16, with usual couplers*: these include the addition of *Willis* Swell sub & super octave couplers.

We were enthusiastically welcomed to the church by its organist Clive Robinson, who spoke briefly about the church history, revealing that this Garrison church, built in 1854, had remained undedicated to any particular saint until 2002, when it was decided, finally, to dedicate it to St Barbara, the patron saint of artillerymen and engineers.

Clive also revealed the organ's history

with a short résumé of the changes and additions made to the instrument, and its front pipe decoration, over the years before demonstrating it for us with four contrasting pieces: *Intrada* by Grayston Ives; *Lantana* from *Plymouth Suite* by Percy Whitlock; *Prelude* from Little Organ Book by Harold Darke; and *Nun danket alle Gott* by Karg-Elert. Clive's engaging playing clearly displayed the organ's tonality, with the *Forster & Andrews* flutes strings and diapasons supplemented by colourful *Willis* mixtures and reeds.

We are most grateful to Clive for his enjoyable playing and allowing members to try the organ for themselves.

The second organ we visited was at Green Street Baptist Church, Gillingham, an instrument that proved to be particularly interesting. Built for an earlier location, it is much older than the *Forster & Andrews* we had just enjoyed, being built by *J W Walker* in 1855 for St John's Church, Deptford. It was moved to Green Street in the late 1800s, being rebuilt and installed by *W Walmsley* of Maidstone in 1900, set in the gallery



Brompton, *Forster & Andrews* Photo C Jilks



J W Walker 1855, rebuilt by W Walmsley

Photo C. Jilks

above the original high pulpit. It appears that the Great and Pedal organs are the major part of the original *Walker*, although the Swell Organ contains predominantly new pipes by *Walmsley*; the spotted metal front pipes also date from 1900 and are not the original front.

Deputy President, Colin Jilks, who has tuned the organ for many years, revealed a little of the organ's history and construction, mentioning its heavy tracker actions, still using its original rollerboards with their wooden rollers and couplings.

John Wilkins, our member from Rainham, had kindly offered to demonstrate the organ for us, choosing music from the late Victorian period in keeping with the organ's construction. Because of the heavy composition pedals and heavy stops, John was assisted by Colin Jilks and Colin Haggart, who plays the organ occasionally, to help with the large number of stop changes needed to perform the music effectively. John played: *Passacaglia* by John E West (1899); *Melody in D* by S Coleridge-Taylor (1898); and *Festal March* by George Elvey (1871).

John's playing, using a wide range of

stops, revealing the organ's many colours, was particularly enjoyable and greatly appreciated by members. Of course, members do like to try instruments for themselves and Patti Whaley, from Faversham, played Bach's *Tocatta, Adagio and Fugue in C major BWV 564*. Using the Great chorus with its original Sesquialtera mixture, the organ revealed more of its 1855 tonal heritage, thrilling sounds and engaging music beautifully played. Although heavy and rather cumbersome to play, this is a fine organ, an instrument now little used, as the musical styles of services restrict its use to the more special seasonable services.

Nevertheless, we were well received at the church and a fine tea had been prepared for us in their lower hall. This was not the end of our pleasures, as John Wilkins had thoughtfully devised an informal quiz for us; twenty brain teasing questions which, even without the right answers, were immense fun. We must especially thank John for not only playing so well, but also arranging this visit for us, and Clive Robinson at St Barbara's Garrison, with his unbounded enthusiasm.

Romsey Abbey & St Mary's Southampton

VISITING ROMSEY in June we were privileged to enjoy its winding medieval streets, buildings and magnificent Abbey: one of the finest examples of Norman architecture in Europe. The original church was an Anglo-Saxon foundation, a Benedictine Abbey which continued until, in 1130AD, the Normans started to build the substantial stone abbey we see today. Making full use of the Abbey, the Benedictine foundation continued to prosper and grow during the succeeding century to become in excess of one hundred nuns, who lived in the community. The Abbey continued successfully until the dreadful Black Death fell upon the town in 1348-9. Half of the town's population of over a thousand people died and the number of nuns fell by 80%, leaving only nineteen: numbers never then exceeded more than twenty-six in subsequent years.

The town of Romsey itself evolved clustering around the Abbey, which perhaps prevents a full present day appreciation of the Abbey's external architecture. There are no appreciable green spaces around like Salisbury and other Cathedrals, which can be viewed from a perspective allowing their full lines and soaring spires to be fully appreciated. Here at Romsey, viewed from its close perspective, the Abbey presents rather cumbersome lines, with a somewhat squat square tower reaching only a little above the Abbey's roof line. Nevertheless, from the top of the tower's not insignificant stature, were one to look down, Romsey's attractive rooftops

and medieval street plan would be revealed in Lilliputian detail, only briefly marred by the road works in the town square during our visit.

Entering the Abbey by the north door, the Abbey's true splendour is instantly revealed. The line of the nave's warm stone Norman arches reaching unhindered to the choir, their rounded symmetry brushed by light from the clear glass West window. This is un-spoilt Norman, an architectural delight, with its arcades of rounded arches capped by smaller rounded arches; although the East windows are 13th century and the West end of the nave was extended by three arcades in 1240AD, introducing the new Early English style.

We were irretrievably drawn to the dis-



Romsey Abbey Choir & Chancel Photo C.Jilks

tant East end of the Abbey, beyond the choir and into the chancel. Here set on the North side is the Abbey's imposing 1858 *J W Walker* organ. The organ's spotted metal front pipe display, set on a substantial wooden case, conceals the main Great organ, with the Swell organ standing several feet higher, speaking through the smaller arches above. The organ was built using tracker action, with Barker Lever assistance to the Great organ. This gives a remarkably comfortable action and it is commendable that the organ has retained this action, together with its original tonal design since it was built.

The organ has forty-seven speaking ranks, although this includes nine Nave organ stops added in 1982 by *Mander*. Just a glance at the main organ's specification reveals a comprehensive tonal design and is an outstanding instrument of the mid-Victorian period. All its pipework has survived to demonstrate the charm of this period. Diapasons speak with a clear singing character, yet are unforced in tone. The flutes have a warm yet silvery voice with the reed stops adding richness and character, without swamping the main principal chorus. Interestingly, the Great organ has a 15-19-22 mixture to which the separate tierce 13/5 rank can be added, if desired, to form a cornet mixture. The Nave organ of nine stops was installed by *Mander* to support congregational singing and can be played from a separate one-manual and pedal movable console, or from the main organ console: although this speaks well in the Nave, it is difficult to hear at the main organ console, its distance introducing a considerable time lag.

We were welcomed to the Abbey by Assistant Director of Music, Adrian Taylor, who gave us a full introduction to the organ and its history, before demonstrating this fine instrument for us, with *Master Tallis's Testament* by Herbert



Romsey Abbey 1858 J W Walker Photo C.Jills

Howells.

There was much interest in the organ and members were able to play whilst others enjoyed the many points of historic interest in the building: interestingly, the Abbey contains the tomb of Earl Mountbatten of Burma. There was more to see than could be accommodated during such a relatively short visit and many vowed to return when time allowed.

Time had been allotted for lunch before leaving Romsey and our party of some twenty-five explored the many available hostelries, before twenty-two rejoined the coach they had arrived in, with another three travelling in their own cars, setting off to Southampton to find St Mary's Church and its *Willis* organ.

St Mary's is a mid-Victorian church, its



St Mary's Church, Southampton Photo C.Jills

outward appearance consistent with its period, but internally the building presents a more contemporary character. Disregarding the modern worship para-

phernalia set up in the nave, the church's interior walls and arches looked smooth and rather featureless, with the building devoid of memorials and monuments one would associate with a Victorian church.

All was revealed when a wartime photograph was found showing the utter devastation of the church after it had been bombed during the war. Remarkably, the congregation, clergy and a couple of hardy choirboys still held their service amongst the ruins.

The *Willis* organ set on the South side of the chancel, with the console on a raised platform on the North side opposite the organ, was installed in 1956. This is a substantial three-manual and pedal instrument, originally built in 1883 for a church at Stirling, Scotland. Here at Southampton, it was installed with electric action and a fine new *Willis* console, built, as was customary, with black stop jams and the *Willis* rocking coupler tabs above the Swell keyboard.

We were welcomed to the church by Paul Isted, St Mary's Organist, who spoke of the organ's history and the work the organ requires to return it to good working. Most of the instrument was in fact working quite well, although full



Henry Willis organ viewed from the raised console platform Photo C.Jills



Morning service at St Mary's Church, Southampton following bombing Photo St Mary's Church

organ and sustained chords could deplete the wind supply. Paul demonstrated the organ for us with Herbert Howells *Psalm Prelude Set 2 no.2* and a *Whitlock Fanfare*, which was particularly enjoyed by members.

The organ tonally glowed with *Willis* colours, the bold clear, singing diapasons, building through to the full diapason Great chorus to 17-19-22 mixture. As well as a choice of three diapasons, the Great 8ft gedeckt was particularly *Willis*, its long open 'tulip' stoppers giving a characteristic start transient. The Swell organ was equally colourful, with two mixtures, one of 12-15-19-22 and a cimble of 24-26-29, together with an oboe and 16-8-4 reeds. The Great is topped by a good tromba and a tuba. The pedal is also comprehensive, providing a solid bold foundation; the organ has fifty-nine stops, although there are a number of exten-

sions and duplications.

This substantial organ proved irresistible to members who were ready to put it through its paces and, as is usual when members play, full organ produced the occasional, if inevitable, gasp from lack of wind. Nevertheless, this is a fine instrument; although one wonders what its future might be as the modern worship contingent, much in evidence in this church, continues its unrelenting march.

However, we must thank, not only Adrian Taylor and Paul Isted, but our own Andrew Cesana for arranging the day.

New Members

Prof Andrew Linn – Rochester
John Ross – Gillingham

Rochester Cathedral Recital - Ondřej Smolík

Rochester 13th July 2019

SEVERAL OF us had been highly-impressed by the performance of Ondřej Smolík, winner of the Advanced class at this year's KCOA competition in Maidstone, and gathered with anticipation for his recital at Rochester Cathedral on 13th July.

Ondřej hails from the Czech Republic, where he is organist at St. Anthony the Great, Liberec. He has just completed his second year at Pardubice Conservatory, and already has several successes to his name.

The recital opened with *Praeludium in G minor BuxWV149* by Buxtehude. The dignity of the opening section was followed by delicate flues and light diapacons for the second before somewhat-unexpected sharp reeds for the third and the usual *pleno* for the final section. Purists might have raised their eyebrows at some of the registrations, and at the absence of double-dotting for the minims in the final section; nonetheless the performance displayed integrity and consistency in itself.

Mendelssohn's *Prelude and Fugue in D minor op37* followed, delivered with clear articulation and conviction. We were next treated to the first movement of Guilmant's *Sonata no1 op42*. Here the declamatory opening, written on five staves and almost symphonic in character, made full use of what one is often reminded is the most important asset of any instrument, namely the

acoustic of the building, followed by sympathetic and delicate handling of the movement as it evolved and developed before returning to its arresting opening material.

By now the somewhat strident reeds of the rebuilt instrument deserved a rest, which was duly provided in the *Adagio* by Janáček. Limpid melodic lines played out as the midday sun dappled the walls of the cathedral Quire, providing beguiling relaxation and relief as the easeful chromaticisms of the piece unfolded.

Thalben-Ball's *Variations on a theme by Paginini* do not often crop up in programmes, perhaps because of the demands which they place on the executant. Possibly not all of those present realised that they are played entirely on the pedals, until a left-hand bare fifth drone is introduced in the penultimate variation before the manuals are deployed for a short fulgurating toccata in the final variation. Few composers have dwelt so fully on a pedal-only composition, perhaps heralded by Alkan's formidable *Twelve studies* for pedal-piano of c1871. One requires shoes with adequate heel clearances for the three- and four-part chording, and a flat rather than ribbed sole for the coruscating glissandi. We were given a masterful realisation, in which the occasional smudge or mis-hit could be readily forgiven in the context of a live performance rather than a clinically-edited recording.

The recital concluded with the choral fantasy *Amen, es werde wahr* by Petr Eben. Here Ondřej again showed his control of the instrument and its resources.

This was altogether a powerful occa-



Ondřej Smolík takes a bow Photo C. Jilks

sion, and the protracted standing ovation which was given was fully-deserved. The second recital which constitutes Ondřej's prize will be given on the fine instrument of St. George's, Hanover Square on 29th September 2020, and we hope that plenty of members will support that, especially if they missed this occasion.

It says much for the *KCOA* competition that it has, for the second time running, attracted high-quality entrants from overseas. We do hope that native participants will nonetheless not be dissuaded from displaying their mettle at future competitions.

AGM & Choral Evensong

OUR ANNUAL General Meeting on 13 July, following the outstanding recital by our Competition winner Ondřej Smolík, took place in the Ithamar Chapel in the restored Rochester Cathedral Crypt.

Our President, Andrew Cesana; Treasurer, Kevin Grafton; Secretary, Rosemary Clemence; and Rob Miller, Competition Chairman, gave their reports: a final report from Rosemary, as she has now stood down as Secretary after eighteen years' service to the Association. We must particularly thank Rosemary for this sterling work, keeping us in touch with activities and meetings; a job that has changed dramatically over the years with the advent of email, which has become the predominant means of communication.

Officers were elected with President Elect, Michael Cooke, becoming President; Kevin Grafton, Treasurer; Matthew Young, Secretary. Three Deputy Presidents were re-elected: Colin Jilks; Nicholas King; and David Shuker. Chris Clemence completed his third year on the committee, and with no other applicants there are now four vacant places. It is hoped others might be co-opted during the coming year, as the Association can only function properly with the support of its members.

However, at the close of the meeting, Colin Jilks gave special thanks to Rosemary Clemence for her devotion to the Association as Secretary for so many years; her term of office is only surpassed by Mr Warriner, the



Rosemary & Chris Clemence Photo C.Jilks

Association's very first Secretary.

Following the meeting there was time for refreshment in Rochester High Street's many coffee houses before Evensong.

Evensong was sung on this occasion by Rochester's Voluntary Choir. The Responses were by McCree with the Canticles *The Salisbury Service* by Lloyd. Interestingly, the anthem *He is the way*, set to music by Bryan Kelly, used a text by W H Auden, the influential 20th century English poet and writer. Together with the Psalm, the whole service was beautifully and enjoyably sung, with telling accompaniment from organist Jeremy Lloyd, whose final voluntary Gigout's *Toccata in B Minor* provided a fitting conclusion to the service.

Rosemary Clemence's 'Eighteen years service'

AS ROSEMARY CLEMENCE steps down from her long held position as Secretary at our AGM this year, we will find it difficult to imagine the future without her. After eighteen years' service to our Association, 2001 - 2019 – a period only exceeded by Mr Warriner, our very first Secretary – we will require a lengthy period of adjustment, so efficient and congenial has her service been. We can only, and must, convey our most sincere thanks, wishing her well in her future endeavours, with the hope she remains within our fold, to enable us to continue our comradely and affable association with her and, of course, husband Christopher.

Letters to the Editor

SIR, – Your excellent Journal arrived today and, once again, has completely disrupted my intended work plans. The stunning photograph of Rochester Cathedral and its west-facing organ front soon had me exploring the text inside, which contained so much fascinating material that the rest of the morning disappeared without trace. Several issues came to mind, for which experts may have answers.

First, paint-decorated pipes, as at Rochester, are an acquired taste (I prefer plain metal or, where money allows, bright tin ones). But what does a thick layer of softish colour material do to

the sound? Does it deaden the emission of upper frequencies, or is my expectation that Victorian painted organs deliver a dull sound come from other factors? To take an extreme, how would pipes made of foam rubber sound?

Second, how does proximity affect our perceptions? Two of the churches reviewed had both a west-end organ and a chancel one. Experience with chamber organs, such as the one thrust into frequent use in Canterbury Cathedral, while the main instrument is being revised, suggests that the clarity with which singers hear the sound from a close instrument is substantially different from the way that similar pipes up in the triforium are perceived – brighter and with different starting characteristics. Is it just explained by the loss of energy as sound travels a greater distance?

Third, the photograph of the *Compton* in the Fyvie Hall, London, filled me with horror; all those pipes crammed in with barely any room between them. So my question is, why do organs in cramped spaces never sound as good as ones where the pipes ‘have room to speak’? What is the science behind it, and how does containment relate to the better sounds that seem to come from organs that have cases with sides and tops? I would love to know.

*Berkeley Hill
Organist, St Leonard's Church, Hythe*

Our Editor replies:

WE MUST THANK Berkeley for his letter and his enquiring thoughts on organs and their pipes.

Decorated pipes were very much a Victorian development and reflect the

period the organs were built; if a Victorian organ is restored, its pipe decoration should be retained, as it is as much part of the instrument as its tonal or mechanical design. The paint itself is mechanically so thin it has no real effect on a pipe's tonality. Many front display pipes from this period were made using zinc as opposed to softer pipe metal (an alloy of tin and lead). Pipe metal produces a warmer tonality, although the top lip cut-up and languid nicking play a significant role, as does the pipe's scale. Wooden pipes produce a very warm sound – foam rubber? We can leave that to your imagination.

The proximity of an instrument and its perception is, of course, changed by the distance its sound has to travel with the loss of energy, especially upper frequencies, as it travels through the air. Nevertheless, an organ's position in a building, with reflective stone walls for example, changes its perceived sound adding to its qualities, the reflected sound arriving fractionally after the original sound thus enhancing and adding to it. Chamber organs are voiced on lower wind pressures, very differently from main cathedral organs, which are voiced on higher wind pressures with enhanced higher tonal frequencies, allowing for their perceived losses in a large building. Standing close to a cathedral Great organ, or inside a Swell box, when played with just moderate registration, the organ will appear to be shouting – painfully.

Your observation regarding the *Compton* Fyvie Hall organ is also interesting. *Compton* usually allowed good space around their pipes, which gives room for pipes to speak without interference from near neighbours. If a pipe is very close to another of similar speaking length, it can induce activity in the other. Organ cases again work by directing the organ's sound, an angled top will help project the sound forward.

Ramblings of a Retired Rector Chori (2)

By Paul Hale

I TOOK SOME space in the February 2019 *Journal* in enlarging and commenting upon some of the items in the August 2018 edition. In my article I wrote almost entirely about Extension Organs; this time I'd like to share with KCOA members some thoughts and information about the organ of Merton College Oxford, along with the organs of Great St Mary's and Trinity College Cambridge, all of which were topics last August.

First of all, to Oxford. When I went



Merton College Dobson organ Photo C. Jills

up to New College in 1971 the *Grant, Degens & Bradbeer* organ there was new, and my generation needed little convincing that that sort of uncompromising *Werkprinzip* neo-baroque instrument was the organ of the future. However, we were soon proved wrong, as fresh awareness and enthusiasm for romantic music – French, German and British – took a firm hold with organists during the 1980s and 1990s. Thus it is that today's large Oxbridge college chapel organ is quite likely to be more eclectic – that is, more fully embracing of as many periods and styles as possible, without losing a clear unity of character. This is precisely what we aimed at for the large new Merton College organ (for which I had the honour to be the consultant).

The contract was awarded after a full and fair procedure, in which two British firms were in competition with one from the USA and one from Switzerland. In the event, the most expensive proposals – by *Dobson Pipe Organ Builders* of the USA – won the day! And that was almost entirely because of the 'wow' factor in Lynn Dobson's beautiful and extraordinary case design. I had set out, in the tendering brief, that the case design had to pick up on motifs from the chapel's Mediæval stone and wood-carvings, and that the college colours needed to be woven in. The coloured rendition sent in by Lynn Dobson (whose initial training was at Art College) was met with huge enthusiasm by the organ committee, particularly the Chaplain, who persuaded the Bursar that the additional cost (£250,000!) was justified.

Shortage of floor space in the event precluded the Pedal 16ft Open Wood

which I had specified, but otherwise the scheme as it was built was a clever *Dobson* adaptation of what we had proposed. The challenge was to make an organ loud enough to speak across the enormous Crossing area, through the wooden screen and into the main chapel – yet without losing beauty of tone. In this the organ has succeeded, though inevitably, at close quarters, it can sound rather uncomfortably loud, an effect picked up in the August write-up of the *KCOA* visit.

Readers will be interested to know that in arriving at the precise volume level of the organ two remarkable events took place. The first was when the *Dobson* Tonal Director and Head Voicer flew over from the USA with a collection of new pipes in their luggage – most of the ‘C’ pipes for the Great Diapason chorus! These were set up in the little 1965 *Walker* still in the chapel at that stage, and the wind pressure put up to that which we planned to use. *Dobsons* were surprised at how much the pipes had to be loudened to enable them to make sufficient impact in the inner chapel. Ben Nicholas and I wandered around the chapel whilst they opened up the tips of the pipe feet until we felt everything was just right. They then took the pipes back to their factory in Iowa and voiced all the other stops to match. Much was our relief when the organ was assembled on site and we found the Great chorus just right!

However, our delight was short-lived, for the Swell Diapason chorus was far too loud. Why was that? And what to do? The reason was that the Swell is elevated at the top of the organ in a very shallow swell box of enormous width – the entire width of the organ. Thus, the sound gets out extremely well and sings above the top of the screen. So, the



*Merton College Dobson organ
viewed from the Chancel* Photo C.Jilks

voicers set to and started softening down the Diapason chorus by ‘knocking up’ the tip-holes. Alas – the tone became fluty, as the pipes were of generous scale and with quite high mouths. This is where *Dobsons* did the second extraordinary thing: the voicers had trained also as pipe-makers, so, believe it or not, in the chapel they unsoldered the bodies from the feet of every single pipe in the Swell chorus, trimmed a little off the bottom of the bodies – which in effect lowered the height of the upper lips – and soldered all the pipes back together. Lo and behold, the tone came back to being a lovely warm, clean Diapason sound when the pipes were set at the right volume.

The 45-stop tonal scheme allows



*Trinity College Metzler;
Father Smith case of 1686* Photo P Hale

accompanists every colour they could reasonably expect in accompanying a first-class choir, with two enclosed departments (in extraordinarily effective swell boxes) being vital in fulfilling this role. The organ allows the repertoire of many periods and styles to be played, for in addition to Diapason choruses on all departments it has a full complement of mutations (wide and narrow scale), of chorus reeds, and of solo reeds soft and loud.

Of course, getting the most out of an organ's colours depends upon adequate stop control, which is where combination pistons (especially general pistons)

become invaluable. The Merton organ has all the controls one might wish for, including a 'stepper' which steps through the generals in sequence. This brings us to another of the organs we are looking at today - Trinity College, Cambridge. The Trinity organ has to do the same job as the Merton organ, but being built by an uncompromising Swiss firm, *Metzler Orgelbau*, in 1975 (inside the *Father Smith* case of 1686), it was made with no playing aids whatsoever - and this for a tracker organ of 42 stops, the knobs for which spread out either side, in true *Schnitger* fashion, well beyond the player's reach. So, for the last 43 years players have managed the remarkable feat of accompanying the college's superb choir and playing the entire solo repertoire with no stop assistance other than a handy organ-scholar to push and pull.

This has now been rectified: *Metzler* returned during the summer of 2018 to clean the organ and, whilst doing so, fitted a combination piston system. You may well ask "how did they do that, if the stop-action is entirely mechanical?". The answer is that they fitted large electric solenoids at a convenient place on the long trace-rods of the stop action, powerful enough to move each stop slider and knob. These were wired to a system giving general combinations controlled by a toe piston stepper - no divisional pistons; so the console looks almost unaltered in appearance. Doubtless the organ scholars are delighted and relieved, though it has to be recorded that some famous players, who rejoiced in the purity of the organ as built, are not at all happy with the fitting of a combination system. Which all goes to prove that, as we know, in our funny little world you can't please all the organists all the time.

A quick final word about two other



Paul Hale at the console of the Trinity College Cambridge Metzler during rehearsals

Photo P.Hale

Cambridge organs mentioned in the August issue – both in St Mary’s, the University Church. The organ at the west end belongs to the University, is called the University organ, and is playable only by the University Organist; a unique situation. It is the most complete remaining organ by *‘Father’ Smith* (1698), was rebuilt by *Hill* (1870), rebuilt again by *Hill, Norman & Beard* (1963), and then historically restored by *Noel Mander* in 1995. It was not ‘replaced by a *Mander* organ’ as the August *Journal* suggests – unless Noel Mander did far more to it than he ever let on! The instrument in the chancel

was built 1991 by *Kenneth Jones* and I had some consultative involvement after Peter le Huray died. I mention it only because I shall never forget a day in a pub in Dublin with Ken Jones and the then organist of St Mary’s, Christopher Moore. Jones had already quoted a price and a stop-list but as the day went on and the Guinness flowed, he became more and more excited about the project – and kept adding stops to the scheme. However, the price remained the same! A fine organ was the result, but *Kenneth Jones & Associates* must have lost heavily on the job. As many organ-builders will tell you “’twas ever thus...”

Lessons from sixty years accompanying hymns

By Berkeley Hill

ACCOMPANYING HYMNS is a staple of the life of church organists. My first regular post was at a large Congregational Church in Swindon when, aged 14 years, I succeeded a Mr Trowbridge, who had died suddenly. The church needed someone quickly, and I found myself promoted from occasional filler-in at a village Methodist Chapel to the (relatively) big league of a town-centre church, complete with substantial robed adult choir and weekly anthems. After my first Sunday, the lead-covered belfry on top of the church tower fell down, fortunately not landing on anyone. The kindly choirmaster blamed the wind rather than my organ-playing as the prime cause, though suggested that perhaps I could be a little less robust in my use of the William Sweetland (of Bath) organ next weekend. Since then, sixty years as an organist have given me experience in churches of all shapes and sizes, including deputising in a dozen cathedrals. The long period - almost five decades - spent as Director of Music at St Leonard's, Hythe, with its large and complicated *Harrison & Harrison* organ, has also provided opportunities not only for playing thousands of hymns but also for selecting them; my Hythe contract says that choice of music (including hymns) is my responsibility, though I should take into account 'reasonable requests' from the clergy. So far, the legality of this arrangement has not been tested.

I thought fellow members of the KCOA might be interested in some of the key things of a practical nature I have learned about playing for hymns. The

discussion started by Stephen Barker at the Canterbury January 2019 meeting, when he got members to explore a range of hymn styles as singers, suggested that this was a topic where we have a lot in common, and the exchange of experiences might be helpful to all. I call the following points the 'seven pillars of wisdom' in hymn accompaniment (after T E Lawrence, whose book I was reading during sermons when I started organ playing, rather than Proverbs 9:1), but do not claim any originality in identifying them, or pretend that seven is anything other than a literary convenience.

As a principle, the organ accompaniment is to help the singing, not to beat the congregation into submission. I have found that, to achieve this aim, the approach taken by the organist has to reflect prior thinking and be sensitive to the context. The ideal, arguably, is to apply minimum intervention. If the singing is going well (though this may be difficult to judge when the organist is remote from the congregation), my experience is that it is usually best to withdraw to the least amount of organ consistent with maintaining pitch and sustaining the required mood, which will be determined essentially by the words. However, with a relatively unknown tune, the support will need to be stronger.

I have found it prudent to think creatively about registrations - and not to automatically press familiar pistons. What sort of sound it wanted, and what is the minimum selection of stops needed to generate it? Clearly the words are critical, but the tune and the period it comes from is also important. What sort of sounds was the tune's composer used to? For later Victorian tunes I avoid upper-work, even to the extent of flooding the building with fat 8' tone for Aurelia ('The

church's one foundation'). This would contrast with treatment of tunes by Clarke, Croft or Handel, when the organs were smaller, hand-blown and the sound lighter and more transparent. Good stylistic matches seem to lift the singing.

Within the confines of this choice, I have learned to vary the registration between every verse to reflect the changing feeling of the text. This also keeps the ears of the congregation sensitive to the words. Often just changing a single stop will be enough, or removing 16' tone from the bass for a verse. 'Less' is usually 'more'. As a young man when colouring the accompaniment in the last verse of 'Dear Lord and Father' (Repton), with its 'earthquake, wind and fire' before the 'still small voice of calm' I tended to illustrate by peaking with full organ followed by a collapse to *voix celeste*, but I later realised that there are more subtle, and more effective, approaches.

It has become clear to me that playing louder only encourages louder singing up to a certain point. Beyond that volume singers start to turn off. Unremitting loudness kills congregational contribution, and any choir-members present will have long given up the unequal battle with the organ and resorted to 'gold-fishing' to save their voices.

Perhaps unsurprising, I have found that singers need the opportunity to breathe. Sometimes they try to do this in ways that destroy the sense of the words, but when and how they breath can be influenced by the organ. This means that the accompaniment must be rhythmical, with a steady pulse, and the pace such that whole lines in the text can be taken in one breath. Running on to the next line where the sense of the words dictates this can be encouraged by the articulation in the accompaniment. It also means that there has to be a definite, and predictable, number of beats between verses. However, with very large build-

ings, cavernous acoustics and big congregation, pace will need to be slower, with in extreme situations the need to relax a little at the ends of lines and verses to ensure that the next line starts together. It can still be rhythmic.

To introduce hymn tunes, I have found it is best generally to play over the complete tune. I maintain that if a tune is worth singing, it is worth hearing complete. In St Leonard's, Hythe, this is also for a practical reason; choristers cannot see hymn-boards showing numbers, and the youngsters inevitably need enough time to find the hymn. Personally, I easily get confused when only the last phrase of a tune is played. But surely flexibility should be applied; for a first hymn, when everyone has things ready, and if the mood demands it, a single phrase on the tuba will suffice. Incidentally, I would love to recreate the tradition of choral preludes (as used in Bach's time) to introduce the tune, but in the Anglican Church, with numerous hymns per service, I have not been able to get this to work.

And, finally, to last verses. If, as is common, there is a habit of last verses being sung in unison, a different harmonisation for the final version works well if used sparingly. But in my experience these need to be simple, bold, striking, and sufficiently different from the norm for all except the tone deaf to be aware that something exciting was happening. I keep a small collection for personal use; when playing at Exeter Cathedral in 1979 I unleashed one (to 'Miles Lane' for the hymn 'All hail the power of Jesu's name') that was subject of much discussion among chapter clergy over coffee as to its publisher. Congregations in Hythe now treat it as nothing out of the ordinary.

Any comments or additions to these points would be very welcome. Berkeley Hill is Director of Music (and main organist), St Leonard's Church, Hythe, Kent.

James Bryant

A short Profile

JAMES BRYANT was born on 30 June 1950 at Taunton, Somerset, although, with a burgeoning family – Jim was the eldest of five brothers – they soon moved to Poole, Dorset, where, later, Jim joined the choir of St Mary's Church, Longfleet, eventually attaining the position of head chorister.

Like many Parish Churches, St Mary's maintained a strong musical tradition with music and settings for the traditional Prayer Book offices. As a result Jim was exposed to a wide repertoire leading to his strong interest in music and in particular that of the church. He attended many diocesan festivals with the choir, notably in Salisbury, Winchester, Sherborne Abbey and Wimborne Minster.

Beginning his secondary education at Henry Harbin Secondary School, Poole, Jim began piano, then organ lessons, with the organist at St Mary's Church and subsequently played the piano for many of the school assemblies. This was deemed a necessity as the Director of Music at the school always considered himself to be an organist and did not play the piano except in the classroom. It was here Jim was engaged in further music making and added the violin to his instruments subsequently playing and singing in a number of the school's regular Gilbert and Sullivan productions. As this was a boys' school he had to frequently adopt the part of a chorus girl!

Jim's father was a pharmacist with his

own business who also had a strong interest in music as a listener, although not as a player, who encouraged his son by exposing him to a wide range of music at the annual series of concerts by the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra in the famous Winter Gardens; at the time Constantine Silvestri was their principal conductor. As a result the family became acquainted with a first violinist from the orchestra who was to become a lifelong friend and from whom Jim received further violin lessons. During this time he continued to receive a number of organ lessons from Michael Peterson on the organ at St Peters Church, Bournemouth, who subsequently left to become Organist and Master of the Choristers at Tewkesbury Abbey. Jim has an abiding memory, when arriving for a lesson, of meeting Michael in a boiler suit, having just emerged from the pipework!

After completing his school studies Jim took a short break, during which time he continued his organ lessons with the late Geoffrey Tristram at Christchurch Priory. Geoffrey was a fine, charismatic and much respected player who inaugurated a series of Wednesday recitals which still continue today. Jim attended many of these with his father inspiring him to continue his studies. At the time the instrument in question was a Compton with a somewhat unwieldy action. Regrettably, Tristram became frustrated by the many action faults, with the salt water from the river affecting the bellows, resulting in repairs which were considered too expensive. It was eventually replaced by a large Compton Makin electronic being one of the first of its



James Bryant

Photo C. Jilks

kind. The conditions for this stipulated the pipework remain in situ and today's instrument is now a fine organ rebuilt by *Nicholson* which Jim was fortunate to play just before last year's Advent Carol Service.

In 1968 Jim began his studies at Trinity College of Music, London and studied under Nelson Lever for Organ and Joan Barker for Piano. Whilst there he sang in many of the great choral works under the baton of Charles Proctor who at the time was also organist at Hampstead Parish Church. As a patron at Trinity, Sir John Barbirolli frequently attended the choir rehearsals. At college Jim played for the Methodist church at Stockwell, where he was living at the YMCA, graduating from Trinity in 1972 with both the G.T.C.L. and L.T.C.L organ teacher's diplomas.

In 1973 Jim began post graduate studies at Keswick Hall in Norwich, playing the organ at Cringleford on the outskirts of the city and carrying out teaching practices in Wells-next-the-Sea and Fakenham Grammar School. He was tutored by the late Geoffrey Laycock who achieved great standing by editing a new catholic hymnal and conducting many famous choral works including the Dream of Gerontius. Also, whilst at Keswick, he met his future wife Helen.

On leaving Norwich in 1974 Jim began his teaching career at the John Hunt of Everest School, Basingstoke, where he was required to teach both music and English. Whilst there, he was the organist at Odiham Parish Church, which is where he lived. Subsequently, in 1982, he moved to direct the music at, what became, Richard Lander School in Truro, after amalgamating both the girls' grammar school and a mixed secondary modern. These were interesting and exciting times as the

carol services took place in Truro Cathedral and Jim was able to perform on the famous *Father Willis* organ. On one momentous occasion the girls' choir performed Benjamin Britten's Ceremony of Carols, complete with harpist. The school boasted two choirs, an orchestra and a wind band, all of which performed regularly.

Whilst in Cornwall Jim acquired an interest in yachting and regularly went for trips on the Fal and Helford rivers with a teaching colleague. He also pursued his interest in wine by engaging in a course, resulting in two wine and spirit educational trust certificates.

The family spent fifteen very happy years in Cornwall, during which time Jim was organist and choirmaster at Kenwyn Church, Truro and subsequently played for the Probus team of churches. He also accompanied the Chacewater Male Choir who toured regularly both at home and abroad, and on one occasion won their class in the Cheltenham Festival. Whilst in Truro, Jim gave two composite recitals in the Cathedral, on one occasion with a close college friend who is a pianist and on another, with the Chacewater choir.

In 1994 the family moved to Kent and settled in Elham, where Jim still lives, teaching at Brockhill Performing Arts College, Saltwood, Hythe. Jim retired from teaching in 2005 and subsequently from the post of organist and choirmaster at Barham. With more time available, he joined our Association in 2005, becoming a regular and active member and serving on our committee.

He now plays on a freelance basis, allowing more time with the family, and to pursue other interests, including ancestry research. He has more recently had tuition from James Parsons and Tom Bell, and is still pursuing organ studies with Gerard Brooks.

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