

# *SFO News*

## *January 2007*



### *Issue 8*

#### **From Stewart Alston, President, Scottish Federation of Organists**

I should like to draw your attention to two major organ events which are taking place in Scotland in 2007.

The first is the annual Conference and AGM of the SFO. The Federation was founded 50 years ago under the title "The Scottish Society of Organists". This year's meeting will be held on Saturday, 12th May in Motherwell R.C. Cathedral when the principal guest will be Timothy Byram-Wigfield, Master of the Music at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, and formerly of St. Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh. Timothy will give a recital on the recently rebuilt 4 manual organ in the Cathedral and also a talk on Alfred Hollins, a selection of whose works he has recently recorded on the organ of the Caird Hall, Dundee. There will also be choral and instrumental events during the day. Booking forms will be available from local Secretaries from late March.

The other major event is the Annual Congress of the Incorporated Association of Organists which will be based in Glasgow from Monday, 23 July to Saturday, 28 July. Congress last met in Scotland in Edinburgh in 1994. The opening recital of the week will be given by Dame Gillian Weir on the Lewis organ of the Kelvingrove Art Galleries on the evening of Monday, 23rd July and will be open to the public. Do put this date in your diary. Other recitals/events during the week will be held in Paisley, Largs, Glasgow Cathedral and the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

Accommodation for delegates will be in the 4-star Beardmore Hotel, Clydebank. Further details can be obtained from the Congress Organiser, Mrs Jeanne Cawley - telephone 01454 774469 or email [diapason@onetel.com](mailto:diapason@onetel.com).

I look forward to seeing you at one or both of these events, and I send you all Best Wishes for 2007.

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As **Dr Francis Jackson** approaches his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007 we have asked **Dr Denis Townhill**, Organist Emeritus, St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh to write this appreciation of his life.

"I have only this to say about growing old – I didn't notice it happening and I don't agree with it." (Sir Paul Getty)

The foregoing statement might well apply to Francis Jackson, for the passage of time seems to have little effect upon his continuing musical activities. The 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2007, will mark the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth in Malton, Yorkshire, the county in which he has spent the whole of his long and immensely fruitful musical career. Coincidentally, he shares his birth date with Kenneth Leighton, a fellow Yorkshireman and distinguished composer, born in Wakefield in 1929.

The outlines of his early life chart Francis Jackson's training and progress towards a hugely successful career in music. Born in the small market town of Malton in Yorkshire, he sang in the choir of York Minster 1925-1933, under Sir Edward Bairstow, and then Organist of Malton Parish Church 1933-1940. As a pupil of Bairstow, he learnt the skills of an organist and choirmaster and studied for the necessary professional qualifications. The A.R.C.O. 1936, F.R.C.O. 1937, gaining the Limpus Prize. After war service in the 9<sup>th</sup> Lancers in Egypt, North Africa and Italy, he returned to York as Assistant Organist in April 1946, just before Bairstow died on 1 May 1946. Francis Jackson's appointment as his successor was officially made on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1946. This led to his appointment as Conductor of York Musical Society 1947-1982, York Symphony Orchestra 1947-1980 and achieving the further qualification of D. Mus. of Durham University in 1957.

Since then he has pursued a remarkable period of varied musical activity. Apart from the considerable demands of his work at the Minster, he has given organ recitals throughout the U.K. and in Switzerland, Paris, Denmark, Bermuda and six tours of the USA and Canada. He was

President of the R.C.O. 1972-1974 and President of the I.A.O. 1960-1962.

His large and varied list of compositions now exceeding a hundred opus numbers, includes works for solo organ, chamber ensembles and orchestra. He has enriched the repertoire of cathedral music with a large quantity of anthems and service settings, many of which are widely performed.

Not unnaturally, such a remarkable range of achievements has led to numerous, well-deserved honours. These include F.R.S.C.M. 1963, Fellow of Westminster Choir College, Princeton, New Jersey 1970, F.W.C.C. and O.B.E. 1978. He is also Vice-President of the R.C.O. and F.C.O.C.A. and following his retirement as Organist of York Minster in October 1982, the Order of St. William of York was bestowed upon him in 1983 and he was appointed Organist Emeritus, 1988.

Throughout his long life of complete dedication to his art, Francis Jackson has been selflessly supported by his devoted wife, Priscilla who has provided a happy and stable home for him and their family. I have known him for over fifty years and he is one of my oldest friends in the profession. His name and that of his wife occurs more frequently than any others in our visitor's book and we have enjoyed their warm hearted hospitality in Yorkshire many times.

Apart from numerous recitals in St. Mary's Cathedral, Francis has composed a number of pieces for our choir, a Te Deum commissioned for the centenary celebrations in 1979 and a lovely setting for unaccompanied double-choir of words by Fred Pratt Green, "When, in our music, God is glorified", for my retirement in 1991.

Much more could be said but we rejoice in his anniversary.

Lang may his lum reek.

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### **Web site Statistics**

For those are interested in these things, I am delighted to report that the use of the new web site that was launched in mid-July continues to increase rapidly.

In July (latter two weeks) 76 people made 99 visits, in August 258 people visited 372 times, in September 392 people visited 626 times, in October 520 people made 762 visits. So far in November saw another increase with 580 people visiting 896 times and in December 483 people visited 835 times.

### ***Stirling and District Society – Evelyn Stell***

Stirling and District Society have found the change to Saturday afternoon meetings continues to increase attendances dramatically. You may remember that last year I gave advance details in SFO News of our February Linlithgow meeting, a talk by Robin Bell on improvisation. In the event, the gallery was totally jam-packed, with people even sitting on the stairs. Some of our visitors were from other societies, and we were delighted to see them. Well, Robin's going to do it again this year on Saturday 17 February at 2.30 pm. The subject is choir training and the venue is St Peter's Episcopal Church, High Street, Linlithgow ...

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### ***Inverness Organists' Society – Bridget Black***

The first half of session went well with some new members joining us. The first meeting was a quiz, which revealed just how little some of us know but also how much others know - valuable prizes as well! We had a very good evening with Paul Baxter, Managing Director of Delphian Records, who brought us an amazing selection of their recordings and a number of early Christmas presents were purchased. Paul is local to Inverness and was one of the first winners of the Curtis Craig Competition in the Inverness Music Festival - the competition for the winners of selected classes. Our December meeting was on Christmas repertoire, which is always a good evening, with an opportunity to hear other people's suggestions for repertoire. It is just rather a pity that Christmas lasts such a short time. By the time you read this, we shall have had our annual dinner and be well into 2007. Happy New Year and all good wishes for 2007.

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### ***Aberdeen and District Organists' Association – Allan Ritchie***

The Aberdeen and District Organists' Association has a busy, varied and interesting programme for 2006/07. In September the Association teamed up with the Tayside Organists to visit Old Church and St. Mary's & St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Montrose followed with a visit to Brechin Cathedral and finishing with high tea in Brechin. Robert Lightband, Andrew MacIntosh and Ian Robertson gave short talks and recitals. This joint meeting was the first of its kind, was very successful and likely to be repeated in the future. The October meeting consisted of a Repertoire Session whereby members were invited to come along to St. Mary's Church in Carden Place to play a selection of pieces which they use as preludes,

postludes or gap-fillers during church services. The annual social event was a St Andrew's Night in November, the company enjoying stovies, crannachan and coffee before finishing the evening singing Scottish songs in chorus style. Geoffrey Atkinson started 2007 with an evening on music publishing which included a talk, discussion and music to hear, see and buy. The ADOA recital in February has local group Con Anima performing Faure's Requiem with Sophie-Veronique Cauchefer-Choplin on the organ. The well-known world-class organist will complete the evening giving a short organ recital. At the end of March the ADOA is to have a repeat Songs of Praise of last year based on the new hymnary CH4. The year concludes with the customary spring outing, this time visiting three churches in the Stonehaven area.

Mr. James Lobban, a member of the Aberdeen and District Organists' Association of many years, died in November 2006. He was an extremely gifted musician. Mr. Lobban was Director of Music at St. Machar's Cathedral in Aberdeen and was Principal Teacher of Music at Aberdeen's Hazelhead Academy. He was also leader and conductor of the Aberdeen Bach Choir, a position he held for over 35 years. A pupil of Aberdeen Grammar School and graduate of Aberdeen University (1964) Mr. Lobban held the post of principal music teacher at Inverurie Academy before moving to Hazelhead. Mr. Lobban was a very quiet, shy and private man who had a fine, dry wit and well developed sense of humour even although he took his work very seriously. James Lobban was a remarkable musician, he will be greatly missed and will certainly be a sad loss to music education in the northeast of Scotland.

Mr. Norman Marr of the Aberdeen and District Organists' Association, of the Scottish Federation of Organists, of the Incorporated Association of Organists, of..... !!! has finally hung up his pedal pumps. Norman "stopped" playing the organ at Denburn Parish Church in July last year just weeks from reaching the magical 50 years in the post. Why "stop" then? Alas, that was the date set by the Church of Scotland for the Denburn Church closure. Not to be outdone Mr. Marr arranged for the Church to open one last time on the city's Doors Open Day, Saturday 9 September, the date which marked the 50th anniversary of Norman's appointment there. Norman concluded the day by giving a recital of music he had enjoyed playing as voluntaries over the years. The recital included music by Bach, Clerambault, Frank Bridge, Herbert Howells, Percy Whitlock and John Cook. A sad but glorious finale to a long and distinguished career from a remarkable and charismatic figure.

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## ***Glasgow Society of Organists – John Power***

Our Organ Crawl on Saturday 4th November began at St Margaret's Episcopal Church, Newlands, then progressed to Netherlee Parish Church, and finally took us to Cathcart Old Church. It was a successful and very pleasant afternoon. Archie Shearer demonstrated the organ at St Margaret's, and Bill Hutcheson carried out the same honours at Netherlee. There were also contributions from GSO President Alan Rodger, Derek Burns, myself and guest Matt Edwards (from Alloa). Many thanks to all who assisted in making the afternoon run smoothly, and especially to Lawrence Clark, who not only demonstrated the organ at Cathcart Old, but saw to it that the tea room was open for the visitors, so that we were all fortified by tea, coffee, sandwiches and home baking before our individual journeys homewards.,

Another treat was in store for GSO members on Saturday 9th December when we congregated at Emmanuel Haus (German Speaking Congregation) at 7 Hughenden Terrace in the West End. This most memorable meeting was set up by Christine Furnish, who accompanied the singing on the delightful 5-stop single manual chamber organ by E.F. Johnson & Son, Cambridge (1973). Thanks to all who participated, including Bruce Cameron who led the choir through a selection of German Christmas music and to those who laid on a lovely spread of German seasonal goodies for our sustenance. The Glasgow Society of Organists was made very welcome by the Pastor and the congregation members.

To conclude, I must mention a rare treat I experienced on Saturday 2nd December - two organ recitals given by GSO members. The first was the Lunchtime Recital given by Avis McIntyre on the rebuilt Willis organ at Renfield St Stephens, and the second was a Promenade Recital at Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, given by Bill Hutcheson. There was excellent playing from both organists and plenty of variety.

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## ***Hymn Accompaniment – some reflections and hints – Andrew Caskie***

(these notes formed the basis of the lecture/demonstration on hymn accompaniment given by Andrew at our March meeting in Palmerston Place Church).

### **Introduction**

In a sense, the phrase "hymn accompaniment" sets us off on the wrong foot. Accompaniment suggests

following, and that is emphatically what hymn playing is not. It is leading without driving.

What are we trying to do in hymn playing? We must first note the spiritual context. Hymn playing is more than just a musical performance; it is serving our congregation in the public worship of God. It is a solemn responsibility, an immense privilege and, potentially, great fun! We should examine our attitude of approach, to participate in “worship in spirit and truth” (Jn 4:24). Next time we think “Oh no, not Love divine again....” take note!

Practically, we are serving the congregation by giving them freedom to sing, and all technical considerations at the organ should be subservient to this. We are instilling the confidence to sing out, to sing the tune correctly, and to sing at the right speed. We should at all times be sensitive to the mood of the occasion and the meaning of the words, and then present hymns vividly and imaginatively to engage hearts and minds.

### **Preparation and practice**

Before you strike a note, you should prepare thoroughly. With hymns as an organist’s bread and butter, it can be all too easy to turn up and play the notes. Yet there is nothing worse than hearing someone rattle off the notes with no sensitivity to music or words.

Start by reading through the words. Try to capture the overall theme (e.g. joy, grief, prayer) that will inform the manner in which you play the tune. Having read through the words and decided the tune, it is time to practice the tune purely as a piece of music. If you have an ever-expanding collection of hymnbooks, make use of this resource by digging around for the version of your particular tune that has the best harmony and pitch.

Let’s assume that you have a simple four-part (SATB) hymn tune in front of you. Seated at a piano with right foot over the sustain pedal, it doesn’t take long to achieve an effective playing. On the organ, however, we need to work hard at our legato technique to avoid the “kangaroo petrol” effect.

A four-part hymn is usually split into two with SA in the right hand and TB in the left. As we are playing the bass line with the pedals, there is no need to duplicate this with the left hand. This is why it really is easier to play hymns on the organ with the pedals rather than manuals only, as getting all four parts legato (albeit with appropriate phrasing and articulation!) in both hands can be tricky, with lots of borrowing between hands and finger-swapping required. When you play the pedals, your left hand just plays the tenor line, helping out the

right hand now and then. If you are able to, it is no bad thing to fill in some extra notes to thicken the texture sometimes.

Practice manuals alone and pedals alone before putting them together. Mark the pedalling in! With some hymns there is only one way to play them correctly; I always get Repton and Thornbury (to name but two!) wrong without practising the pedals first.

Particularly at the start of a verse, crisp chords are needed. I tend not to tie repeated notes that would otherwise make the rhythm lifeless. There are exceptions to every rule of course: I often lift both hands on each crochet at the start of Praise, my soul, the King of heaven, for example, but do not lift everything in between each of the first three notes of Aurelia. Judgement is required as to which parts to repeat and which parts to tie. Take, for example, the second half of the tune Nicea, with the dotted crotchet rhythm repeating on middle A, and think about what would work best here to put the rhythm across clearly.

### **Tempo & rhythm**

Let’s assume that you can now play your hymn tune to a note-perfect standard. Putting it together with the words makes a hymn! The first thing to think about is the speed. Influencing factors here will include the style of tune and words, the size of the building / resonance, and the size of the congregation. You must have a clear idea of the speed before you start to play the first chord. Some organists take hymns painfully slow, with a kiss of death to joyful praise. Having an innate sense of the correct speed for a given tune is a real gift. Generally, we should aim for a liveliness that doesn’t flag or rush. A brisk tempo will make people want to sing.

Occasionally, try an extreme: the Welsh tune Ebenezer can work well sung very slowly, for example.

Having decided the speed, our first task is to give an introduction. Here we are setting the scene – demonstrating the tune, pitch, speed and to indicate the general mood of the hymn. An absolute must is that the introduction should be at exactly the same speed you intend to play the whole hymn at.

What should we play for the introduction? There’s no need to play the whole hymn unless you suspect the tune will be unfamiliar. Avoid the confusing practice of juxtaposing the first and last lines, which will never teach anyone the right tune!

Either the first or last two lines is usually ideal. The main criterion is that it must be clear. If your introduction

ends on a different chord from the starting chord, there is no need to give everyone an unmusical dominant chord as a transition – congregations are not thick! Play the introduction with life and a sense of drama. Always imagine that it's 7.25pm on a winter Sunday evening, people have got hard weeks ahead of them, they're tired, and it's Love divine, again.... - your job is to make them want to jump to their feet and sing, rather than clamber wearily to their feet with a sigh.

So we're now at the end of the introduction. Hopefully the congregation will already be on their feet rather than just starting to think about it! There should be absolutely no let-up in tempo at the end of the intro. It is fatal to slow down: the congregation will simply start singing at the slower speed. Many organists have an appalling habit of grinding to a funereal halt at the end of the introduction (with lots of *dimuendo*...), and then holding on to the last chord while everyone coughs and splutters and pulls themselves up. A congregation gets to know its organist's methods!

A critical aspect is the gap between the intro and the first verse, which should be exactly the same as between all the verses. Remember that they're already on their feet! Two beats in time are usually ideal, but be prepared to alter this for some time signatures or tunes with an anacrusis.

From the start of the introduction to the end of the last verse, the rhythm must be rock-steady and consistent. Never ever slow down unless in the last bar of the last verse, and even then do it sparingly with restraint. Likewise, never adopt the unmusical practice of gathering notes – holding on to the first note of each verse.

Good crisp articulation is needed to get things going, particularly to establish the pace in the first verse. Pointedly playing all four parts staccato is a bit rude (and extreme!) but appropriate detaching of some of the parts will help a lot. The pedals help a great deal in congregational singing – make sure that they are not dragging half a beat behind your hands. Try legato hands and detached pedals or vice versa for a line or two.

It's important to think through phrasing before you start. The organ doesn't need to breathe, so we need to think about when to lift our hands. Not phrasing hymns is a key contributor to sloppy singing. Look at the punctuation and give the congregation time to breathe in all the right places, bearing in mind that these will not always be at the end of lines. It can be difficult to do this breathing in the context of a rigid rhythmic tempo, but

this is our goal. If you can manage to multi-task, I recommend singing along while playing.

## Registration

In the art of blending stops, the most important thing is to listen. There are two aspects to registration – colour and volume. Yes, it's fun playing stirring hymns on a big organ if there's a congregation to match, but you don't need a large instrument with lots of pistons to have to think about registration. As long as you have more than 5 stops there is no excuse!

The foundation sound for playing hymns should always be the diapasons on the organ – i.e. open diapason, principal, fifteenth, etc (usually referred to as the principal chorus). Congregations hear notes better at least an octave up or down from the note being sung. In other words the pedals at 16' pitch and stops of 4 or 2' pitch on the manuals. Sometimes you might find an ideal registration if you play an octave up or down from the music. Mixtures can add sparkle but sometimes need to be supported underneath by the use of 16' tone manual tone. Although bright tone and clarity is far better than brute force, having the occasional wallow in double diapasons and cornopeans is undoubtedly good for the soul.

Unless you've got particularly well-balanced Great & Swell organs and a good independent Pedal, you will find it necessary to have the Great to Pedal, Swell to Pedal and Swell to Great couplers out most of the time. It is important not to make too many sudden changes of dynamic – additions on the Swell should be covered by closing the Swell box before opening again. Full Swell with the box closed can be very exciting, for example. How else do you play Melita?

While an occasional verse on full organ (unless you play at St Giles'!) is always exciting, be careful to strike the correct balance between giving a firm lead and playing too loud.

I was taught never to play two consecutive verses with the same registration. It is excellent advice. Plan ahead and think about how you might illuminate the text by use of colour or volume. Dear Lord and Father of mankind is a good example. It would be criminal to play through the final verse with the same volume or registration for the lines "Speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire" and "O still small voice of calm!"

You don't need pistons to add a stop here and there between verses or lines. Practice it if need be.

One other bad habit to avoid is the practice of hanging

on to the last chord of the last verse, while gradually pushing all the stops in with one hand.

### **Special effects**

Besides colour and volume, there are other ways to keep your hymn accompaniment fresh. If you have the right instrument, you could try soloing out the tune on a different manual, or even an inner part (e.g. the tenor line in the second half of *Gonfalon Royal*). Whatever the instrument, you could try inverting some of the parts, faux-bourdon style, or reharmonising a verse. There are plenty good books of reharmonised last verses.

If you have a choir with good sopranos or trebles, a descant can be very effective. Modulating up a key is sometimes frowned upon, but there is no denying the lift it can give to congregational singing if carried out well. Bach is recorded as having modulated twice in one hymn, although perhaps with a little more ingenuity than a dominant seventh!

The use of other instruments can enrich hymns. Brass instruments go well with the organ, but even a piano can be effective if in synchronised tuning and played by a musician who can improvise to some degree.

### **Contemporary Christian Music (CCM)**

Many of us are asked to play contemporary music (e.g. from *Spring Harvest*, *Songs of Fellowship*, *Mission Praise*, etc.) in our churches as part of the sung worship. The first thing that needs dealt with is to dispel the myth that the organ can manage Widor and Messiaen fine, but can't cope with Kendrick!

Commitment starts when enjoyment wanes. Our attitude is crucial. Condescension or sneering over "happy-clappy" music we don't like will only achieve alienation of the organ as a medium for leading worship, alienation of ourselves, and division / discord in God's house. Ultimately, you know where the door is.

It is important to bear in mind that many contemporary songs were never conceived for keyboard instruments. For example Graham Kendrick writes for guitar and then retrofits the music to the piano, with varying degrees of success. Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, on the other hand, write with the piano in mind, which frustrates guitarists!

The difficulty for organists lies primarily with the rhythm. Because the guitar and drums offer such rhythmic drive, the music is propelled along with a driving beat, rather than the ebb and flow of modulating harmony and

cadences as in an SATB hymn. Take away the powerful beat from some CCM and it can be very difficult to maintain that sense of momentum; hence the fiendish syncopated scoring in some books to try to recreate this. We must sit down (at the piano?) and work out exactly how it should be played. How many organists make derogatory comments about hymns they can't even play properly? Try to get a sense of the rhythm, and where the strong beats lie. Is it one in the bar, or two in the bar, perhaps?

Remember that most CCM arrangements in hymnbooks are transcriptions. I suggest that you learn to play the music initially as written, so as to ascertain the rhythm, but from then just read the melody and chords, improvising the rhythm appropriate to the organ. Don't play all the notes at this stage: realise that some of the structures are there just to provide rhythm – why not try to make up better ones?

As with more traditional hymns, play the music with life! Lift your hands, lift your feet, and keep the registration bright. Remember the need for a strong pulse and rhythm.

### **Conclusion**

I hope that some of the techniques outlined above are helpful to you. Even if you disagree then some purpose has been served in causing you to re-assess your approach!

Why not ask selected members of your congregation for feedback, and pray about using your talents in hymn playing. With the responsibility of hymn playing, hard work and practice can bring much fun and satisfaction. Let the last word be given to our own revered Dr Hollins: "The happiest days of my life have been spent at the church organ".

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### ***Organ Building in Scotland – Robert Lightband***

Last year proved to be quite productive and certainly gives the lie to any fears that pipe organ building is dying on its feet. The three biggest projects of which I know have all been in the central belt.

John Lightbown completed his great work in Motherwell Cathedral. This was complicated by the fact that the design changed while work was going on. However, the result is very good indeed.

While the organ was being done, John also completed the restoration of the large three manual in the church

of Rhu and Shandon. This organ began life as a two manual Forster & Andrews but was enlarged by Hill early in the last century with a new Choir Organ. Hill prepared for a Trombone, but this was never installed. In the 1950s some idiotic architect desired to cut away the bottom of the organ to make room for the Ministers and Elders. The winding went into the tower room behind the organ, and the action was crudely electrified by Rushworth and Dreaper.

With no room under the organ this caused terrible problems, both with steadiness of wind and access to the actions. John has renewed the actions, rewinded the organ, and installed the Trombone. The massive Great Posaune is now playable from the Choir Keys as well as the Great.

Meanwhile, Sandy Edmonstone was working away at his mammoth project in Blackhall, Edinburgh. Again this was a problem. A not very good three manual organ was crammed into a chamber at back and North side of the large church, from where not much emerged. The solution was to cantilever the Great out into the church, remove the Choir organ, and bring the Swell front forward. This was accompanied with the introduction of much new pipework. A new console and action were supplied. For those of you who do not know Sandy's work, he is one of the builders able to furnish magnificent craftsmanship with an almost unbelievable ability to voice and tonally finish. You can imagine the results of all this work in Blackhall.

One of the best kept secrets in Edinburgh, at least kept from me, is the organ in the Grand Masonic Lodge in Edinburgh. The recently restored hall, worth visiting for its decor alone, is fronted by an organ case which is arguably the best in Edinburgh. Apart from the heavier timber work, the case could have made three hundred years ago. One stop, the Great Trumpet, does not work any more. Acoustically, the hall is magnificent. But so is the tone of the organ. To my ears, it puts Brindley and Foster right up with the Hills, the Willisies and Lewis. The sound is breath-takingly good.

But.....

Does one restore the faulty B & F chest, which two major builders flatly refuse to do, or install, at the same cost, new slider soundboards and a new action, but forfeit any hope of Heritage money? Answers on a postcard, please!

Inverness Old and High had a two manual organ built by Father Willis. This was rebuilt by Hilsdon, with a new, detached console, new action and tonal improvements. When Hilsdon started his career from Norman & Beard,

his actions were good and his work was conservative. From then on he went downhill, reducing the Herbert Norman actions to a badly wired electro-pneumatic action. Worse than that, he could not resist improving the voicing. This meant a little cutting up here and there, a little rescaling there and here, but thoroughly wrecking the instruments, tonal integrity. In the case in Inverness, it is hoped to restore the organ's tonal originality, install a new Willis-based mechanical action, a Willis type console en fenetre and a new Trombone.

Finally, in Stenhouse and Carron church, the wonderful Binns is likely to be restored on purely historical lines. The work of Binns is quite unique. Impossibly small-scaled strings, but otherwise wonderfully voiced, chromatic chests and actions that are quite often difficult to access. This, together with the instrument in Skelmorlie, are the two best Binns in Scotland.

If Donald lets me, more along the same lines in the next issue.

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### **Review by Andrew Macintosh (President, Tayside Organists' Society)**

Ian McCraw. *Samuel C. Hirst: Dundee's Master of Music* Friends of Dundee City Archives Publication no. 6 (ISBN 0-9536553-5-0)

£6 by post from Dundee City Archives, 21 City Square, Dundee DD1 3BY, or from Wesley Owen, Nethergate, Dundee

The latest in a series of books collating and interpreting the material in Dundee City Archives, this book gives a fascinating insight into the musical life of Dundee in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Samuel Hirst, born in Huddersfield in 1843 and a pupil of the young Walter Parratt, moved to Dundee in 1864: initially as organist of the Congregational Church in Broughty Ferry. He was subsequently organist of Dundee Parish Church (St Mary's) for half a century. In addition, however, Hirst amassed a huge portfolio of work throughout Dundee, Angus and Fife, conducting amateur musical societies in Cupar, Kirkcaldy, Blairgowrie, Forfar, Perth and Newport. He was involved with Dundee Choral Union, Dundee Harmonic Society and Dundee Amateur Opera Company. And in 1866 he was appointed Organist of Kinnaird Hall, Dundee, following the brief tenure of E.P. Chipp, who came to Dundee from the Ulster Hall in Belfast, and lasted less than a year before going on to Ely Cathedral.

Hirst was a major figure, not just a jobbing conductor but the prime mover behind the foundation of many of these societies. Ian McCraw provides a vivid account of Hirst's musical career, using the wealth of material available in Dundee's archives (including a comprehensive scrapbook kept by Hirst) and augmenting it with other primary source material, including contemporary reviews. Generally these are complimentary, though a reviewer in the Dundee Evening Telegraph of 28 March 1890 was not afraid to discuss Hirst's technique as a conductor, and it seems that there is nothing new under the sun:

'[He is] Everything a conductor should be—and something more. He knows his score in its every detail, can sing each individual's part, and can note the slightest slip made by the humblest member of the chorus ... In addition, it is alleged, he sometimes scolds dreadfully, but, as an old member of the Harmonic said the other evening in our hearing, "a season under him is worth all the trial of temper." He scolds to good purpose, and, after all, one gets used to it, for his bark is far worse than his bite.'

McCraw's meticulously researched work deals with the separate parts of Hirst's career in discrete chunks, so as well as a description of his work with amateur societies there is a chapter on his career at St Mary's and another, very useful, one on the development of the organ in St Mary's, installed by Forster and Andrews in 1865, covering its installation and subsequent development under Hirst's control. The musical career of Hirst's sister Annette, an acclaimed soprano, is also covered. However, the book is more than simply an interesting study of an organist in his context as a wider musician; it also stands as a valuable description of the immediate aftermath of the General Assembly's change of heart on the use of organs in worship in 1864. The book is neatly presented and the printing of the small selection of photographs and document facsimiles is very clear.

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As many readers will be aware, The Royal College of Organists restarted examining in Scotland, after a long break, in 2003. We have had some successful candidates, but the number of players interested in sitting the examinations has not been large, and though the College intends to examine in Edinburgh once a year, in July, there were not enough candidates last summer to justify running the session.

We hope to be able to examine in Edinburgh again this July, so can I encourage anybody who has thought of sitting their CertRCO or ARCO to consider doing so in Edinburgh? The deadline for entries is 30 March.

Further information is available on the website at [www.rco.org.uk](http://www.rco.org.uk), or by ringing me on 0870 609 1067.

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### ***A Visit to Durham, North Carolina – Elizabeth Atkinson***

Durham in North Carolina is the seat of Duke University, gifted by the Duke family from the proceeds of 'tobacco' money. The highest point of the University and possibly the town is crowned by the Chapel, a large Gothic structure with not one but three pipe organs. The oldest instrument, the Aeolian organ has four manuals and pedal board (approximately 6,900 pipes), is situated at the Choir end of the Chapel, and according to the literature, is known for its extremes of dynamic expression. In 1976 the Flentrop organ was installed in a gallery just above the entrance to the Chapel. The claim is that this instrument allows the listener to hear the in the most authentic way, the sound which would be produced by the composers of the golden age of the organ, Bach, Couperin, etc. In 1995 construction began on the Brombaugh organ in the Memorial Chapel. A two manual and pedal board instrument, the specific purpose was to reproduce the sounds of the late Renaissance and early Baroque music. The builders used the historical 'meantone' tuning system, which I am given to understand means that the octave is divided into 12 equal half-steps rather than based on the natural scale.

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Readers are encouraged to pass this Newsletter on to any interested non-members and they are in turn encouraged to join any affiliated society. Details at [www.scotsorgan.org.uk](http://www.scotsorgan.org.uk) or from the Editor.

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