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Editorial

In the April Reporter I suggested that a wide-ranging appreciation of different styles of organ building would limit the amount of ill-considered meddling with old organs that still passes as 'improvement'. Only if we can understand the thinking that went into the design of an instrument will it release its full musical potential; once this understanding is established, the idea of changes being 'necessary' should quickly evaporate.

While wanting to encourage the idea that good organs of all periods are worthy of preservation (even today's new instruments will eventually be historic), I think one can quite fairly attempt to discourage the kind of sentimental devotion to much-rebuilt instruments of no pedigree that seems to be a feature of the English organ scene. We all know the kind of thing: an organ with pipework by six or seven different builders, randomly disposed in different parts of the building or in a remote chamber, its electro-pneumatic chests facing in various unlikely directions, much loved by a group of local admirers who are convinced that it is the finest organ in the area, or at least 'has some very good stops'.

What is still more depressing is that this generally low level of taste is prevalent even in the most distinguished company, for the description above could apply with equal accuracy to instruments in many of our most famous cathedrals and college chapels. Is it really possible that there are still those who think that, for example, a neo-classical Positive division (chiffing pipework on electric action!) can be effectively balanced against a Willis or Harrison Great chorus (however ingeniously 'rebalanced') and supported by a number of Pedal units scattered round the building? Sadly, this is not just a possibility, but the true state of affairs.

This sort of bad musicianship has endless unfortunate repercussions. Quality of playing suffers: an unthinking approach to the instrument can only lead to unthinking performances. Pupils brought up to accept third best may never be able to rise to the challenge of a well made and stylistically coherent instrument.

The craft of organ building also suffers. Despite heart-warming signs of a revival in the building of new organs, and despite encouraging reports published in 'The Organbuilder', by far the largest proportion of organ building business in this country lies in the frequent and unnecessary rebuilding of pathetically bad instruments.

Even the preservation of old organs is affected. Even now one frequently hears that some poor, unsuspecting parish has been sold an organ thrown out from its original home because it was no good, and has been persuaded to accept it solely on the grounds that it came from some famous Oxford chapel or other 'approved' source. Against this sort of lunacy our own Redundancies Officer, with his long list of soundly built and little altered pedigree instruments, can make little headway.

We are all the worse off for this kind of thing. To observe the phenomenon is very much easier than to suggest an answer, for any serious campaign might strike close to the roots of musical education in this country. Your own views would be welcome.

Report

Birmingham Residential Conference 1st - 4th September 1987

University House in the University of Birmingham was the venue, and Jim Berrow the Conference Organiser.

The papers which were presented covered subjects ranging from the ecclesiastically architectural to the organologically archaeological, with sideways looks at the Barber Institute, the publishing of 18th century music, and BBC organ recording policies; style of presentation covered a similarly wide range, from the suavely confident delivery of 'G.F.Bodley and his style' by Adrian Barlow, and the usual high standards of research and communication of Nick Thistlethwaite (on the introduction of Pedals in England, and on William Hill and the Town Hall organ), to the chaotic and conference-organiser-provoking styles of people who shall remain unidentified. In addition to those already named, the speakers (and subjects) were Jim Berrow (John Nicholson), John Norman (House Organs), Stephen Daw (J.S.Bach), David Wickens (late 18th century organ-builders), Betty Matthews (Schwarbrick (or however we are supposed to spell it)), Julian Elioway of Oxford University Press, Paul Spencer-Longhurst of the Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Alan Barnes (Snetzler), Christopher Kent (The earliest music for Pedals in England), Percy Young (The Shaw-Hellier Collection of music; how good to hear this elder statesman!), Kenneth Jones (organ design and architecture) and Paul Spicer of the BBC.

The outing took us to West Bromwich Town Hall, St. Augustine's in Dudley, St. Michael's in Stourport, the Baroque church at Great Witley, New St. Martin's in Worcester, All Saint's in Bromsgrove (why?), and Kidderminster Town Hall. In Kidderminster the Wyre Forest Council generously provided us with a sherry reception, dinner, and an organ recital by John Bishop which was recorded by the BBC.

On the last night, the conference dinner was preceded by a concert of music by Boyce, Corelli, Stanley, Marcello and Handel.

The whole conference was a triumph of organisation, and much credit must go to Jim Berrow and his team of willing helpers. Personally, I would have preferred fewer papers with more time allowed for discussion, and more help with lists of names/places/dates/instruments from printed hand-outs; with some forethought, much of the information which speakers felt that they had to give could have been printed out and used to create a 'climate' for each paper.

Philip Sawyer

Conferences

Mill Hill - Saturday 7th November 1987

Organised by Alfred Champniss

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 Champniss and Geoffrey Morgan, and speakers will include Ian Bell and Bernard Edmonds. Full details were given on a sheet accompanying the July issue of the Reporter. For further details, contact Alfred Champniss, [REDACTED]

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.

Gottfried Silbermann Study Tour - East Germany 1988

We have received to date 12 expressions of interest in this venture. We shall need a minimum of 25 persons to make the Conference viable. Would any more members who had intended to let us know that they would like to go, please write to the Chairman or Secretary without delay - bearing in mind that spouses and guests would be welcomed. If we are unable to interest a further 13 or more people, clearly the event will have to be cancelled.

Some concern has been expressed about the selection of the date - October 1988. This was originally thought to be a time convenient from several organisational points of view - but we would welcome suggestions for an alternative. In this connection, a date during the Easter vacation 1989 has been mentioned as being a possibility. Observations on this would be welcomed.

On the subject of occasional overseas tours, we would be glad to hear from anyone who might be interested - even if only, at this great distance in time away, in principle - in partaking in a study tour of 'Les Orgues Anciens' in the South of France - perhaps in 1990 or 1991. There is a possibility that such a tour which some members may find convenient to combine with a holiday - would be based on Toulouse and might be set up for us by Prof. Xavier Darasse who is recognised as one of the most knowledgeable scholars in this field. Some members may have heard his most interesting exposition on the subject at the I.C.O. in July.

A few members have in the past posed queries as to what this sort of activity has to do with the British organ. Fair comment - but perhaps it is best simply to draw their attention to No. 4 of the Aims of BIOS - on the back page of this Reporter - and comment that we are in fact called 'The British Institute of Organ Studies' and not the 'Institute of Studies of the British Organ'!

Donald Wright

Briefly...

The Endowment Fund

This has now reached a sum over £6000 - all raised as the result of contributions from our members. In our last report, we referred to the fact that application was being made for financial assistance for two project-based exercises - the implementation of the work necessary on the Archive and the completion of the National Pipe Organs Register. While we are awaiting a response from several Trust Funds who have already expressed general interest, we are glad to report two initial generous donations. The Grocer's Charity have made a contribution of £500 and the Leche Trust have given us £1000. The Society is glad to record its appreciation and is most grateful for the welcome practical hesture of support for its efforts.

Donald Wright

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Towards a History of Organs in the Parish of Halifax

Richard Barnes

One of the difficulties of any researcher might well be in deciding where is the most likely place for information to be found on the desired subject, to avoid fruitless searches in the wrong areas.

It had never really occurred to me that the pages of local newspapers would contain Organ information much beyond the basic: 'The new organ in St.A's church was opened on Sunday by Mr.B. Collections at the two services raised £C, and the preacher was Mr.D.'. It thus came as a fascinating surprise when a contact in a local hostelry - a member of the local antiquarians - gave me a copy of a series of 23 consecutive weekly articles printed in the Halifax Guardian during 1869, entitled 'History of Organs in the parish of Halifax'. This note is by way of announcing the existence of the documents, and to make known a few of the more interesting aspects of them.

It appears that the earliest record of an Organ in the Parish pre-dates Snetzler's famous Halifax instrument by just under 200 years. Although at the beginning of the 16th century money had been bequeathed for an organ at Halifax, it does not appear to have been used, and according to these articles the first record of an organ actually erected was at Heptonstall. [1] The Guardian writer, in the next week's edition, speculates as to whether this organ, having been stored for much of its life, might possibly have survived the Commonwealth.

The articles deal at great length with the history of the organ in Halifax Parish Church. Several minor mysteries are cleared up, including a lack of knowledge as to exactly how much work Hill did during the 19th century.

Snetzler seems to have done quite nicely out of the good citizens of Halifax. Besides the parish church, there is mention of Well Head Mansion, home of the Waterhouse family, as having a Snetzler chamber organ, worked on by Hill in the 1850s. This would appear to confirm the Hill letter book entry sent me by Bernard Edmonds some years ago - indexed as 'Halifax Chapel' - as having been Well Head. Then there is mention of Lightcliffe (Old) Church, ordered from Snetzler and finished in 1787 by Ohrman and Nutt (spelled 'Okeman'). There is, of course, no mention of All Saints Elland, quoted in Sumner's The Organ (4th Ed.) as being

Snetzler 1770, because (as I discovered on reading an article on the Waterhouses of Well Head) this Elland organ and the Well Head Snetzler are one and the same. The instrument was given to All Saints Church Elland (not the Parish Church, St. Mary's, as erroneously quoted) by Mrs. Doherty-Waterhouse in 1915. It was restored by Mander and moved to an Anglican Convent in Horbury in 1957.

As the articles progressed a lively correspondence seems to have developed from readers. The writer one week quotes St. George's Sowerby as having had a Conacher in the 1860s. Now I knew straight away that that was wrong, as that is my church! Sure enough next week appeared the grovelling correction, it should have read St. Peter. This refers to the superb Georgian Church at Sowerby (near Halifax, as opposed to Sowerby near Thirsk), dating from 1766, and the correspondent, after admonishing the journalist for getting things wrong, goes on to inform him of the history of the first organ in that church. As stated by B.B.Edmonds in the second of his articles on Yorkshire organ builders this was indeed by Donaldson of York, 1791. Apparently he signed his name inside the windchest, as did Snetzler.

Having not long since read the Edmonds articles I was delighted to read in the Guardian series an apparently complete history of the beginnings of the Holt firm. It appears that early in the 19th century one Samuel Taylor, organ builder of Rochdale, crossed the great divide and settled in Halifax. He set up business, first in Square Road, and later in Cheapside. Several organs were built in local places of worship, but the real interest comes when we read that he took two young men into his employ, namely John and William Holt. My deduction from this, and from the date 1821 given by Bernard Edmonds for the birth of William leads me to speculate that there was indeed only one generation, and that William was employed by Taylor as a very young boy, following his somewhat older brother into their own firm while still in his teens. We know that they were on their own before 1838, as apparently the instrument quoted by Edmonds as Harrison Road Chapel 1838 was not the first they had built there, the first having gone to Stainland Chapel in 1838. It appears John died in Bradford, and William, considered the more ingenious of the two, set up in Leeds, and also opened a branch in Edinburgh. This, I suspect, clears up another little mystery which cropped up many years ago when I found an 1870 Holt Bourdon with an original railway delivery label on it, addressed to Holt at his Hanover Street, Leeds address, via the Caledonian Railway!

The other great value of this series of articles is the insight it gives into the early 19th century organ in Halifax and district. Many stop lists are quoted. What treasures were destroyed in the name of German Romanticism. Among them were organs by John Gray (2), Samuel Renn (3), Donaldson, Snetzler, Ward, Holt (numerous), Greenwood Bros, (several) (there is much information on John Greenwood and his step brothers William and Charles; the connection between them and Wilkinson of Kendal is well known [2]), Nicholson of Rochdale, Nicholson of Bradford, Kirtland and Jardine (2, both at Mytholmroyd), Fearnley of Bradford (a case by him is possibly still in existence), Hopkinson of Birstal, Henry Williams of Cheltenham, Wilkinson of Kendal (2), plus one by Wilkinson before he moved to Kendal, Conacher & Brown, later Conacher & Co. (numerous), and a highly detailed description of Forster and Andrews' work at All Souls Haley Hill together with some other work of theirs. The articles

concluded just after Hill built their first totally new instrument in the parish, at Todmorden Unitarian Church (still in existence), but before their even more magnificent work at Park Congregational Church. Still to come were St. Mary Halifax (Hill), Christ Church Todmorden (Gray and Davison), and of course much fine work by Isaac Abbott. Several more Holts appeared in the next few years, but of course J.J.Binns was still in his teens!

From the point of view of the pre-Schulze history of the organ in a typical Northern town, these articles are in my view, priceless. Having lived in the district all my life makes them doubly interesting. I intend eventually to obtain a better quality copy and deposit it with the BIOS archive. In the meantime any enquiries should be addressed to me at 72 Pye Nest Road, Halifax HX2 7HF, preferably with a stamped addressed envelope. They will be answered as soon as I am able.

t1] 'In the register book of Heptonstall Parish Church is the following entry; "Mantorandum]. - The 21 day of April Ano. Dni. 1572, in the Parish Church of Heptonstall there were laid up on the coffer, with the register book, 120 organ pipes; and 16 great pipes, 5 wood pipes and 15 lead pipes, were laid up with Richard Bentley, in Heptonstall, for the use of the parish, in the presence of, etc."'

[2] BIOS Journal no.1 p26.

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The Organist of St. Helena

Betty Matthews

Bound into a manuscript book at the moment in my possession is the following small letter. Headed 'Edin. 1834' it runs:

' Sir,

Having been bred to music as a profession for seven years with the late Mr. Nath. Gow*, I accepted of a situation in the Island o St. Helena as Organist where I remained for 8 years with advantage to Myself and Satisfaction to My employers, but having lost My health I left it, and had the Misfortune to lose all My Effects by Shipwreck.

Sir, having returned to a good Old Mother (83 years) and having been long in ill health I have Composed a Number of airs which I intend to publish ...'

Having added a P.S. to say that his mother is 'very ill' he asks the recipient of the letter whether he will support in any way this publication. Although the gentleman in question is not named, it is very likely Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe (71781 - 1851), a Scottish antiquary and artist who, although living as a recluse managed to be a lifelong friend of Sir Walter Scott.

Sharpe must have been musical for he published in addition to scholarly works, Minuets and Songs of Thomas, sixth Earl of Kellie in 1837. His MS book into which Andrew Pirie's letter is bound has the name 'C.K.Sharpe Esqre, 93 Princes street' written on one page and there are references to other members of his family on some of the tunes which are mainly Scottish in character.

Mr. Pirie's offering, although elementary in form is in 6/8 time in the key of G with an Alberti bass. It has been headed in pencil 'C.K.Sharp Esqrs.. Favorite'. On the verso in 2/4 is the heading 'Miss Sharps' delight'. She was easily pleased.

The MS collection written in various hands and on different sizes of paper is of no particular interest: it is typical of its period. But the occupation of Mr. Pirie is of interest. It is

very difficult to find information about St. Helena, other than that the capital is Jamestown. Discovered by the Portuguese in 1502, it was occupied by the Dutch, the East India Company and finally the British Crown. Nearly half the population in 1673 was composed of slaves who had been imported.

Its most famous resident, it hardly needs saying, was Napoleon, who lived there in exile from 1815-1821 and died there. Pirie missed him by a few years.

An old Crockford at last revealed that the island comes under the heading of 'South Africa'. There is a cathedral dedicated to St. Paul and there have been Bishops since 1859. In 1959-60 the Bishop was also the Dean. The population was 5600, but this may possibly have included Ascension Island. The Bishop lived at the suitably named 'Bishopholme'. Other churches (called 'stations') were St. James with St. John, Jamestown, and St. Matthew, Hutts Gate. Which was Pirie's church?

In Crockford of 1977-79 a third Bishop had been installed, the population had risen slightly to 6500, the income from investments from £400 to £600 plus a grant of £100. The cathedral organist is at last named. It was a Mrs. J.George. As the first Bishop took up residence only in 1859, over twenty five years after Pirie's departure, he was probably not organist of the cathedral and it seems likely that St. James with St. John Jamestown was the church concerned, particularly as the town was the capital of the island. As to the organ? Perhaps someone can provide some information.

*Nathaniel Gow (1766 - 1831): a successful Scottish publisher and composer of airs, reels, and strathspeys.

.oOo.

Mother Smith

Bernard Edmonds

'Smith was twice married, though the dates have yet to be discovered; likewise the surname of his first wife, whose Christian name was Anne'. [1] This being still the state of play sixty years after these words were printed, it was with startled interest that I recently set my eyes on an entry from the Calendar of Marriage Licences, dated February 1678-9: [2]

SMITH BARNARD - CHURCH ANNE

Of course it could conceivably be a coincidence, for Bernard Smith is no more uncommon a name than is William Hill, and there was one about in those days in the military world who figures, says Freeman [3], with his widow, in the Domestic State Papers. Freeman does not give references, dates, or details to facilitate comparisons. He notes the interesting fact of a military Bernard Smith with an uncle Gerard in the time of the Great War - and indeed a military Bernard was to be found in recent issues of the London Telephone Directory - but so far as Father Smith's contemporary is concerned he is uncommunicative.

A Lieutenant Bernard Smith is known to have been in the Londonderry Garrison during the seige in 1689 [4]. I know nothing of his domestic state; but whether it was his widow or not who attracted Freeman's attention in the Records Office that April afternoon in 1910, it is certain that had Freeman found her name to be Anne he would have noted the fact. Surely a coincidence in both Christian names would be too good to be true!

I in my turn met a widow in the Public Records Office. Her name was Mary Smith, and her husband was an ensign (second lieutenant) 'in Colonel Mordaunt's regiment' [5]. But the

document did not give him any Christian name. For that, I had to follow her to Kew, where I found that his name was Hugh. [6] Clearly the Reverend author had married the lady off to the wrong lieutenant.

The only other reference to a Bernard Smith which I turned up (apart of course from those obviously to the organ builder, all noted in Freeman's book) was the following intriguingly mysterious one. It is undated, but the associated calendar suggests '166?'. Michael Hild Servand of Bernard Smith turned from aboard of the falcon aboard of his majesties shipp the York now Rideing att Spitt head'. [7]

Ann Smith was buried at Upham in September 1698, aged 63 [8] Thus in February 1679 (new reckoning) she would have been 43 or 44, and the arrival of a daughter could perhaps have been a bit of a surprise - we are told by various writers [9] that Shrider married Smith's daughter, though no primary source seems ever to have been cited. Miss Smith poses a few problems.

A year after Anne's death Smith had married Elizabeth Houghton and set about making a new Will [10]. In this he mentions his relatives, but there is no mention of any daughter. Had she married Shrider and then died, she would have had to do both before the age of 20. Had the marriage not yet taken place, one would have expected a mention of her; likewise if she were married and still alive. It is significant that Christopher Shrider Junior, who succeeded to his father's business, was Shrider's child by his wife Helen.

'Mrs Hellen Shrider died March 21 1752, aged 65 years, and was buried ye 27, in the South Cloyster, on her fathr, Mr. Thos. Jennings'. [11] 'Eldest child of Thomas Jenings (sic), one of the choir of the Abbey . . . She married, at the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, 6 April 1708, Christopher Shrider, the celebrated organ-maker, to whom she was second wife, he having previously married a daughter of his master, the still more celebrated Bernard Schmidt. He was buried at S. Anne's, Westminster, 31 May 1751. Their son Christopher . . . succeeded to his father's business and died 16 October 1763'. [12] Five other children are mentioned, all of whom died young.

This is all in an editorial footnote, and gives no supporting references whatever, so we are still unable to ascertain the circumstances of the Shrider-Smith nuptials. The above mentioned editor does not seem to have seen any original document, for he uses the name 'Schmidt'. Bernard always signed himself 'Smith' and was always referred to as such - or on occasion 'Smyth; and even if he be identified with the elusive Baerent Smith [13] the same applies. It was not until the later years of the eighteenth century that the fads of german and dutch spellings of his name grew up, seemingly triggered off by Burney, as Boeringer points out. [14]

Incidentally, the entry for Smith's burial, referred to as untraced, [15] was seen by F.G.Edwards and recorded by him: St Margaret's Westminster, 20 February 1708 - 'Bernard Smith Esq., Organ Maker in Ordinary. S.S.C.' [16] (sc. 'South side of Church').

One would hope that further primary sources will come to light; but so far as Mother Smith is concerned - have we in fact 'found the lady'?

1] Freeman & Rowntree Father Smith p.7. 2] Calendar of Marriage Licences granted in the Faculty Office from October 14 1632 to Oc-tober 31 1695 p.71. Note also Rene Harris to Joan Hiatt, September 1677. p.68: and Garadus Smith

to Hannah Cobb, December 1691, p.117. 3] F. & R. p.2. 4] Calendar of State Papers 1693 No. 106 p.174. 5] ibid. 1698 21 June. 6] Calendar of Treasury Books Vol.XIII p.358. Treasury Papers Vol.54 No.1. 7] S.P. Dan: Car II, Vol.187 No.132. 8] F. & R. p.105. 9] J.H.Monk The Life of Richard Bentley (1830) p.161; J.Done A Complete Treatise on the Organ (1837) p.6; Hopkins & Rimbault The Organ (1877) p.105; et al. 10] F. & R. p.70. 11] Westminster Abbey Burial Registers. 12]Harleian Society Westminster Abbey Registers p.383; H. & R. loc. cit. 13] J.Boeringer in Organ Yearbook VI (1975) p.4 et seq.; F. & R. p.107. 14] Boeringer op. cit. p.5. 15] F. & R. p.106. 16] Musical Times 1905 p.518.; Musical Opinion March 1923 p.562.

Redundant Organs

West Yorkshire

Organ by Hill, 1869 and 1877 (choir added)

Disposition: Gt 8.8.8.4.4.3.2.III.8. Sw 16.8.8.4.2.8.8.
Ch 8.8.4.4.2.8. Ped 16.16.8.

Casework: Piperacks to front and right side; oak; diapered.

Action: Mechanical; pedal pneumatic

Dimensions: h 20', w 16', d 12'

Poor condition but restorable; choir trackers and pedal pneumatics recently vandalised.

Scotland

Organ by Willis, 1895. Altered 1903/1911. Rebuilt Rushworth & Dreaper, no date.

Disposition : Gt 8.8.8.4.4.3.2.8. Sw 8.8.8.8.4.III.8.8.
Ch 8.8.4.8. & Gt reed Ped 16.16.8.8.
Couplers 6 unison, 4 octave

Casework : Piperack approx 5' wide across chamber arch

Action : Pneumatic

Dimensions : Organ chamber: h 20' w 10} ' d 10i ' }

Oxfordshire

Organ by Denman, 1875 - still available. See Rep. Vol.10 No.4 (Middleton Cheney). A good sounding instrument, about to be dispersed if no-one takes it on! New contact: Revd. Hilary Davidson, [REDACTED]

Cleveland

Organ by Harrison & Harrison, 1876 - still available. See Rep. Vol.10 No.4 (Hartlepool). Said to be largely unaltered.

Gwynedd

Organ by P.Conacher, 1912 - still available. See Rep. Vol.10 No.4 (Aberdovey).

Other organs currently available:

- 2m Gray & Davison, 1879; action partly electrified.

Gt 5, Sw 5, Ped 2, Couplers 4. Nothing above 4'.

- 2m Monk, 1880, in Wales. Said to have 'numerical' action!

(Perhaps 'mechanical compouter' ... ?!)

- 2m anon. pneumatic. Installed in Welsh church, possibly by Willis c.1925. Gt 9, Sw 8, Ped 5.

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

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 & 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 instruments at Tockenham, Wilts., Kinoulton, Notts., St Wooton St. Lawrence, Hants.