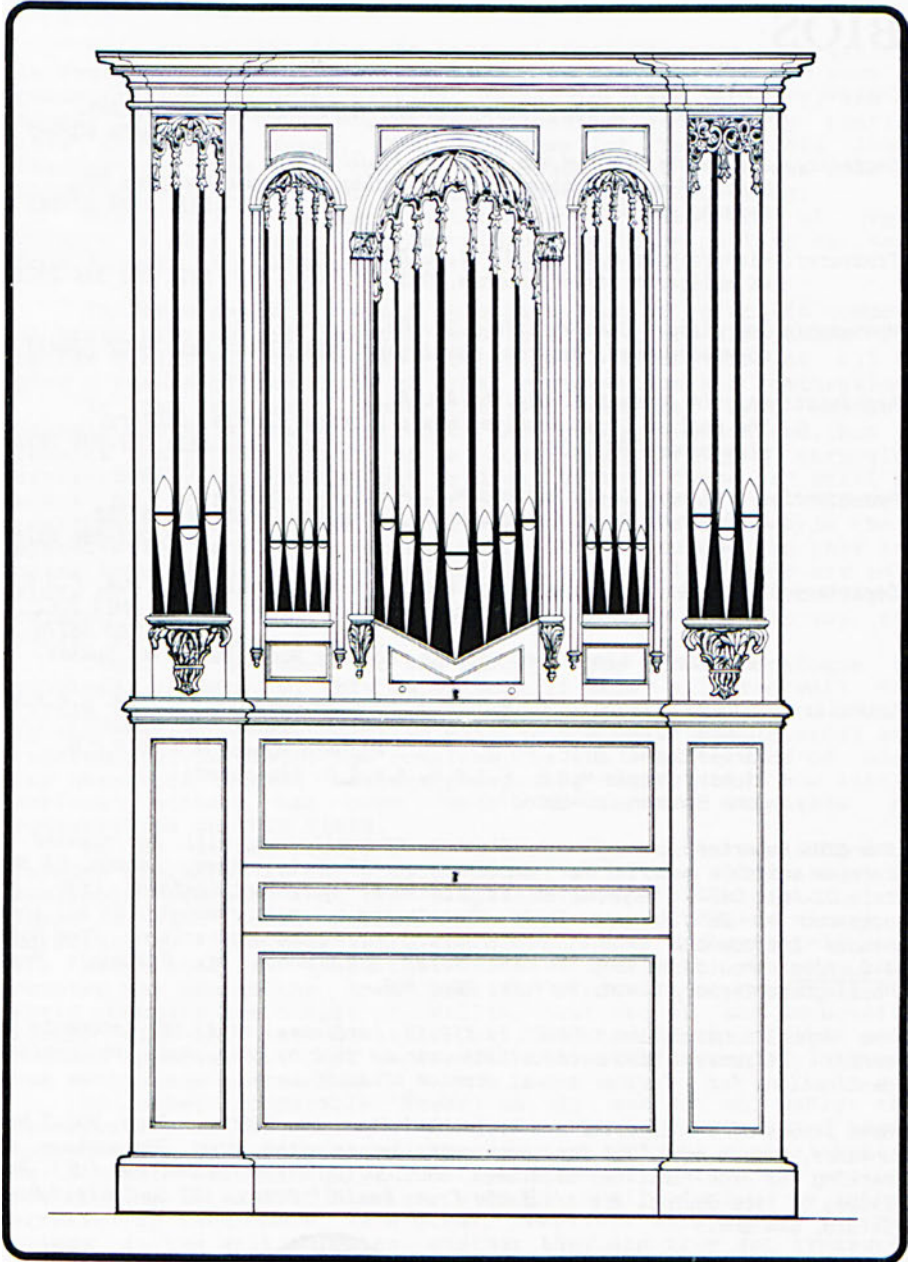


# BIOS REPORTER



# BIOS

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# Editorial

This month will find the International Congress of Organists in residence in Cambridge; it is a rare pleasure to see such a concentration of organ-playing talent in this country, and an honour for BIOS to be one of the organisations jointly hosting this ten-yearly event. The programme for the congress looks fascinating, and there can be no doubt that those who come to Cambridge will find their stay enjoyable and stimulating.

What will a foreign visitor make of the state of organ culture in this country? At Cambridge we will be putting our best foot forward, but scratch beneath the surface ....

In these pages it would perhaps be out of place to comment on organ playing and teaching in Britain - there are others far better qualified to do that - but it will do no harm at all to give a resumé of the state of organ preservation and restoration.

In the ten years since the ICO last met BIOS has been bravely waving a flag; our work has not gone unnoticed, but it remains only the start of a long and difficult struggle. Extraordinary to relate, but in Great Britain there is still no means of official classification or recognition of historic instruments, nor any means of directing state funds towards their preservation and restoration. Where else in Europe is this the case? Some of the most notable surviving historic organs are in a state of complete dereliction (Spitalfields, Thaxted, Buckingham Palace, Preston Public Hall), and many others have, to say the least, an uncertain future.

There is no need to run through the whole catalogue of problems; readers of this magazine will know all too well how little is known about the British organ and its music, how slight is the regard of most British players for their own musical and instrumental heritage, how complete is the indifference of most lay observers towards matters concerning organs, and how little serious attempt has been made to improve standards of conservation in this field.

To me it has always been a great pleasure to introduce foreign visitors to the British organ; so little information is available overseas that the slightest scrap of information is leapt on with great enthusiasm. For many it seems almost a surprise to find that there are organs here, and certainly most are astonished to learn that in the nineteenth century this country was one of the most prolific producers of organs in the world (Compare the output of Willis, just one of our successful firms, with that of Cavallé-Coll, and the truth of this soon becomes apparent.). Can we instill the same degree of interest and enthusiasm nearer home?

In other comparable areas we do not do so badly: the conservation of historic buildings in this country, and their appreciation by a very broad cross-section of the general public is a great success story. The reputation of British archaeology and museums is without blemish, even if their funding is rather erratic. In fact there is a great reservoir of sympathy for old things in the British Isles, whether they are true art treasures or just nostalgic reminders of the more recent past. It is this innate feeling for the past that BIOS must try to tap.

# Report

**Northampton** - 16th May 1987

21 people attended this seminar on historic English tuning and temperaments. The day was primarily concerned with assessing the interdependence of organ, music and tuning in English musical history, but ended with some interesting discussion relating known English tuning systems to today's requirements.

Dominic Gwynn introduced the day, providing his assessment of the way tuning developed in England and the assumptions underlying English methods of tuning. This was amplified by Martin Renshaw's account of his work on some historic English organs, and the importance of recovering evidence for the original tuning system and applying it. After lunch Charles Padgham gave a short demonstration of how 1/5th comma meantone might suit Stanley's voluntaries, and Christopher Kent gave a fascinating insight into some of the connections that can be made between music and tuning, between c1750 and c1850. We had to some extent been circling around variants of meantone tuning, so Sandy Mackenzie's exposition of his tuning system, and the way it could be varied to suit tastes and circumstances started a discussion on its place in the overall history of English tuning and the merits of using it, and other English tuning systems; a discussion which deserves to be continued elsewhere, and thoroughly.

As the day's organiser I was as pleased with the day as an organiser can be; the comparatively small numbers assisting the degree to which people felt able to join the discussion, which is what these seminars are about. I hope over the next two or three years, always on the same weekend, to hold similar seminars, with pipe scales, bellows and windways, and organ case manufacture among the subjects. I am conscious of the days' dependence on my own speaking and my own circle of acquaintance. If anyone would like to make a contribution, between ten minutes and an hour, on any of these topics, I will be very grateful, and organise accordingly.

Dominic Gwynn

## AGM

Notice is hereby given that the annual general meeting of the British Institute of Organ Studies will be held at 11.30 a.m. on Friday 4th September 1987, in the University House, University of Birmingham. The agenda will be as follows:

1. Chairman's introduction
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the A.G.M. held on 20th September 1986
4. Matters arising
5. Elections\*: [a] Publicity Officer [b] 3 members of Council
6. Financial report
7. Consideration of the annual subscription
8. Election of the auditor
9. Reports of other officers:  
[a] Secretary [b] Membership Secretary [c] Archivist  
[d] Secretary of the N.P.O.R. [e] Redundancies Officer
10. Publications
11. Forthcoming meetings
12. Any other business

\*Elections: nominations for the above, duly seconded, should reach the Secretary not later than 12 noon on 3rd Sept. 1987

# Conferences

Annual residential conference: 1st - 4th September 1987

## **Birmingham**

Organised by Jim Berrow

This year's residential conference will be held at the University of Birmingham, with accomodation on the attractive campus in Edgbaston, only one and a half miles from the city centre. Attractions include:

Adrian Barlow on Bodley - Alan Barnes on Snetzler - Jim Berrow on John Nicholson - Stephen Daw on Bach - Julian Elioway on publishing - Kenneth Jones on recent developments in organ building - Christopher Kent on pedal music - Betty Matthews on Schwarbrick - John Norman on house organs - Paul Spicer on broadcasting - Nicholas Thistlethwaite on William Hill - David Wickens on 18th century organ builders - Percy Young on the Shaw-Hellier collection - Conference Dinner - BIOS AGM - BIOS Archive at Central Library, Birmingham

Demonstrations and lectures on organs old and new by William Drake, Forster and Andrews, William Hill and Tamburini, including 'Town Hall' music and a day specialising on the 18th century organ with concerto performances by Ian Ledsham and chamber group, using the Barber Institute's Snetzler organ.

Places are still available; the cost is expected to be about £80 inclusive. Details from: Jim Berrow, [REDACTED]

**Mill Hill** - Saturday 7th November 1987

Organised by Alfred Champriss

This day conference will be centred round the organs in Mill Hill School (Mander 1986) and Belmont School (Hill, Norman and Beard 1934). The organs will be played by Alfred Champriss and Geoffrey Morgan, and speakers will include Ian Bell and Bernard Edmonds. Full details are given on a separate sheet accompanying this issue of the Reporter.

## **Forthcoming Events**

There will be a joint meeting between BIOS, the Federation of Master Organ Builders, and the Incorporated Society of Organ Builders, to be held at the Royal College of Organists on 19th March 1988. Details will follow.

The 1988 residential conference will be held in Reading. The dates proposed are August 1st - 4th.

Day conferences are planned for 1988 in Manchester and East London.

# Dear Sir...

Dear Sir,

In the January Reporter the Editorial touched on two points in the first paragraph which I think should be amongst the main concerns of every BIOS member. The first is the number of continental organs that have been introduced into this country in recent years. The second is the unfortunate fact that we have not generally chosen the most inspiring. There are a number of consequences, of which these are the three most important:


1) When an organ is required in a prominent or prestigious place, more often than not the order goes to a continental builder. This means that English builders are given a reduced chance to develop quality and style. It is partly their own fault, as standards and a sense of style have gradually declined in the last 40 years. But it cannot be pretended that there are not now English builders with self confidence in their own craftsmanship, and their own distinctive contribution to make. If they are not encouraged in their own country they will soon become discouraged.

2) One contribution that British organ builders can make is to revive English organ building traditions. I would hope it is the one closest to the BIOS member's heart. Unfortunately the imported neo-classical organ has little to contribute to it. In its overall layout, in its mechanisms, in the formation of the chorus and in the voicing; in other words in all those areas of greatest significance for the interpretation of the music, it could hardly be more different from the English classical organ. That does not mean that the mainstream English classical organ was odd, any more than any other style of organ is odd. It is not odd; it is just special, and imported organs will never teach us what was special about our organ building or our musical traditions.

3) I do not regret continental imports; from a Dutchman it would be absurd. Rather I would encourage as wide a variety as possible. What I do regret is that the organs that do come here do not generally represent the best that the continent can supply. We tend to import from firms who were considered inspiring 20 years ago, but which are not generally considered to be in the forefront in their own countries today. The best work, in my experience, comes from newer, smaller workshops which the older firms spawned, and it is they that have set the pace. The reasons for this change are varied and complex, but there is a parallel movement here. It is unfortunate that the larger continental firms, who have the resources to publicise themselves here, engage the interest of forward looking people in Britain, when they are losing it amongst similar people in their own countries.

I wait in expectation for a sense of adventure in the organ world in Britain, not only in the choice of imports, but in an increase in interest in the historic British organ and in the self confidence in the British organ world. My belief is that the latter will follow the former.

Dominic Gwynn



Dear Sir,

With regard to Christopher Kent's letter in the April Reporter, what connection has exaggerated staccato with sensitive modern tracker action? Precisely none. The exaggerated staccato and excessive articulation devised by some players to overcome unresponsive actions and pipes, and now transferred to modern trackers, has no place whatever in classical organ technique, despite what many eminent 'experts' would have us believe. The ability to phrase and articulate while still maintaining the impression of a singing line is an art requiring discipline and control and is quite the opposite of the choppy style that passes for 'Baroque' playing. Schweitzer should still be compulsory reading for everyone.

I can well understand his unease at hearing Parry on Valotti tuning, but if Dupre's Prelude and Fugue is so reliant on the Cavaille-Coll sound for its successful performance, then it isn't worth playing at all. Particular kinds of sound are far less important than convincing musical interpretation, and I would far rather hear a musical performance on a Hope-Jones, than an idiot let loose on a Silbermann.

Ronald Leith  


Dear Sir,

...The splendid drawing on the front of the current Reporter matches my indicative sketch of the Flight & Robson presented to Llanwog Church, near Caersws, Montgomeryshire, in 1855 - of course not then new, though of C compass. I hope it is, or will be, in better hands than when I last saw it.

Members may like to know that at Vinça, on the fascinating railway line from Perpignan to Prades and La Tour de Carol in the Pyrenees, there is an organ of 1765 by Jean-Pierre Cavallé, of the great dynasty, which has recently been restored in character, but with a 26 (sic) note pedal board, and there is an Association J.-P. Cavallé, based at 29 Nouv. Route du Réal, 66320 Vinça (or c/o the Mairie)....

R.J. Moseley  


## **New Recording**

### **An Eighteenth Century Organ Treasure**

**Paul Derrett** plays the organ of **St. Alkmund's Church, Whitchurch**  
F.E.Bache - Introduction and Allegro; S.S.Wesley - Andante in E minor; G.F.Handel Pieces for Musical Clocks; J. Stanley Voluntary Op.7 No.2; W.G.Alcock - Toccata; H.Sumison - Air Berceuse and Procession; R.Popplewell - Puck's Shadow; P.Gowers - Toccata.

Priory Records PR 192

This organ has very little to do with the eighteenth century, despite the misleading title. It owes its present character to an extensive rebuild by Peter Conacher in 1894, and is one of few relatively unscathed examples of a very interesting type of instrument. It is large enough to have complete flue and reed choruses, but just small enough to be tracker - though I have no doubt that players with less stamina than Paul Derrett

would find a Barker machine a great help. The Conacher work is late enough to have given the instrument some attractive 8' stops, excellent chorus reeds, and a rather aristocratic (even condescending?) balance between foundation stops and upperwork, and between flues and reeds: - this is typical of certain end-of-century organs by Hill, Walker, Forster & Andrews and others (but not Willis or Lewis), and typical of instruments where Frederick Bridge gave advice. Whitchurch has what I imagine must have been the old Westminster Abbey sound, and, again like other instruments of this type, it is rescued from what excesses the period had to offer by the retention of a considerable quantity of pipework of 1755 by Richard Parker. The very remarkable case (Mark Anthony Dallam, 1714) is another fortunate survival.

Paul Derrett is perfectly well aware that this is not an eighteenth century organ, and his programme is arranged accordingly. By choosing some relatively obscure music, he has cleverly expanded the appeal of the record to both those who are interested in this organ and those who are interested in a unique recording of one or other of the pieces played. This is so much better than a 'local interest' record where someone has felt it necessary to play desperately hackneyed and often unsuitable music: I own several of these where the track carrying the Bach D minor or Widor Toccata has hardly ever been played.

This is a thoroughly Anglican record, (with the possible exceptions of the Handel and Stanley, presumably included to show off old pipework and prove that a 1966 Contra Fagotto played up an octave with Bourdon and Tremulant will just about do as a Vox Humana), and all the more enjoyable for being single-minded about it. I enjoyed the F.E.Bache especially - not a great piece, but a good one, and suddenly illuminating for me some of the missing links between the Samuel Wesley/William Russell period and what followed later in the century. The only problem about Anglican organ music is that it so often takes one at a leisurely and undramatic pace through a relatively featureless landscape; the Sumsion seems especially long for the amount of musical material presented. The Popplewell by contrast is not leisurely at all, but its lively canonic writing tends to get stuck in a harmonic groove. The Gowers Toccata is perhaps the strongest piece on the record; its dedication to the memory of Brian Runnett, the young organist of Norwich Cathedral killed in an accident in 1969 gives us part of the reason why.

Paul Derrett is certainly sympathetic to this repertoire, and by excellent playing he cleverly disguises the fact that most of the nineteenth and twentieth century composers represented here were probably more at home writing for choirs than for organs (and if anyone was wondering how I would care to define 'Anglican', it is just this fact that I hoped to imply); perhaps here lies the root of one of the great problems of organ playing in this country.

I would not wish to appear too equivocal; I have enjoyed listening to this record, especially because of good playing and a fine organ. The pieces chosen are right for both performer and instrument. Others please follow!

S.B.

Available from:  
Priory Records, 24 Verney Close, Tring, Herts HP23 5LB



# Redundant Organs

## Leicestershire

Organ by G.M.Holdich, undated  
Disposition: lm; 8.8.8.4.4.2.  
Action: Mechanical  
Dimensions: h 14i', w 83', d 6'

## West Midlands

Organ by Steele & Keay, 1912. Overhauled 1985  
Steele & Keay, a Potteries firm, made excellent mechanical actions. This organ is described by a discerning critic as being 'quite splendid and absolutely unspoilt with two choruses and Pedal 16.16.8.'  
Action: Mechanical  
Dimensions: h 20', w 15', d 10'

## Leicestershire

Organ by Abbott & Smith, 1889  
Disposition: Gt 8.8.8.4.4.2.  
Sw 16.8.8.4.2.8.  
Ped 16. (in two powers)  
Action: Mechanical  
Dimensions: h 17', w 13', d 10'

## Derbyshire

Organ by J.M.Grunwell (of Derby; an ex-Hill man), 1875  
A private/teaching organ, moved to a chapel in 1901  
Disposition : Gt 8.8.4.2.  
Sw 8.8.4.  
Ch 8.8.4.8.  
Ped 16.8.  
Casework : Piperacks - metal in front,  
wood (pedal pipes) at sides.  
Action : Mechanical  
Dimensions : h 9½', w 93', d 4i'(case), 7' incl console

## Avon

Large 3m organ with 1930s tubular pneumatic action (Vowles), but with considerable historic interest.

## London

Organ by Bishop & Starr, c1854 - still available, desperately needing a good home. See Reporter Vol. 10 No. 4 (Wealdstone Baptist)

## Other organs currently available:

lm anon. early 19th century, with second manual added (with harmonium reeds!)  
lm anon, early 19th century, rebuilt with second manual 1883 Lydiatt  
2m W.Noble, c1890, mechanical to manuals. Gt 6, Sw 8, Ped 2  
lm Casson, no date, short compass F - f''', pneumatic action, very handsome case: freestanding, panelled oak, Jacobean inf style.

For further information and contact addresses, please write to the Redundancies Officer (address inside front cover).

# Notes & Queries

'Father Smith's chamber organs generally consist of a stop diapason all of wood. Sometimes there is an open diapason of wood Down to Cefaut, an open flute of wood, a fifteenth of wood, a bass mixture of wood; that is to the middle C of two ranks, the cornet of wood of two ranks to meet the mixture in the middle. Sometimes the mixture is of mettle, as is the cornet. N.B. - if it is stil'd 'a furniture' it is not one of his, that is if the mixture is stil'd so it is not. Remark that the wooden pipes are all of clean yallow deal'.

So Handel wrote, according to a cutting I have found, to one 'Mr. Granville'. I suspect that this was Bernard Granville of Calwich near Uttoxeter; I have not yet been able to chase up the original - perhaps someone can enlighten us?

Where was the first installation of an organ with two separate consoles to serve different rooms on either side of it? I could only instance the 29 stop 3 manual erected in 1852 by William Hill in the Private Chapel at Windsor Castle, serving also the Music Room adjacent. Hill estimated £100 for the provision of the second console. The specification is to be found in 'H.<L R. '[1] The 1887 Willis organ followed the same plan. [2]

The Next instrument seems to have been by W. Beales of Croydon, a 3 manual of 27 speaking stops for Boscombe Arcade and Pavillion. But that would not have been until the Late 90s; for Beales (a Lewis man who started a business in London in 1872) was not working on his own until 'W.Beales & Co.' dissolved its partnership in 1894. There were probably others; does anyone know of any earlier ones?

A few writings seen recently contain the statement that Gauntlett extended the manual compass from G down to C. In fact, of course, he curtailed the compass from G up to C. Another persistent one is the perpetuation, Fe Thaxted, of Freeman's confusion [3] between St. John Bedford Row and Bedford Chapel, Oxford Street;[4] and again, G.P.England was not the son of George, but of John.[5]

Enquiries in the last Reporter have borne some fruit. Geoffrey Orrin, Assistant Librarian at Swansea University College, has sent photocopies from Worrall's Directory of South Wales, 1875, and another Swansea directory. From these we gather that James Spencer Dane & Sons of 19 Union Street, Swansea, Organ, Harmonium, and Pianoforte Builders, had been 'selected by the Government to build an Organ for the Chapel in Her Majesty's Dockyard, Pembroke, in preference to six of the best London and other firms'. In 1875 they offered church organs of 3 stops 'with every modern appliance' for £31. 10s., additional stops £10 each; Harmoniums from 5 guineas to £21, with an 'Exhibition Model at £26. 5s.; and Pianofortes 'Of the best London Manufacturers, the style, finish, and tone not to be excelled' at 18 guineas and upwards 'in Oak, Walnut, or Mahogany'. The date of founding is not stated, but the Government Appointment was March 1868. No doubt the 'London firms' would have liked to administer 'six of the best'!

Harmston iCo., Aberdare were the firm concerned at Penmark; they occur in a directory of 1895 and were a music shop probably acting as agents, not builders. I am also informed that Harmston of Newark was functioning in the 1880s. Further Welsh queries include Wade i Meggitt of Tenby, late 19thC; and the make and provenance of the organ installed at Aberaeron about 1900, but clearly older than that. Cronibald of Blackburn fl. 1923 excites a query, as do Monk Gavet & Merchant. I can only help with the last; they advertised in 1906[6] 'Established 34 years as Alfred Monk' but I do not know how long they continued in that style.

Monk started in about 1879 in Great College Street, Camden Town, and after a brief sojourn in King's Road he settled in 1885 in a large new factory in Holloway Road. Father Willis had a high opinion of him, and recommended Monk for work he could not undertake himself. Gunther, manufacturer of organs and pianos in the City of London, 'Established 1797', had a son who carried on the business, and his son Henry voiced reeds for Norman i Beard and Later Harrison, his work being noteworthy. He invented the two and three tone reed

system, one resonator having two or three different reeds on the soundboard, separately controllable. This does not seem to have had wide use. Ultimately Henry bought up the Monk business and traded as Monk & Gunther.

Ginns Brothers of Merton were two Willis men - one having been foreman - who started their own business in 1880, actually in Colliers Wood. Amongst their better known works was that now at Stretford Public Hall and the rebuild of the Willis at Christchurch Priory. Stuart Goodall is anxious to find out as much as possible about them and their works, and if anyone can help please get in touch with him direct[7], or via me.

I was lunching in the pub at Great Munden, where is a Compton from Finchley Gaumont to which a grand piano has been attached. When the piano suddenly started seemingly playing on its own, a man seated near it was so startled he spilled his drink. Burney tells us that at the Handel Commemoration at Westminster Abbey in 1784, Joah Bates conducted from a harpsichord connected with the organ erected for the occasion. 'The keys of communication ... extended 19ft. from the body of the organ, and 20ft. 7in. below the perpendicular of the set of keys by which it is usually played.' This of course was they other way round from the pub set-up. Long movements we know, and claviorgana we know. Is this combination of the two unique, or merely unusual?

Can you remember the atmosphere in the organ world - or at any rate the Establishment thereof - prior to the Festival Hall rumpuses? Some organ builders had better ideas, as instanced by this letter sent to me some years before, in 1948, by a small builder, a Willis man:

'One of the builders about whose work we do not enthuse enough is William Hill and Son ... I have great admiration for the solid and aristocratic style of this firm's work, and their unpretentious but classical voicing and tonal schemes ... Certainly they did more to uphold and maintain that classical organ than did Father Willis with all his genius. He, I think, was a little overcome with his brilliant and masterly powers of creating the tone qualities, both reed and flue, which he had in his mind; but if he had studied the organ as a musical instrument more, built in a more classical style, and cased his instruments with worthy cases, he would, with his immense ability, have been the greatest of all builders without question.

'Unfortunately this country has never realised in anything like a general sense that the organ is just as much, if not more, a polyphonic and contrapuntal instrument as a symphonic one ... This with the pernicious practice of high pressure voicing (only really justified in rare instances), lack of the understanding of the functions of mixtures and mutations, that dreadful blight 'extension', and you have some of the reasons why the organ has earned for itself the character of being no longer regarded as a musical instrument by musicians ... If organ building is to improve in the near future it has got to be shorn of a lot of its so-called 'improvements'. A radio does not make a household civilised, any more than an adjustable piston makes and organ a work of art. I must stop, or you will think I am a bore!'

And so must I!

BBE

1] All editions (1855, p.490), Hill's Letter book.

2] Organ xxvi p.136.

3] M.O. 10/24 p.61

4] Reporter I 2 p.9.

5] Reporter III 1 p.10, X 2 p.11; Sumner The Organ 4th edn p.177.

6] M.T. 6/06 p.371.

7] 209 Leaside Way, Bassett Green, Southampton SO2 3EQ.

# AIMS OF BIOS

1. To promote objective scholarly research into the history of the organ and its music in all its aspects, and, in particular, into the history of the organ and its music in Britain.

2. To conserve the sources and materials for the history of the organ in Britain, and to make them accessible to scholars.

3. To work for the preservation, and, where necessary, the faithful restoration of historic organs in Britain.

4. To encourage an exchange of scholarship with similar bodies and individuals abroad, and to promote a greater appreciation of historical overseas and continental schools of organ building in Britain.

*The drawing on the cover is by Nick Plumley, and shows his Flight & Robson chamber organ. The alternative pipeshades on the side towers are possible reconstructions of missing originals. Originally a barrell Sc finger organ, it was found in a church in Lincolnshire. It is of long compass, and the pipes of all five stops (8.8.8.4.4.) are original. Identical cases can be found on Flight & Robson instrumentj/ˈiUˋenham, Wilts., Kinoulton, Notts. & Wooton St. Lawrence, Hants.*

