

SPRING MEETING 2016

DUNDEE Scotland

The annual Spring Meeting of the European Chapter of the American Guild of Organists took place from April 6-10, the week after Easter, 2016. Member Chris Bragg organized an itinerary in Scotland that met all of the high expectations. Centers for the week were in Dundee, St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow. The 35 participants came from 8 countries including Germany (11), USA (7), England (6), France (3), Holland (4), Belgium (2), Scotland (1) and Austria (1) and ranged in age from long-retired down to an infant of less than one year! The convention hotel was located just outside of Dundee. Many of the meals were organized beforehand in fine restaurants near the venues. The opening dinner on Monday night for example was Italian cuisine not far from the Hotel. After a good night's sleep (for most to recover from the strains of the Easter celebration and the journey) everyone boarded the bus Tuesday morning for an excursion to Caird Hall in nearby Dundee where the marvelous Harrison & Harrison (III/P/50/1923) awaited us. A presentation by Jim McKellican from the "Friends of the Caird Hall Organ" was very enlightening. He provided the historical backdrop with information about the City Architect James Thomson who turned Dundee into the "Venice of the North" with his monumental Victorian-style buildings but also interesting aspects concerning the organ building project and especially about the consultant, the blind organist Alfred Hollins, whose specification was considered by some to be somewhat old-fashioned. This resulted in critical resistance from a wealthy organ patron and necessitated delicate negotiations in order to complete the project. The organ is atypical for its time in that there are multiple enclosures (Swell Division, Orchestral Division and Great Reeds). A fine demonstration of the organ by Andrew Macintosh included a powerful rendition of Herbert Howells 3rd Rhapsody. As with almost all organs visited, participants then had time to play suitable period repertoire [Charlton Palmer: Thema ostinata (Barbara Gulick), Hollins: Trumpet Minuet (Barbara McKelway), Elgar: Imperial March (Ian Pattinson), Howells: Rhapsody (Katelyn Emerson), Lemare: Andantino (Mike Irvine), Ch. V. Stanford: Prelude Nr. 3 (Axel Wilberg), Eric Thiman: Prelude (Joy Irvine)], some French Romantic [Franck: Cantabile (Meredith Baker), Th. Dubois: Toccata in G (Christian Michel)] and even a few 20th Century and contemporary pieces [K. Leighton: Fanfare (John Falkingham), R. Jones: Pièce lyrique, Air sentimentale (Georg Wagner)].

After a lunch break in the sublime sunshine which continued most of the week, two somewhat older organs were on the itinerary. En route to the 1890 Hill organ (III/P/25) in Lochee Parish Church Chris Bragg gave an informal but very informative narrative about town history and the development of the organ in the 19th Century. Dundee was the city of "Jam, Jute and Journalism". Arguably jam (marmalade) was invented here. Due to several advantageous circumstances, Dundee was internationally the largest producer of jute and their newspaper industry was widely known and respected. Felix Mendelssohn's recital of Bach works at the Birmingham Bach Festival prompted organ builders, most notably William Hill, to start building full pedal boards. From the 1850's, the period in which William takes his son Thomas into partnership, Hill's principal choruses get markedly louder, here with a tierce in the bass. Thus Chris Bragg's demonstration of the vintage instrument with 3 pieces by Neils Gade showcased these choruses on the one hand and the traditional

romantic colour stops such as the Clarinet, Oboe and Hohlflute (not the traditional Stopped Diapason) on the other. Participants responded with works by lesser known English composers [Hugh Blair: Romance (Axel Wilberg), Gordon Cameron: Prelude on Columba (Ian Pattinson), and Sumsion: Coventry Carol (Mike Irvine)], some more common Romantic repertoire [Mendelssohn: Sonata 4 (Barbara McKelway), Karg-Elert: Prelude on "I thank Thee, dearest Lord"(John Falkingham), Guilmant: Trois Oraisons (Christian Michel), Stanford: Prelude Nr. 5 (Barbara Gulick)] and even the second movement of the second Hindemith Sonata (Meredith Baker). To demonstrate that this was a rather opulent installation, Chris Bragg removed the music rack to display the Barker machine for the Great manual – carried out in mahogany! The final destination for the first day was St. Salvador's Episcopal Church in Dundee. This being Chris Bragg's own church it was not surprising that once again much valuable information was forthcoming. The architect was George Bodley, the leading Victorian church architect who also was responsible for designing the Washington National Cathedral. It would seem that Bodley quite often cooperated with a Rev. Frederick H. Sutton, who was somewhat of an organ historian with a collection of drawings of (mostly medieval) organ cases published in a book "Church Organs, their Position and Construction". These cases were traditionally quite shallow and mounted on the sides of the nave without hindering the view toward the altar and beyond. It would further seem that Bodley and Sutton most frequently ordered their organs from Joshua Wordsworth and Samuel Maskell, as is exactly the case here. As inconspicuous as the placement may be, the installation is quite lavishly decorated to match the interior of the church and the sanctuary in particular. This organ (II/P/23) also boasts principal chorus on both manuals and a variety of colour stops such as Cremona 8' (Gt.), Keraulophon, Cornopean, Hautboy, and Clarion 4' (Sw.). For the demonstration Chris Bragg chose two compositions of Jacques Lemmens, who had himself thrice visited Dundee, in 1864, 1866 and 1868. The Prélude à 5 was presented with all of the 8-foot stops together. In spite of the English provenience it was a very convincingly-French-sounding Fonds-combination without sacrificing clarity. The first movement of Lemmens' third Sonata was first conceived as a Fantasia in a-minor. This rousing piece put organist and instrument, both of which were in good form, through their paces. Participants followed with Hugh Blair (Axel Wilberg), George Thalben-Ball: Elegie (Mike Irvine), a short piece by Elgar (Cheryl Duerr), a B-A-C-H fugue by Schumann (Katelyn Emerson), and an arrangement of the Pachelbel Canon (John Falkingham).

The entire Wednesday was listed as "free time in St. Andrews", however there were ample suggestions to fill it in: opportunities to visit the Cathedral and Castle ruins, a harpsichord performance of Bach's Clavierübung II by Sean Heath, a "Music Talk" by Raymond Calcraft on Shakespeare and Cervantes and settings of their texts by Vaughan Williams and Rodrigo, and a rehearsal of Bach's Mass in B-minor with University Organist Tom Wilkinson and the St. Salvador's Chapel Choir. After dinner in a local restaurant the whole group attended an organ concert by the venerable Canadian pedagogue John Grew on the Gregor Hradetzky Organ (III/P/40/1973) at St. Salvador's Chapel of the University of St. Andrews before returning to the hotel by "coach" (or bus, as we would say).

Thursday began with a ride to Edinburgh where we met our host/guide for the day Dr. John Kitchen, Edinburgh City Organist, University Organist and retired 'Senior Lecturer in Music' (U. of Edinburgh). The first instrument we encountered was the monumental instrument in Usher Hall built in 1912 by Norman & Beard and completely restored in 2003 by Harrison & Harrison (IV/P/63). To quote our guide, "The pipework remains entirely unaltered, and now sounds much as it must have done in 1914. It is characterized by a predictably Edwardian opulence, fullness and richness of sound, as well as offering a huge variety of exotic

colours. Both the swell and great departments are bold, yet with plenty of fire and pungency. The two mixtures contain not only tierce ranks, but the flat twenty-first harmonic; such mixtures were generally intended to be used with the reeds, not as chorus mixtures in the way we now expect. The pedal complements this well, and contains a full-length metal contra violone 32', some of which comprises the display pipes. The choir offers some beautiful delicate sounds, including a seductive unda maris, and the solo and orchestral departments tempt with all sorts of exotic delights, including a kinura-like orchestral oboe, a small-scale orchestral trumpet (not the big solo reed that one might expect from such a name), a noble and not devastating tuba, and – most extraordinary of all – a family of strings from 16' foot up to a cornet d'violes mixture. There is also a two-octave carillon, made of steel bars." This being said, he proceeded to demonstrate all of these features and more with an inspired and convincing rendition of Elgar's so-called 2nd Organ Sonata, which, as we learned, is nothing more (and nothing less) than a transcription of Elgar's Severn Suite for Brass Band. The pieces played by participants [Mendelssohn: Finale from Sonata 6 (Meredith Baker), Charleton Palmer: Thema ostinata (Barbara Gulick), Boellmann: Minuet Gothique (Christian Michel, Wm. Mathias: Processional (John Falkingham)] were all transformed through the ultra-romantic sonic garb. The contrast to the next organ could hardly have been greater. In 1978 Jürgen Ahrend built a new organ (II/P/21) for the Reid Concert Hall at the University of Edinburgh. "Inspiration for the [specification] drawn up by the late Peter Williams and Gustav Leonhardt came from early 18th-century German instruments. The main case houses the pipes for the Hauptwerk manual and Pedal division. The pipes and stop-knobs for the Rückpositiv are behind the player. There are no registration aids and inter-manual coupling is by manual shove-coupler. Tuned to unequal temperament (Werckmeister III), the organ has lucid, clear voicing, played via an unbushed mechanical action of exceptional refinement. . . . (It) remains the only organ by this firm in the UK (and) requires very little maintenance; it was cleaned a few years ago by Hendrik Ahrend, Jürgen's son, when very slight adjustments were also made to the key action." In addition to this description, Ruth Ahrend (Jürgen's wife) had brought along a Photo-Album with pictures from the installation and made this available to the participants. After a demonstration by Dr. Kitchen of various stops and combinations with Pachelbel's Variations on "Alle Menschen müssen sterben" (in this case "At the Lamb's High Feast", not the Orgelbüchlein Chorale) Ruth was the first participant to play [with Hannah Grötsch, J.S. Bach: Vater unser (small version) and Edeltraud Bode, In Dir ist Freude (Orgelbüchlein), arr. for 3 players]. Other participants followed with appropriate repertoire [J.S. Bach: Prelude in G-Major, Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten (Georg Wagner), Fantasie in g minor (Ian Pattinson), Liebster Jesu (John Falkingham), Frescobaldi: Toccata (Axel Wilberg), Buxtehude: Passacaglia d-minor (Mike Irvine), Praeludium d-minor (Katelyn Emerson)]. Dr. Kitchen's admonition "The organ tells you what to do!" was primarily in respect to the flat, parallel, short pedalboard which requires pedaling almost exclusively by toes. Lunch was taken at various locations near the hall before bussing to the final organ of the day, the Henry "Father" Willis organ (III/P/32) in St. Stephen's Church Centre, Edinburgh. This is called a Centre because the space is no longer used for services but rather as a community center for much less pious events. "Initially the organ, installed in 1888, was to be used only to accompany the praise; voluntaries were not permitted. (Even after this restriction was lifted, one elderly lady remained outside the church in all weathers each Sunday until 'that sinful sound' ceased at 11 AM!). . . . There are three manuals and thirty one stops; . . . There is only one (tierce) Mixture and there are only three Pedal stops, yet the organ lacks nothing in musicality or versatility. This organ shows that an organ's success can depend far more on quality of tone and good regulation than (on) having a 'complete' stop list." Dr. Kitchen opened his demonstration with four chorales from Bach's Orgelbüchlein: Wer nur den lieben Gott lässt walten, Liebster

Jesu, Das alte Jahr, and Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich. The Corno di Bassetto 8' on the Choir was especially poignant – even though not in the least baroque! These were followed by a spirited, one might even say flamboyant, rendition of the first movement of Guilmant's 5th Sonata. The Barker machine on the Great Division was certainly important for this work and it was equally evident, why this organ "has been widely praised nationally and internationally as a world class musical instrument." Participants responded with selections by Percy Whitlock: Folk Tune (Mike Irvine) and Pastorale (Axel Wilberg), Mendelssohn: Fugue from Sonata II (Barbara McKelway), and Finale from Sonata III (Christian Michel). Dr. Kitchen bade his farewell and sent us off with a vibrant Handelian March (from memory!) albeit in romantic guise. The bus then brought us to a restaurant directly adjacent to the Byre Theatre in St. Andrews where the evening closed with a piano recital by the renowned Dutch concert and recording artist Ronald Brautigam. His program consisted of two Beethoven Sonatas (D-major, Op. 28, "Pastorale" and C-major, Op. 53, "Waldstein"), a Sonatina and Scottish Folk Music Settings by the contemporary composer Ronald Stevenson (1928-2015), Fantasy f-sharp minor, Op. 28, and the Sonata Écossaise both by Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

The final day of the Spring Meeting was spent for the most part in Glasgow. Here we met Matthew Hynes, organ builder and historian, our guide for the day. He first introduced us to the magnificent instrument in the Glasgow Evangelical Church on Cathedral Square. This was a landmark organ (III/P/28) built by Forster & Andrews as opus 1000 in 1887. In the 1850's James Forster and Joseph Andrews hired Albert Vogel, who had worked with the Schulze company from the Black Forest in Germany. Vogel became their head voicer and also rescaled their Diapason choruses. Forster & Andrews had consistently high standards of workmanship coupled with excellent materials. Several particular aspects of this instrument testify to the opulence of this installation: the Dulciana stop in the Choir is built completely down to CC instead of sharing the bass pipes of the Gedackt, which was much more common, and the 16' Open Diapason in the Pedal consists of open metal pipes all the way down to bottom CC, instead of going over to stopped pipes at some point. Two other conspicuous details are the astonishingly low wind pressure of 3" for the entire organ and a radiating concave Pedalboard (not original). The company continued producing fine organs until it amalgamated with Norman & Beard by 1924. Matthew Hynes demonstrated stops (the "splashy" Trumpet on the Great) and combination with hymn excerpts before bidding us to "avail (our)selves of the instrument and savour it!" It was duly savoured with works by Mendelssohn (Meredith Baker), Stanford (Barbara Gulick, Axel Wilberg), Thalben-Ball: Tune in E (Mike Irvine), and even portions of the Petite Suite for Organ Duet by Denis Bédard (Kristien Poesen, Kathleen Vlekken). The next venue will certainly remain a fond memory for the warm welcome and hospitality. The Organ Committee of St. Bride's Episcopal Church outdid itself to make us feel at home, hot tea and coffee, homemade cookies and no less than 5 committee members turned out to greet us. The William Hill (II/P/19) organ from 1865 was originally built for Anderston Parish Church, Glasgow, where it was the first organ to be used legally in a Presbyterian Church in Scotland. It was partially altered by Harrison & Harrison, 1881, and finally moved to St. Bride's and restored by James MacKenzie in 1972. Unfortunately it has not fared well since then and is in rather sorry condition due to dust, dirt, and a leaky roof. The abovementioned Committee is very active and the next restoration by Harrison & Harrison is pending for 2018. The demonstration was given by Stuart Campbell, retired University Organist (U. of Glasgow) and incumbent Assistant Director of Music at St. Brides. His demonstration consisted of Easter chorales from Bach's Orgelbüchlein: Christ lag in Todesbanden; Jesus Christus, unser Heiland; Christ ist erstanden (3 verses); Erstanden ist der heil'ge Christ; Erschienen ist der herrliche tag; Heut' triumphiret

Gottes Sohn. In spite of the placement in a niche above and to the left of the altar, the organ was very present in the space. Several participants braved the unusual staircase (steps for each foot) to gain hands-on experience: Wm.-Southcombe Lloyd-Webber: Pastorale (Axel Wilberg), Bach: Alle Menschen müssen sterben (Barbara McKelway), Kuhnau: Prelude (Edeltraud Bode), Robert Jones: Pièce lyrique, Air sentimentale (Georg Wagner), Boellmann: Toccata Gothique (Meredith Baker), Mendelssohn: Fugue from Sonata 2 (Mike Irvine). The next and final venue of the Spring Meeting had some things in common with the previous station. For example, the Henry "Father" Willis organ in St. Margaret's Parish Church, Knightswood, was also originally built for a different church, the Townhead Parish Church in Glasgow. It was moved to Knightswood and also restored by James MacKenzie and Matthew Hynes, but more recently in 2002. Another similarity was the overwhelming welcome by the pastor, the organist Christine Furnish, and other women of the parish who presented more coffee, tea, cookies and cakes than we could manage. Coming back to the organ for a moment, it is remarkable that the first electric blower was installed in 1960! Before that it had to be pumped. Also, the S.S. Wesley-H. Willis radial-concave pedalboard is original from 1866 and one of the earliest examples in the UK. Once again Matthew demonstrated stops and combinations with hymn-playing, garnering a spontaneously sung Halleluja at the end of an Easter hymn. Then the time and attention was divided between the organ and the refreshments. New pieces never ceased to turn up and here we heard a Pavane by Eric Thiman (Mike Irvine), the 2nd mvmt of Hindemith II (Meredith Baker), the Trumpet minuet by Hollins (Barbara McKelway), two of the Houston Chorale-Preludes by Bernard Sanders (Bernard Sanders), diverse Mendelssohn and others.



The closing dinner is always a special moment. The cuisine was fabulous French (Café Montmartre in Cupar) and was crowned with a round of well-deserved thank you's, which was to be expected after the experience of the whole week. Naturally Chris Bragg was the main recipient, not only as a demonstrator for many of the instruments and for sharing his profound knowledge of the English/Scottish organ, but also for the meticulous preparation work he had done well in advance. Each participant was "armed" with a token of

appreciation and, in addition, Dean Judy Riefel-Lindel presented Chris with a group gift of an etching of a canal scene in Amsterdam, where Chris and his wife had done graduate studies and worked for a few years in early 2002. The fabulous Spring Meeting booklet with daily itinerary, list of participants, and not only the stop lists but detailed information about all of the organs was prepared by Chris. Practically a constant at the Spring Meetings of the European Chapter is the noteworthy and admirable camaraderie of all participants. Mutual respect and acceptance of the other participants regardless of their playing abilities or academic status is the basis for a harmonious common experience.