

BRADFORD ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION
Newsletter 2024-1

Letter from Jolly.

Dear All,

Lots to think about, in the B.O.A. World, as spring approaches and we can get out more.

Some good news.

Yesterday, Edward and I spent the best part of the morning at St Mary's Thornton in Craven where we met up with Mark and Ginny Wood - the organ builders from Harrogate who look after the organ there.

It has been a testing time (pun intended) for the folk at Thornton. A while back it was discovered that the asbestos insulating the organ blower's motor had de-laminated. Various 'expert' asbestos removers were consulted and an extreme range of solutions touted. The most extreme involved closing, sealing and then decontaminating the church (for a truly eye watering cost). The same company intended to remove the organ outside and clean it with pressure hoses! I still don't understand why Thornton's wardens were so hostile to this scheme as it was only going to cost about £50,000.

What actually happened was this. The blower was simply removed by appropriate, approved professionals and the organ was checked for contamination. It was this checking that happened yesterday and I am delighted to report that, to no-ones surprise, the organ was clear. A new blower has been ordered and later in the year Woods will return to restore the tubular pneumatic pedal action on this lovely instrument.

I have related this *cautionary* tale because I think there is likely to be a whole host of aging blowers out there, lurking with intent to de-laminate and it might be time for a wider conversation about this. In many parishes struggling to maintain and justify their pipe organs such a happening would most likely result in the disposal of the instrument. A timely replacement of the blower would certainly be preferable.

It was Mark Wood, by the way, who recently restored the swell organ at Bradford Cathedral and Edward and I enjoyed hearing about that while the asbestos testers did their stuff.

On a further optimistic note, all of our organ builders are working flat out it seems with several years of work each. So, there must be lots of organs getting some TLC.

Don't have nightmares,

Jolly

Secretary's notes

It is with sadness that I announce the deaths of three of our members, Geoffrey Collins, Valerie Mitchell and Leslie Woodcock.

Geoffrey Collins

Geoffrey had been a member for many years, serving as President and as a council member.

He had not been able to attend meetings recently due to his ill health.

Geoffrey was organist at Saltaire Methodist church for many years.

Latterly playing at East Morton on alternate Sundays and also at Saltaire URC Church.

He started piano lessons at seven years old and shortly afterwards began to play the organ. It became his lifelong passion.

Valerie Mitchell

Val was a BOA member for a long time. Both Val and her husband Jim served as president.

David Shinn writes

Val was a very caring person who loved to entertain people. She was a great help to Jim, looking after music for rehearsals and services. She was also very involved with the Mothers' Union at St Barnabas Church, Heaton, knitting hundreds of baby bonnets for the Premature Baby Unit at the BRI. They were a very close family and will be very greatly missed by both family and friends.

John Hammond writes

I have many happy memories of Val especially as Jim invited me to play for the odd service when he was away and for many rehearsals. Val was always present supporting Jim.

She had a strong character and wanted things to be just right.

She always showed a happy face and generally cheered everyone up. If she was talking too much Jim would just shout "Val" in a stern voice and that was sufficient!

She had a very kind nature as well as being so stoical in her last few months of that awful illness.

Leslie Woodcock

Mr Leslie Woodcock the oldest member of our association died earlier this month at the age of one hundred and one. In his younger days he had been an organist and a Lay Reader in the Church of England. Unfortunately some years ago he completely lost his hearing, but after many operations involving implants he regained his hearing .

He had a life long interest in music in the church and it was his greatest wish to be able to play the organ again. At the age of ninety three he approached me to have organ lessons and to join the Association.

He had a two manual and pedal electronic organ in his home and it was here that I gave him lessons.

It was obvious that in his earlier days he had been no mean player. He enjoyed his lessons and the chats that we had- usually about the church as it was !

Latterly he began to have problems with his eye sight and the lessons became visits when I would play for him and talk about organs and churches and Vicars ! Sheila and I went to his Centenary birthday party and he was in remarkably good spirits. For the last few months he was in Shipley Manor Nursing Home where I visited him just before Christmas.

He talked about the churches that he could see from his window, St Paul's Shipley and Christ Church Windhill. He remembered that the organ at Shipley was a Binns and he remembered Canon Perrit who was Vicar there when I was a boy. He remembered Swinburne Garrett who had been organist at Windhill and had known him when he was organist at Northowram. Small world, I was a pupil of Mr Garrett.

I feel privileged to have known Leslie,

RIP Leslie

Edward Scott

Report

Recital given by Henry Websdale at St Paul's Shipley 20th January

Many of us will remember when, not *so* long ago, three of our young members- all in their teens - gave us a recital. That was about 15 years ago and, these days, we are certainly seeing the great results of that initiative to bring on young players.

So, I was delighted to come and hear, one of those three, Henry Websdale, give the recital for this month's B.O.A. event. Henry is now working as a repetiteur in Austria and the opportunity to hear his performance attracted a larger than usual and quite distinguished audience for a real treat.

First, we heard Bach's e minor Prelude and Fugue (the Wedge). This was a truly virtuoso delivery making the best of the instrument and the acoustic.

Next came Vierne's 'Claire de lune' from the second suite. Again a virtuoso delivery - but in an entirely different sense. Playing delicate, French music on a large, bombastic English organ is not so straightforward and we often ignore the quality of the sweeter stops on such instruments while assuming they are all about volume! Henry gave us a charming reading of this and utilised the registration of the organ superbly.

It was time for something lighter. Hollins' 'A Song of Sunshine'. Another performing challenge - how to transmit the sense of wit required without detracting from the composer's craftsmanship. Henry did not disappoint.

Next a contrast in mood but, this time, the instrument might have been made for such a piece. Herbert Howells' 'Psalm Prelude' was written for just such an instrument and venue. Henry entranced us with a beautifully coherent rendition.

Henry finished with Franck's 'Chorale No 3 in a minor'. Again, his relaxed virtuosity ensured a thrilling end to the programme.

So, thank you Henry for a fabulous recital. Thank you Edward for all the work you put in with the youngsters all those years ago. Thank you B.O.A. for having the imagination to develop that scheme. Finally, thank you St Paul's Shipley especially the warden (I'm afraid I can't remember your name) who gave up most of her Saturday to, so ably, accommodate us.

Jolly Felton

Secretary's notes

Please note that most of the meetings in the syllabus are now in an afternoon. Your council would be glad to know your thoughts on this.

This is your Association and you should make your views known.

There are vacancies on the Council

Perhaps **you** could consider filling one of these places. Do phone me for more information about this.

Sheila

St John's, Baildon BD17 6ND

Saturday 17th February at 2.15pm

Improvisation – Prof. David Baker