

SFO News

July 2010



Issue 15

Organ Advice Committee

Donald Maclagan

I wonder how many members of the SFO's affiliated local societies are aware that as a federation we are able to give advice to congregations of any denomination, or to anyone else who owns an organ, when they are contemplating the future of their instruments. Normally the first visit to an organ by an Adviser is free and only if further visits are requested may a fee be negotiated.

As a general policy Advisers favour the retention of pipe organs but where there is no realistic alternative, or where there is already an electronic organ in situ, then advice will be given on these electronic organs.

Presently, there are nine Organ Advisers covering the whole of Scotland – I myself cover Inverness and the North, including the islands, and currently have two jobs ongoing in Shetland.

Anyone who is within the Church of Scotland requiring the services of an Adviser should in the first instance contact the Committee on Church Art & Architecture (CARTA) at 121 George Street, while anyone else should contact me on donaldmaclagan@scotsorgan.org.uk or 01540 662431.

Although the country is reasonably well covered we do have an urgent need to appoint another adviser to cover the south-west and Dumfries-shire. If you could help in this area, or can recommend someone who might be able to do so, please do let me know.

An Invitation to Meet the King of Instruments

Nairn M. Young

In February of this year the Glasgow Society held an 'Education Day' in St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Great Western Road in Glasgow's West End. The event was not targeted at young people who are learning the organ nor indeed was it aimed at those who are learning any other musical instrument. Instead the day was designed to introduce school pupils to the organ as an instrument, and to experience the thrill and excitement of its repertoire. Since the percentage of the population who attend church has continued to decline in recent times, and religious observance in the schools more often than not does not

feature the organ, the committee was aware of the fact that many school-aged pupils simply never hear the instrument and may hardly know it exists! Consequently, it was decided to invite pupils from four primary schools at primary 6/7 stage to experience what we called 'the sound-world' of the organ. A sub-committee was formed with a remit to make the necessary arrangements, and four members of the society's committee, namely Nairn Young (convener), Norman Girvan, Christine Furnish, and Charles Donnelly elected to serve on it. The event was to be called 'An Invitation to meet the King of Instruments.'

The committee decided that St. Mary's Cathedral was the most favourable location for the education day since the organ console there is movable, allowing it to be placed close to the front pews so that the instrument and the player were clearly in view. Indeed the console made a most impressive sight as one walked down the centre aisle, raising the anticipation of the pupils, - exactly the desired effect. Four schools were invited to send a class of pupils from either primary 6 or 7. These were Hillhead and Oakgrove Primaries from Glasgow, and Lairdsland and St. Machan's Primaries from East Dunbartonshire. Unfortunately Hillhead Primary were unable to attend and their places were taken up by inviting Oakgrove to send two classes instead of one. In all 123 pupils attended in two sessions, 61 in the morning and 62 in the afternoon, each session lasting an hour.

The sub-committee discussed at some length the content for the visit, but early on decided to invite John Kitchen to be the main presenter. It was a truly inspired choice! The pupils learned about manuals, pedals, diapasons, flutes, strings and reeds. They saw and heard John play 'Happy Birthday to You' on the pedals - first the tune only, then in two part harmony! - they got to blow through some organ pipes that Charles Donnelly brought along, and some had an opportunity to play the instrument themselves. Of course they heard real organ music as well; the Bach Toccata in d minor, the Widor Toccata, the Trumpet Voluntary and more, but for me a real highlight was John's improvisation on the Harry Potter Theme which finished the session. - Astonishing! (and no one disappeared!) In addition the children had a 'quiz' to work on as they moved through the different aspects of the instrument and its repertoire which helped to underline the teaching points being made by John.

A follow-up pack which was much valued by the class teachers was given to each. It contained more quiz questions and puzzles (with answers for the teachers), an evaluation

sheet for the pupils, a separate one for the teachers, a list of organ teachers, an invitation to hear the organ at the Glasgow Art Gallery lunchtime recitals, and the R.C.O.'s really excellent D.V.D. 'Dan and the Magic Musician.' Lastly, to cap it all, each pupil was given a small bag of goodies to eat.

The day was a resounding success. Six of the society's committee acted as stewards and saw for themselves the interest and excitement generated in the pupils. We received letters from one of the head teachers and one of the class teachers thanking the society, comments from them included 'We were enthralled while listening to Dr. Kitchen performing on the organ'; 'Dr. Kitchen's explanation of the workings of the King of Instruments gave the children a great insight to how the instrument works' - and - 'This was an opportunity which really ties in with the Curriculum for Excellence and it was enjoyed by all staff and pupils'.

These comments were very welcome indeed, however the pupils' evaluations were in some ways even more gratifying: 'The organ pleased me because when Dr. Kitchen came in and started to play I didn't realise that an organ can make a wonderful noise. Right now I feel really happy.' 'What surprised me most was listening to the Bach music. The first piece of music sounded scary'. (Toccatina in d minor!). 'The most important thing I learned was how the different sized pipes make different sounds and how you had sets of three manuals and one set of pedals'. There was only one recurring criticism: 'This might have been more useful for me if we heard more pieces of music' - surely the nicest thing anyone could have said!

Thanks are due to the sub-committee for all the hard work they put into this event, to Frikki Walker, organist of St. Mary's and to the Provost and members of the congregation for their kindness in affording us every help and courtesy in using their organ and beautiful building, to the society's committee members who gave up a day to steward at the event, and to Mrs. Whiteford's bequest which met the costs. Well done everyone!

Widor – More Than Just a Perfect Fifth?

Steve Jones – a summary of talk given to the Inverness Organists' Society

The tongue-in-cheek title for this talk on the Widor symphonies is an odd topic you might think, as they are certainly not as well-known or widely played as those of say Vierne. But they stand at a cross roads in the development of organ music in France in the late 19th century, and Widor and his organ builder family friend, Aristide Cavaille-Coll, together revolutionised French organ music.

So what do we know of the organ symphonies? Clearly 'the Widor' is his most famous piece, much sought after at weddings and after midnight mass, particularly in France. And it prepared the way for similar, although smaller scale and less successful, pieces by Guilmant, Boellman, Dubois, Gigout and others.

We must remind ourselves that Widor himself was a peerless virtuoso. Born in Lyons in 1845, he studied under Lemmens in Brussels and achieved the exalted position of organist of Saint Sulpice by the time he was just 25, a position he held until he was 89. He died in 1937 aged 92, having attained pre-eminent status as a composer, organist and teacher. Amongst his pupils were equally hallowed names such as Vierne, Tournemiere, Milhaud, Shweitzer and Dupre, who was Widor's assistant at St Sulpice for 28 years before succeeding him there.

Not much more may be known of him or his organ music than that. However, there is much more to even the 5th Symphony than just the Toccatina.

Let's take the opening movement. A tight vigorous lively theme is the basis for the whole work, which could be described as a series of variations – many of his movements have a structural freeness reminiscent of Wagner, a repeating Leitmotiv, on whom he was brought up. This theme occurs over and over again, but always afresh with different treatment. And each iteration of the melody itself is often thrown between pedals and manuals, as if being passed to different instruments of the orchestra. There are a variety of unusual organ sounds too (eg 16 and 4 ft flute combinations), various textures, and the full range of the organ dynamic is used. It is highly virtuosic, and exploits to the full the Cavaille Coll organ's symphonic capabilities. Here in all its sparkle we see the creative interaction between organ-playing virtuoso and organ-building expertise. [*play Symphony 5/Movement 1*]

(It is at these points during the talk that an extract from the movement being described was played. In this article, these points will be indicated with the number of the symphony followed by the number of the movement, in this case 5/1, and it is left to the reader to play them at home.)

The second movement has a beautiful melody, with Hautbois above flutes. It is in Lied form, with two differing sections. It's also unusual because I think it is a first to introduce four staves to organ writing, with the right hand playing two melodies on different manuals at the same time, a contortion for mere mortals with small hands and short fingers. [*5/2*]

A third Andante movement, a slowish passacaglia, and a simple Adagio slow fourth movement complete the symphony.

So the 5th Symphony, as well as being great organ music, reveals to us many of the characteristics of the Widor symphonic template, this newly developing sonata or suite for organ. Each symphony has:

- Between 5 and 7 movements, apart from the last two which have only four
- A solid opening movement in terms of theme and tempo, often slow and deliberate; at least two slow movements, one always before the final movement; and one scherzo like movement

- A variety of forms e.g. toccatas, fugues, sonatas, canons, variations, rondos, and much freer Lied-type movements
- A movement through diverse keys within each symphony, with some unusual changes eg F# major to A minor, D flat major to G major, C to E flat minor.
- Much chromaticism through his modulations and developments, with a common technique of transposing themes continuously up a semitone in succession, giving a feeling of instability.

Above all, these symphonies were written to capitalise on the orchestral-like organs being developed by Cavaille Coll. These were a reaction against the clarity of the two-chorus feature of baroque organs, enabling a move away from complex polyphonic organ writing to a more homophonic style. The variety of organ sounds and textures is evident throughout each symphony.

It is impossible to do justice to these 10 symphonies, nearly 6 hours of music, in just under an hour. But what I would like to do is give you a flavour for the variety within them in two ways. First, by illustrating the way Widor has used different forms across them all. And second, by illustrating the different sounds he conveyed as the organ became a symphonic instrument.

There is another degree of variety which I am not going to illustrate but which is very real. Widor wrote 10 organ symphonies in all. The first four were published in 1872, when he was just 27, and the second four around 1880. The Symphony Gothique appeared in 1895 and the Symphony Romane in 1900. However, Widor lived until 1937 and revised his works constantly, so there are said to be as many as 8 different versions of some symphonies in print. Certainly I have experienced this myself – learning from one edition and then trying to play from another – and it is at the very least unnerving, a real trap for the unwary.

A tonal feature of the ten symphonies is that they rise by degree of the scale – starting in C major and moving through D up to C and D again for the last 2. There is also a predominance of minor keys throughout.

We started with an opening movement, so let's now just hear another, that of the 7th Symphony. Again, the opening is deliberate and even heavy, as if setting a firm foundation for the movements to come. Very often in the early symphonies opening movements are specifically titled Preludes. This is in sonata form with a powerful, angular dotted theme. [7/1]

And another opener, the first movement of the 4th Symphony; this is much more in the classical tradition, with echoes of the Mozart F minor Fantasia and Fugue, with its consonant harmony, strong dotted rhythms, and in the same key. [4/1]

The only other movement largely in the classical tradition is the Minuetto, the second movement of the 3rd Symphony, this time a slow movement with the characteristic Hautbois

above flutes and diapasons. Both these movements show the influence of one tradition of the time, that of 'Back to Bach', where forms from the past are mixed with the harmonic language of Widor.

Fugues feature in many symphonies. They were treated by Widor very differently from a Baroque fugue, where complex polyphony could be illustrated on the clear organ registrations of the day. These would simply not work with full Cavaille Coll organ, sounding far too muddy. So Widor adopted a simpler approach to texture although still using all the normal fugal devices.

Here are two very different examples. The first from Symphony 1 in F minor; this is the last movement and it is unusual in that it is a fugue. It has an angular dissonant theme, which evokes a rather bitter sharp taste, but is treated with strict counterpoint, and employs the technique of raising the subject by semitones through the development. [1/7]

And secondly, a more lyrical, flowing and restrained feel to this second movement from the 4th Symphony in F minor. It is entitled Fugue and is written for 8 foot foundation stops on all manuals. Following on from the rather classical first movement we heard earlier, it also has a classical feel to it. [4/2]

Scherzos in the symphonies allowed rapid and virtuosic finger work to be illustrated on many different registrations. Here is one of the lighter varieties on foundation stops and reeds, the fourth movement of the 2nd Symphony. This movement begins in fugal form and then becomes freer. Its 6/8 lilt earned it the nickname 'The Hunt' and indeed it reminds me of the Bach Gigue Fugue.

And in contrast, this fourth movement of the 4th symphony.; it is in C minor, in ternary form, and has florid incessant semi-quavers throughout on the manuals, usually at 8 foot pitch, but at times strengthened with a 16 foot stop on the Great, and with only 8 foot on the pedals, all for flutes.

The slow movements are particularly lyrical and show off the flute, gamba, celeste and solo stops of the organs, in particular the Hautbois / flutes combination, so favoured of Franck, one of Widor's predecessors. He always precedes the last movement of each symphony with a slow movement. We've already heard some of the second movement of the 5th Symphony. Here's the Pastorale from the 2nd symphony, a happy carefree feel. It is in ternary form with its opening rustic tune giving way to a choral and short imitative section. [2/2]

The charming third movement from the 7th Symphony gives us the same sort of sound, but a much more serious feeling and a more complex melody, harmony and accompaniment.

A different combination of effects is given to us by the second movement of the 8th Symphony, with its prominent Great 8 foot flute tune coupled to Swell celestes which also accompany it, with Choir 8 and 4 flute flutes coming in later. It is in ternary form, and begins with a Romance in E major,

that is followed by the tune being accompanied by a dotted rhythm. We pick it up here as the theme comes back in the tenor register with triplet accompaniment above. This lyrical movement is said to have inspired composers of this era to begin thinking of writing 'Romances pathétique' for viola or cello and piano. [8/2]

And there's a similar sound in the second movement of the 9th Symphony, *Symphony Gothique*, reputedly Widor's most popular slow movement.

Widor also made much use of canon as a way of giving variety to the movements. Here is a good example of a canon at the octave from the 8th symphony again, this time the third movement. [8/3]

And a rather more subtle effect from the Adagio fourth movement from the 3rd Symphony; again with the canon at the octave, this is set for flutes, gambas and voix celestes. [3/4]

Widor's music is full of subtlety, even though it tends to get characterised as loud and fast. His Lied forms show great variation of accompaniment, texture and registration.

But we can not get away from the fact that it is the larger and louder movements for which he is best known and probably best remembered, and it is to these that we will now return.

Firstly, the last movement of the 2nd Symphony in D major; this is a boisterous Toccata for full organ. It is also a rondo, a form which Widor used for many movements, particularly in the first and second symphonies. It uses a constant rhythm throughout and employs a great modulation into B flat major early on. [2/6]

But we have to go back to the 6th Symphony for popular loud movements, which with the fifth, is the most well known and most often performed of all the symphonies.

The Finale is a breathless boisterous movement, beginning with full organ theme of big chords, and then moving into a chromatic and more polyphonic second theme fairly quickly. Much of this piece is the development, centring on the sub-dominant and dominant, and returning only to the home key of G major towards the end. This gives it a rather unstable and restless feeling, which makes it less popular than the first movement. [6/5]

By contrast, the first movement has that solid firm feeling so common of Widor's first movements. In sonata form and starting with rasping full organ theme, it becomes quickly quasi-recitative, with an indistinct second theme. It then embarks on a lengthy development in which the theme is passed from right hand to pedal continuously through various keys, before returning in true 'Grand Choeur' style. [6/1]

I am conscious that in putting this together, there has been little mention of the last 2 symphonies, the *Gothique* and *Romane*. These are altogether more extensive and complex works, each based on a plainsong theme, the *Gothique* on the Christmas theme *Puer Natus Est*, and the *Romane* on the

Easter theme *Haec Dies*. And I also have not really given you a feel for any one symphony complete. But I hope that at the very least I have whetted your appetite to find out a little more about Widor and to listen a little more to his organ works.

Personally I have to admit to finding the first 6 symphonies more interesting than the remaining 4. They tend to have shorter movements and are more tightly constructed, whereas the later ones have longer movements which I find do challenge my concentration span. And while the *Gothique* and *Romane* are thematically more complete in being each based on a plainsong theme that dominates much of each movement, this device seems to me to provide less obvious variety and hence make them seem prevaricative. So I would personally recommend a start with the earlier ones.

And what better place to start, and indeed to end this presentation, with what I think is one of THE great movements from the symphonies, the *Marche Pontificale*, the fifth movement of the 1st Symphony. It would almost seem that the symphony should end with this movement, but there are two more movements to go after this. This movement together with the *Meditation* which follow it were both added in later revisions. This is just a great outburst of joy, mainly for full organ. It is in Rondo form, with the main theme made up of great crashing chords, and charming and quieter brass band-type interludes giving relief between the appearances of the main theme. [1/5]

I hope that in presenting this I have persuaded you that Widor is indeed more than just a perfect fifth.

Advice to Secretaries

"You don't write down what they said, and you don't write down what they thought they said. You write down what they would have said if they'd thought about what they were saying." – advice given in 1979 by the outgoing Cabinet Secretary, Sir John Hunt, to his successor, Sir Robert Armstrong, on the subject of taking Minutes of Cabinet.

Stirling & District Society's Joint Meeting with Tayside Society

Ailsa Simpson

The members of Stirling and District Society of Organists were joined by their friends from the Tayside District Organists' Society for a very happy afternoon in Kippen Parish Church on Saturday 13 March. While there could be some debate about whether the high tea or the organ recital by Matthew Beetschen of Dunblane Cathedral attracted the more fulsome praise, there can be no doubting the success of the meeting, which cemented the already-sound relationship between the neighbouring societies.

Matthew chose a very varied programme to suit the Kippen Parish Church organ. A rousing opener by Samuel Sebastian Wesley preceded Maurice Green's Voluntary in E flat, followed by a Prelude by Dietrich Buxtehude ... "bright and happy stuff" to quote the artist ... chosen to demonstrate how an organ with no mixtures or 2' stops can produce a lively sound using 4' stops and octave couplers. Then, using



only the 4' flute stop, Matthew played Mozart's delightful Fantasia in F minor K 606, written for a mechanical organ, before moving on to two pieces by 'Bach' - firstly the Fantasia and Fugue in C minor by C. P. E. Bach and then the Andante and Allegro by F. E. Bache, a real organist in Victorian Birmingham even if his music possibly owes a lot to the pen of W. T. Best. Next came a surprise ... two organ pieces by Schubert. **Schurely** not, as a noted Edinburgh-born actor might comment. And indeed they proved to be transcriptions by Matthew himself of two of the Moments Musicales originally written for piano. The organ's two 8' flutes were shown off in Naji Hakim's Antienne before the organist took his willing audience to the cinema to enjoy a well-known melody from Ennio Morricone's score for 'The Mission' - Gabriel's Oboe. And the recital was brought to a triumphant close by the piece which Edward Elgar wrote for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 and which first brought that composer to the notice of the public at large, none other than his Imperial March.

The high tea, which was arranged by Stirling President David Loosley, organist of Kippen Parish Church, was provided by specialist caterer Michael More of Cambusbarron, and featured some splendid light-hearted recollections on a musical theme by David and by Matthew, proving that organists find unexpected humour in Sunday worship, wedding ceremonies and even funeral services. What a splendid way to spend a rather chilly afternoon in March!

The syllabus for 2010-2011 is now complete. The session starts on Saturday 16 October with a visit to Glenalmond College to see the 2007 Harrison and Harrison organ, followed by a joint meeting with the Lanarkshire Society on Saturday 20 November. This will be a recital by Sheila Robertson BMus (Hons), LTCL, LRSM, Organist at St. Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church, Edinburgh and will take place in Alva Parish Church in Stirling Street, Alva, starting at 2:30 pm. A warm invitation is extended to SFO members who wish to join the Stirling & District members for this recital; and

further details may be had from Mrs. Ailsa Simpson, the S&DSO Secretary, by calling 01324 715568 at any reasonable hour.

Organ Blog

Evelyn Stell

Do you know that I have started up a blog for organists on the Forth in Praise website? It's mainly aimed at RC organists who I think get a dreadful deal generally, and I thought a few SCOTS-type hints might help.

The blog started in June 2009, and then stopped when I was unwell. I picked it up again while convalescing, and I'm finding writing it quite therapeutic!

Please do have a look at it at www.forthinpraise.co.uk/blog/

Carlo Curley at the Caird Hall, 1st June 2010

Robert Lightband

There is many a 'good' organist who tends, more than a little, to be snide about the Pavarotti of the organ, the American born Carlo Curley. The attitude has developed from the extreme showmanship; one has to only glance at his signature, an unusual sense of colour and a general feeling that he is not quite the gentleman as exhibited by ex-Oxbridge Scholars in the entire English speaking world. This would be very unfair. Carlo has the rock-sure sense of rhythm that most musicians would envy. It is combined with a virtuosity that is breathtaking and a remarkable sense of feel about the music and its interpretation.

The recital was a return visit, probably his third, this time organised by the Friends of the Caird Hall Organ. This remarkably successful group has done wonders for what is one of the finest concert organs in the world. The instrument is one of the few that was entirely built in Durham; most Harrisons are rebuilds. It is built on a scale that is breathtaking. Bad organists make a loud organ sound intolerable; good ones make it bounce! Carlo certainly did that. One forgets that Carlo uses the pungent Orchestral strings, even in a chorus with Great stops, much more often than the politely restrained strings on the Swell. There was little use of the huge Open Diapason I or the Hohl Flute on the same manual. These are two wonderful romantic stops, but we did hear almost every other stop on the organ. The organ is not big compared to many others, but has a wonderful array of soft stops, a palette that was used to its full.

It was interesting that in the Gordon Young Prelude in Classic Style Carlo played the last lines, not in octave scales as written, but in tenths, making it far more satisfying and is what many organists use. Wonderful new pieces were heard for the first time in Dundee, such as the Christos Patteraikis by Roy Perry. Stefan Lindblad's Toccata on an American Theme was wonderful, a homage to Bernstein which shot

syncopation and Jazz themes round the Thomsony with a virtuosic brilliance that was breathtaking. Manual changes were both ingenious and sure-footed, so to speak. The Mozart Fantasia K608 was rather less satisfying. This piece was written for a musical clock which had a modest rank of 8' stopped pipes. Wolfgang hated doing it and other pieces he wrote for the same instrument, but produced one of the greatest pieces in the repertoire, quite on a par with Bach. Carlo played rather too fast, and on occasions for the only time in the concert, possibly wrong pistons resulted in quite violent crescendos.

It was a learning curve to realise at the end of the concert what all of us thought about the music, a learning curve because there was quite a wide difference of opinion. Some people, knowing the original opera score looked down with scorn on Wagner's 'Liebestod'. To many of us it was the crown of a wonderful concert. The organ was used in its entirety, but the playing had such depths of emotional passion that few of us were failed to be left breathless both during and at the end of a piece that was a cut to the quick of the soul.

We got not one, but two encores, Scott Joplin's The Entertainer, a fitting epigram for Carlo's performance, and the wonderfully restful 'Cherry Ripe'.

The Sad Tale of Three Little Giant Pipe Organs

Alan Clarke

A church in Shetland was closing in 2010 and the organ was available, free, to a new home. Built by Bryceson Bros, about



1900, one manual, 8.8.8.8.4.4 plus octave coupler, with pedal board permanently coupled. Lowest 13 notes spoke 16' Bourdon. All in full working order. The musicians in this church were manifestly disinterested in the organ, preferring only their praise band. Meanwhile a church in central Scotland expressing great

interest could have taken it: unusually for today there was a willing donor available, principally inferring no charge on the parish coffers. Yet unbelievably this church hummed and hawed, meanwhile secretly the Bryceson's pipes were removed by an "organ builder" who wanted them. This was despite requests to the Shetland church from several sources to keep this instrument intact, particularly because there was a strong possibility of a new home. Doubtful if the Bryceson will ever sound again?

An 1832 Joseph Walker (he was apprenticed to a Dutch firm, married the boss's daughter! the first organ bearing his

name was 1828, the forerunner to J.W. Walker & Sons Ltd.), was at some time in the small village church at Ottery St. Mary, Devon. A delightful single manual with just 8.8.4. About 1970 it was purchased by a harpsichordist who performed with one of the London symphony orchestras who executed some restoration. Fame came when it was used to make a recording of Handel organ concertos because "the pipework sounded so beautiful". It was later bought by a private person, who fitted an electronic pedal board (totally out of keeping) and it was kept in his garage but still playable. A testament to the builder! A few years ago, this person moved house and the organ was dismantled. It is now in pieces again residing duly garaged in South Wales. Unfortunately, the man was taken ill when he moved, and I suspect the organ was dismantled by the removers. The metal pipes were unceremoniously stuffed into a cardboard box, of course now all decidedly damaged. The man admitted to me that he threw away some of the pipes because they were even more damaged! I asked about the tracker mechanism; after some hesitation he showed me a box of tangled bits of wire. Clearly this very early Walker, instead of being a pride and joy, will never be heard again.



A few years ago a Conacher organ, about 1880, again free apart from the cost of transport and reinstallation, was found residing in a redundant Methodist Church in the north of England. I went to see it. Yet again a single manual, 8.8.4.4 if memory serves correctly, having a full pedal board, complete with 16' Bourdon. I played it and found it all in excellent condition. Finding a church that could have been interested added to my enthusiasm to preserve it, but this church's Congregational Board unanimously rejected it. Why? I suspect the pianist/organist, a very determined and influential elderly lady, would have none of it. Meanwhile the Methodists could not find any recipient and I was led to believe that a charity carefully dismantled it and the pieces now reside in a Liverpool warehouse. Unlike the other two organs, this Conacher could, I suppose, be resurrected at a modest cost. It was a beautiful little instrument, ideal for a small church.

Historic buildings are listed and on a limited basis so are pipe organs, mainly through interested parties trying to retain these musical delights. Statutory restrictions on destruction, or even minor alterations, are applicable to every listed building large or small. Why not organs? Greater respect for such a scheme would promote its existence, such as the SFO endeavour. After all, these musical instruments were part of the culture these past 400 years of our church-going ancestors. We should make more of an effort to preserve them, or even develop them, for the betterment of ourselves and our successors.

Keyboard players in churches are becoming a rare breed, and true organists an endangered species. Occasionally a spark of new blood enters the fray but as ever churches in general want a compliant organist at someone else's expense. What can we do? Not many homes accommodate pianos today but down-loading is the new art of music! Ask any minister and you will be told how important the music is to aid worship, but if you want a decent instrument ...! The SFO and its associated societies should continue to develop sound financial, artistic, cultural and theological reasons for keeping good pipe organs in our churches and finding good players for them. I for one would be willing to help in such an endeavour.

Organ Playing Fund

Editor

It may not be widely known that the Scotland's Churches Scheme Organ Playing Fund – supported by The Inches Carr Trust – wishes to encourage the playing of organs by providing financial assistance to churches towards the cost of an event or programme. More details are available from fraser@dunedin67.freesevice.co.uk or fax 01355 303181.

ESO News

Nicola MacRae

As we reach the beginning of another year of the Edinburgh Society of Organists it is perhaps fitting that we reflect upon the wealth of organs that we are privileged to have in Edinburgh. It is difficult to think of another city in the UK that has so many diverse instruments, many being in walking distance of each other. We are indeed spoilt and, through speaking to members of other societies in Britain, we are reminded of just how lucky we are.

Last year the ESO decided to celebrate our City's organs through our *Organs of Edinburgh* recording project with Delphian Records. Many of you will already be aware of our ambitious project and may have already purchased your copy. This is a fantastic project showcasing Edinburgh's wonderful organs. It also features many Edinburgh Organists and fellow ESO members. It takes the form of a coffee table style book with 4 CDs featuring 22 organs in Edinburgh. A short history, specification and photographs are given of each instrument. It was seen as a fitting tribute to dedicate the book to Tom Laing-Reilly who features in the project. There will be a series of launch recitals in the Edinburgh Fringe Festival featuring the organs and artists in the project and you will also have the opportunity to purchase your copy there. I cannot express enough just how exciting this project is and that we are in the privileged position as a Society to be able to do a project such as this. If you would like to purchase a copy you can do so through the ESO website. Please do purchase a copy – you will not be disappointed!

Apart from being busy with this project we have enjoyed a number of varied and interesting events and our thanks go to all who were involved in making them possible.

A lecture recital given by John Kitchen entitled "Mendelssohn and the Organ" gave us a very good start to the New Year in January. The event took place at Broughton St Mary's Church, Bellevue. John gave a very informative and enjoyable lecture and played not only works by Mendelssohn but works which influenced him as a young composer.

Our Social Luncheon and Recital with Paul Hale took place in February in the elegant surroundings of Merchiston Castle School. A fine three-course meal was served to a larger-than-usual group of members in the Old Library. After the lunch, our guest speaker Paul Hale spoke to us in a very entertaining manner reciting stories about past organists and choir members of Southwell Minster where he is Director of Music. Paul then entertained us further with a most enjoyable recital in the Memorial Hall. The event was a great success and much enjoyed by all in attendance.

In March members had the opportunity to play the Usher Hall Organ. 20 members took up this fantastic opportunity and demonstrated the instrument's great tonal variety. Events such as these are very popular with members of all abilities getting the opportunity to play such fabulous instruments and are very appreciative.

In April we had part 2 of our President's Meeting. This was a recital given by Andrew Caskie in St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral covering British Organ Music from 1900 – 1950. Andrew played very well and selected a most enjoyable programme. Jeremy Cull provided us with very informative programme notes which enhanced this most enjoyable recital.

In May a group of approx 20 members went through to visit organs in Glasgow. The highlight of the trip was the opportunity to play the Kelvingrove Organ before the Museum was open to the public. Although it meant leaving Edinburgh at 7am it was well worth it to get a shot of this magnificent organ. The other organs we visited were by no means overshadowed by this famous organ as they were all very interesting and nice instruments to play. We visited Wellington Church, Hyndland Parish Church and St Bride's Episcopal, Hyndland. We also visited the organ in the Memorial Chapel at the University but did not have the opportunity to play; however, Kevin Bowyer very kindly offered to demonstrate the organ and give a short recital.

The AGM passed without contention and we enjoyed an opportunity of meeting fellow members of the organist fraternity and enjoyed an interesting recital given by Matthew Beetschen of Dunblane Cathedral.

We look forward to our next series of events which is to include a visit to the newly restored organ in Freemasons' Hall, Lammermuir Pipe Organs and further afield excursions to Leeds and Bristol.

Inverness Organists' Society

It is sad to report that due to lack of support and interest the Inverness Organists' Society has been dissolved. Difficulties have been experienced for some time with attendances at meetings declining to the point that we were embarrassed to ask people to speak. However, a small group of members of the former IOS do hope to establish a new society to cover the Highlands.

Legal Advice for Organists

Editor

Following an enquiry from an organist who asked the Church of Scotland Law Department for legal advice on his contract and salary, I am asked by Law Department to make it clear that it cannot give advice to individuals – it exists to advise the church. Individuals should consult their own solicitor for any advice they may require.

Salary Scales

Editor

Having considered the current financial climate and the decisions made by the General Assembly regarding the remuneration of ministers and also office staff at "121", the Salaries Committee have resolved (with the agreement of the SFO Committee) that the increase in salary scales due on 1st January 2011 will not now take place. A further review will be undertaken next year in the hope that an increase can be recommended from 1st January 2012.

50th Annual Conference

Donald Maclagan

On Friday 7th May SFO members from all over the country made their way to the Borders to attend the 50th Annual Conference. The members and committee of the Borders Guild are to be congratulated on a most enjoyable two day programme. When I first saw the itinerary my immediate thought was "the timings are too tight – we shall never keep to the timetable!" How wrong I was! Throughout the two days I don't think we ever ran more than about ten minutes late; congratulations Alan Buchan who was at the helm.

And so, we met on the Friday afternoon at Carlops Parish Church that, although dating from 1850, had been totally refurbished 2009. What a beautiful place to start our weekend. We were entertained to tea and Prof Murray Campbell and his wife Patsy told us of the history and recent refurbishment of the delightful little Gothic-cased chamber organ attributed to James Bruce, probably around 1810, and demonstrated its wonderful sounds.

From Carlops we moved on to Portmore House courtesy of the owners, Mr and Mrs David and Christine Reid, where we

heard the 1992 Rushworth & Dreaper organ played by Sarah Brown. We also had the opportunity to "play" the Bryceson barrel organ and also sample a magnificent spread of tea and cakes provided by Mrs Reid.

Eddleston Parish Church was our next port of call. Built for Dunblane St Blane's Church by Arthur Ingram in 1907 the organ was moved to Eddleston in 1980. Alan Buchan played a thoroughly enjoyable short programme here.

The afternoon concluded with a visit to Manor Parish Church and its 1889 Peter Connacher organ moved from Pencaitland to Manor in 2003. Here Brigitte Harris demonstrated the organ, again to an appreciative audience.

Leaving Manor we just had time to go and book into our various hotels, have a wash, (no snooze!), and make our way to the Park Hotel, Peebles for the Celebration Dinner. The meal was *par excellence* and the entertainment afterwards had us alternating between total enjoyment of the music of Catherine Fish and Molly Pringle, and reeling with laughter at their comic antics and the captivating after-dinner speech of Norman Marr. [A transcription of Norman's address is published below.]

An early rise was needed on Saturday morning as we had to be up, breakfasted, and off to Innerleithen Parish Church for Brigitte Harris's Choral "warm-up" at 9.05. (9.05 to accommodate the local bus times!) Appropriate title as the church was freezing!

A quick trip back to Peebles for registration and coffee followed by the screening of a DVD on the organs of Chicago by Dennis Northway, Grace Episcopal Church, Oak Park, Chicago. The AGM of the SFO followed; the pattern was as it always is and details can be had on application to the SFO Secretary.

Now it was time to eat again! A short walk along Peebles High Street took us to the Old Parish Church where we enjoyed an excellent buffet lunch with plenty time to relax over food and drink and catch up with friends whom we hadn't seen since Aberdeen last year!

After lunch we enjoyed part 1 of the Hollins Memorial Organ Recital by Dennis Northway and his pupil Adam Gruber on the 1887 August Gern organ (altered over the years by Willis, Rushworth and Goldsmith). Retracing our steps along High Street, but this time to St Peter's Episcopal Church, we were entertained to part 2 of the recital on the 1909 Harrison organ.

I am aware that this article really just scratches the surface of our packed two days; there is so much more of interest that could be said, but space prevents that. However, I hope that you might all be encouraged to attend next year's conference in Dundee. We ended a very happy event with more tea and cake and the installation of Andrew Macintosh as President of the SFO 2010 – 2011.

50 Annual Conferences

Norman Marr

[This is a transcript of the address given by Norman Marr to the celebration dinner at the 50th Annual Conference in Peebles on Friday 7th May 2010. Norman is the only person to have attended every single conference! – Ed]

Why am I doing this? - 73 years old, organist of same church for 50 years, lived in same house for 44 years, attended 50 Conferences – I've been called a boring old emission of intestinal gas (not the word used on the 7th May!) on several occasions – you will see why!

Well, you asked for it! I could have requested sight of all the minutes for the last 53 years and prepared an informed sermon of some 3 hours length – I elected, however, to give you some anecdotes, not necessarily musical ones, on the history of our conferences. I promise not to exceed 2 hours.

In May, 1957, David Taylor, organist of The North and East Church of St. Nicholas in Aberdeen, asked if my friend Stanley Ewen, and I would like a lift to "an organists' thing" in Dundee – having nothing better to do we agreed.

This was, of course, the First Conference of the Scottish Societies of Organists – I found a note of it, complete with photo, in the July 1957 issue of the IAO Quarterly Record (I have a file of the IAO Magazines from 1953 – who said 'boring?') An edited version of that note follows....
"Representatives from the five Scottish Societies (Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Dundee and Stirling) met at Dundee – almost 100 attended. Sam Webster of Edinburgh opened the proceedings, Dr Greenhouse Allt, President of the IAO, gave an inaugural speech – his remarks, while serious and thought-provoking, sparkled with wit and humour" – obviously not a boring old....

"It was unanimously decided that the conference would be held annually except when the IAO Congress is held in Scotland and the following office-bearers were elected – President - Samuel Webster, Edinburgh, Vice President Alan Wark, Dundee, Secretary, Graham Gould, Edinburgh, Treasurer William McKenzie, Dundee. The Committee would be the Secretaries of each Scottish Society or Association." – end of quote.

After a civic reception we went to the Caird Hall for a demonstration/recital by James Hinchliffe the City Organist. This was quite a performance – at one point he started on a major Bach work – I forget which, and after about ten bars stopped and threw the music on the floor – "you've all heard that one before". The recital ended with what he described as 'the best toccata not written for the organ'. – The Ride of the Valkyrie – frowned upon, of course, by all the purists there, because in 1957, such music was considered not proper for an organ recital programme. It was a stunning rendition, however, read off orchestral score. At one point he pulled out a stop on the right, turned a page and pushed in a stop on the left with one sweep of his hand – a real showman! At lunch the toasts were to "The City of Dundee" by Eric Smith and "The IAO" by James Fleming Lamb.

In the afternoon John Dalby gave a talk on the practical side of the organist's work, quoting experiences from his mythical church of St. Caleb's, Simper. The last event was a recital given by William Coulthard. of Glasgow on the organ of the Gilfillan Memorial Church – not an outstanding organ but one which had 4 manuals! In his programme Bill included a performance of Harwood's Requiem Aeternam in memory of Dr Robert Head of St. Mary's, Edinburgh who had died just recently and who had been one of the prime movers in the setting up of the Conference.

Well,, we've come on a bit since then – we now have more than five organists' groups and the Conference is held even if there is an IAO Congress in Scotland the same year. I remember the last time we had planned to have just an AGM during an IAO Congress in Glasgow and weren't even able to achieve a quorum, because there weren't enough members attending Congress to do this!

Over the years, there have been some outstanding musical happenings, but for an occasion like this I felt that some anecdotes mostly concerning past presidents, might be more entertaining than a mere catalogue of events. One particular conference I remember was in Lanarkshire – by that time I was Secretary and was with travelling with David Taylor again on the Saturday morning – David "knew the way" – suffice to say that the Secretary wasn't there in time to take a note of the AGM!!

Different personalities bring back memories too – at one Stirling Conference I was giving a lift to Dr George Thalben Ball and had one Karl Pearce-Roberts Hosken in the car too. Pearce tapped me on the shoulder and said "Drive carefully, young man, you have the two best organists in the country in your car" At that point I made eye contact with George Thalben Ball in my rear mirror – his wink wasn't unlike that of one Anne Robinson!

The job of Secretary – at one IAO Congress, I was cornered in an hotel in Leeds by William Blakey and Douglas Smart and told that they were putting my name forward and they expected me to say 'yes'! I was delighted to find that on my first year as Secretary, the President was to be Alan Wilkins, by then at The Holy Rude, Stirling and who had been my organ teacher when he was at Beechgrove, Aberdeen. That started a period of 22 years in which I did little but keep minutes. My successor, Stewart Alston, did much to develop the position of Secretary into a real job! Back to Messrs Blakey and Smart - they were two significant characters in the story of Organists' Societies in Scotland. William Blakey a hard-working Secretary of the Glasgow Society and seemingly rather prosaic character until at one Glasgow Conference when he gave a talk on the job of the organist and had the whole company in fits of laughter for the whole time. Douglas too, was a tireless worker for the Edinburgh Society and the SFO – I got a telling-off once for calling him 'Doug' being informed that a 'dug' is an animal you take out on a lead! He wasn't impressed when I remarked that such debased lowland Scots is unknown north of the River Dee! We say 'doaggie'!

The organisation of the Conference has become a major element in the work of our groups — the timing of events being critical in the success of the day. In Aberdeen in 1973 I had asked Reginald Barrett-Ayres to demonstrate the new Walker organ in the Mitchell Hall of Marischal College and asked particularly that the demonstration should last for just 45 minutes. Reg. elected to improvise on Celtic runes and got so carried away that the demonstration lasted 90 minutes. We then had to see the Mander work going on at St. Machar's Cathedral across in Old Aberdeen and arrived at our last venue, St Mary's RC Cathedral, well over an hour late. Pearce Hosken was scheduled to put on a recital with the Cathedral Boys' Choir after a welcome by the Administrator, Father Gordon Robson. While waiting, Gordon had been inspired by the spirit and was to put it mildly, rather fou. After telling us how he was to take them to Rome to sing to the Holy Father, he sat himself in the Bishop's Chair and entertained the company by appearing to conduct the choir. In the pew behind me. Sister Cormac, the young Irish nun who was the boys' football coach, sat crossing herself and saying "O my God. O my God

Another tale of Pearce — at one Stirling Conference, the recital in the Holy Rude included five fugues. As was his wont, Pearce slept through most of the recital, and waking up as one of the fugue subjects was being given out asked "which one is that" and on being told it was only the third, remarked "God save us" and went back to sleep!

When I used to travel down to Perth for committee meetings twice a year, the return journey could take quite a while — one couldn't go through Burrelton without stopping to say hello to David Murray or Forfar without a visit to Strathyre on Lour Road to see Willie Bernard — another two of Scotland's great organists and characters. With David, it was a lengthy discussion on organ building matters and at Willie's, a social call with sherry, tea and cakes liberally provided by Jean. On leaving, Jean would ask me if I had any 'dirty stories' — any funny story containing even the mildest swear-word was a dirty story as far as Jeannie was concerned — all to the embarrassment of Willie. Back in the 60's I had installed a Nazard in the Forfar organ for Willie and he was always keen to tell me it was still working — wonderful people, all of them. I remember particularly the 1994 Conference when Gordon Stewart and I had decided to 'make a fuss' of Willie, and Gordon included Willie's Concert Overture "Cairngorm " in the Celebrity Recital. I had taken care, as we were walking all over central Aberdeen, to arrange transport for older members and others who needed it. The procession on foot was led all day by a 90 years old William Ditchburn Bernard!

Membership of the SFO can lead to friendships and pursuit of common interests outwith the field of organ and church music. Just imagine two SFO presidents, past and present spending time hill-walking and camping —peering out of a damp tent awkwardly pitched, on sloping ground, waiting for the cloud to clear on the Isle of Mull so that they could climb Ben More. Mr Buchan and I had to give up on that particular hill, but we have climbed others together — most recently Bennachie near Inverurie, with his whole family, Jennifer and Andrew having to be carried most of the way!

Since its foundation, the SFO has expanded, becoming the recognised body to give advice to churches and organists on salaries, conditions of appointment, work on organs, and publishing its own newsletters. However, to me, it is also a fellowship, a precious coming-together for people with a common interest — not just a semi-professional body, but a place where lasting friendships have been established. Long may it prosper!

The Heritage Lottery Fund – Organs in Scotland

Alan Buchan

BIOS recently published a list of organs in the UK which had received grants from the HLF. Inevitably there were a few minor geographical as well as organological inaccuracies in the Scottish instruments mentioned, Scotland being regarded as more remote than Timbuctoo or Kazakhstan in the eyes of the southern UK, as we all know. I hope BIOS does not mind that I have corrected a few of the details which were published. The revised version appears below.

Until 1993 there was very little major grant aid for organ repairs. Only the Carnegie Trust and one or two other bodies gave grants, and they were not large. From 1994 this changed when the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) started to award amounts of about 70% of the total cost of restoring instruments which were good unaltered examples of organ builders' work from the past.

The Scottish Episcopal Church made use of this excellent source of funding from the outset; initially the Church of Scotland decided to celebrate the bonanza by refusing to accept any funding from the HLF at all. It took a few years for this policy to change. The Roman Catholic church has also benefited from the HLF, despite significant difficulties with one project. Overall the number of applications in Scotland remained small in comparison with the huge number submitted in England. This was not due to a lack of eligible organs in Scotland; rather it reflected a lack of awareness of the available funding. In some quarters there was simply a lack of interest.

From 1995 to 2005 I acted as organ project monitor for the HLF in Scotland, until being made redundant by EEC regulations (which I have since heard were a smokescreen for making economies). During that period I was by no means consulted on every "case", nor were the HLF's own guidelines always precisely followed by the HLF. You may glean that from details of the organs listed below.

In view of the need to be open about the cost of organ projects, the amount of grant aid is quoted, from which an estimate of the total cost may be made. Figures with an asterisk* indicate that the amount also included substantial costs for restoration of the building as well as the organ. The date given is the date of award, rather than the date of completion. In the last edition of SFO News, it was mentioned that such a list would appear, to give churches the chance to request that specific details are not released. No objections have been raised to date, so we duly publish the lot! It is,

after all, public information, which has been available on the internet.

1995 St. Mary's Episcopal Church, Dalkeith. Hamilton 1845 and 1891. £12,450

1996 St. Salvador's Episcopal Church, Dundee. Wordsworth & Maskell 1882 £124,900*

1996 St. Columba-by-the-Castle Episcopal, Edinburgh. James Conacher 1880 £418,000*

1996 St. Margaret's Knightswood (C of S), Glasgow. Willis 1866 £27,200 (work carried out later than 1996).

1996 St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Peebles. Harrison 1909 £8000.

1997 St. Paul & St. John's Episcopal Church, Airdrie. Brindley & Foster 1911. £19,600.

1997 The Usher Hall, Edinburgh. Norman & Beard 1914. £1,000,000*

2000 St. Thomas of Canterbury RC Church, Arbroath. Postill 1848. £45,000.

2001 St. Mary's RC Church, Paisley. Watt 1916. £249,000*

2002 Auchtertool Parish Church, Fife. Casson & Miller 1880s. £15,500.

2002 Broughton St. Mary's Parish Church, Edinburgh. Lewis 1882. £30,000.

2003 Colmonell Parish Church. Norman & Beard 1907. £13,700.

2003 All Saints Episcopal Church, Strichen. Wadsworth 1893. £8,700.

2004 Calderbank Parish Church. Abbott & Smith. £113,400*

2004 St. John's Episcopal Church, Moffat. Willis 1872. £12,600.

2005 St. Munn's Parish Church, Kilmun. Norman & Beard 1909. £50,000

2006 St. John's Episcopal Church, Greenock. Mirrlees 1867/1879/1914. £50,000

2006 Well Park Mid Kirk (C of S), Greenock. Forster & Andrews 1865/Mirrlees 1912. £50,000.

2007 Dean Parish Church, Edinburgh. C & F Hamilton 1903. £50,000.

2008 Freemasons Hall, Edinburgh. Brindley & Foster 1913. £50,000.

2008 Inveravon Parish Church, Speyside. Hill 1876. £10,000

2008 Roslin Chapel. Hamilton 1872/1902. £4,500,000*

2009 Tomintoul Parish Church. Walcker Dulsannel 1903. £10,000

2010 One or two projects are currently being considered.

Contractors have included Rushworth & Dreaper (and their Scottish successors, Forth Pipe Organs), Harrisons of Durham, James Mackenzie, James Lightoller, Sandy Edmonstone, Nicholson of Worcester, Michael Macdonald, Paul Miller, Lammermuir Pipe Organs, and Walcker of Ludwigsburg.

The HLF is still open to applications for grant aid for the restoration of historic organs, by which is meant organs which are good representative examples of a particular builder's work, which retain the original specification and action. If minor alterations have taken place, the organ may still be eligible, provided a replica of the original can be successfully created. Existing actions and features have to be restored precisely, according to the guidelines, although this has not invariably been followed.

Other requirements are that the public can gain access to building and organ without undue difficulty. The educational aspect is also stressed and parties of schoolchildren are encouraged to see the restored organs played and to observe how the mechanisms work.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has an office in Scotland, 28 Thistle Street, Edinburgh EH2 1EN, Tel: 0131 225 9450, to which enquiries may be directed.

The next issue of *SFO News* will be published in January 2011. Please note that the deadline for receipt of material for publication will be Friday 31st December 2010.

President of the SFO
Andrew McIntosh

Secretary of the SFO
Mrs Bridget Black
16 Elm Park, Inverness, IV2 4WN

Readers are encouraged to pass this Newsletter on to any interested non-members and they are in turn encouraged to join any affiliated society as detailed below.

Aberdeen & District Organists' Association
Allan Ritchie, Secretary
North Tarbothill, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen, AB23 8BS

Borders Guild of Organists
Ms Maggie Stead, Secretary
The Workshop of Tim Stead, The Steading, Blainslie, TD1 2PR

Edinburgh Society of Organists
Mrs Nicola MacRae, Secretary,
17/6 Polwarth Place, Edinburgh, EH11 1LG

Glasgow Society of Organists
Miss Jane J Stirling, Secretary
72 Loch Road, Kirkintilloch, G66 3EB

Lanarkshire Society of Organists
Mrs Margaret Filshie, Secretary
16 Coulter Road, Biggar, ML12 6EP

Stirling & District Society of Organists
Mrs Ailsa Simpson, Secretary
44 Erskine Hill, Polmont, FK2 0UQ

Tayside Organists' Society
Alastair Davidson, Secretary
20 Ben Hogan Place, Carnoustie, DD7 7TG

SFO News is the newsletter of the Scottish Federation of Organists.
Editor: Donald Maclagan,
1 Victoria Court, 72 High Street, KINGUSSIE, Highlands of Scotland, PH21 1HZ
Phone 01540 662431; Mobile 07974 935224;
E-mail: publications@scotsorgan.org.uk
Web: www.scotsorgan.org.uk

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