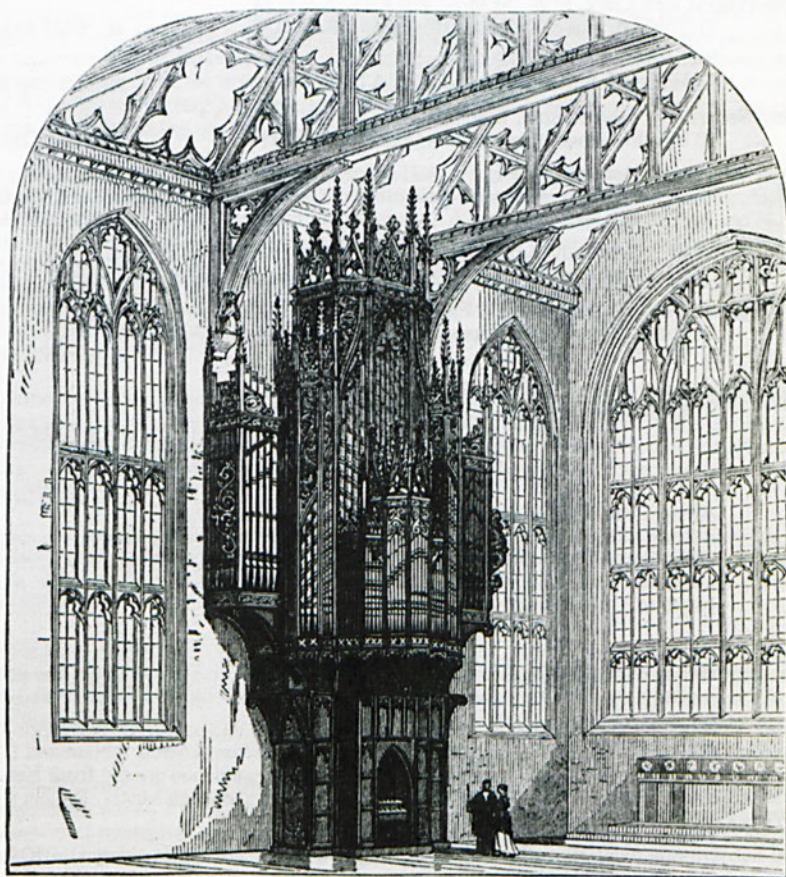


BIOS REPORTER



NEW ORGAN FOR ST. MARY'S CHURCH, NOTTINGHAM.

Vol. 16, No. 2 (April 1992)

BIOS

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Certain back issues of the Reporter are available from the Membership Secretary. These can be obtained at a cost of 30p each plus postage and packing. Please enquire at the address given above for further details. Back issues of the BIOS Journal are available from: The Positif Press, 130 Southfield Road, Oxford OX4 1PA.

Opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the authors, not necessarily those of BIOS

Editorial

Is the organ dying?

It is easy to be pessimistic about the future of the organ as a living musical instrument. With the world-wide decline in church attendance and the influence of religion on the daily lives of the majority, there are fewer and fewer composers for whom the organ is a central part of their work. The recent death of Olivier Messiaen has taken from us one of this century's most creative sacred thinkers. Is our repertoire not increasingly one of music by dead composers? Even those once considered daring and modern now lie in the immediate past. Are there young writers coming forward to replace them? The revival of early music has extended the repertoire significantly in one direction, but is the creation of new music balancing this gain in the other direction?

As a product the pipe organ now stands isolated in a world of high technology and factory production. Resistant to the application of all but the most basic production techniques, its manufacture is labour intensive at a time when only materials are cheap. A hundred years ago Europe and North America were both home to large volume pipe organ manufacture. The largest British example was the 300-person strong Norman & Beard factory in Norwich, and this scale of things was matched elsewhere by companies such as Roosevelt, Walcker and Sauer. Today the making of organs has shrunk and splintered, spread amongst smaller workshops round the world. Are there, today, men such as Cavaille-Coll or Willis to combine fearless innovation and artistic judgement in the creation of new styles?

In a world of music which is fragmented and diversified, split between classical and popular and then further subdivided into narrow fields and areas of special interest, is there space for the centuries-old tradition of organ music? Is there enough to attract a young musical or creative mind to become a player of the organ, a composer of music for the organ, or one of the craftsmen who make the instrument?

These are wider concerns alongside which we may place other more local ones: the rise of the electronic substitute, lack of money and support in British churches, changes in liturgy, loss and decay of old organs. All of these and more have been subjects of this column in the few years that I have been writing it.

However, in writing a last Editorial before passing on my pen to others I, for one, remain optimistic, and would encourage others to feel the same way. The twentieth century has told us one thing surely: that growth and expansion does not necessarily contribute to high standards. Certainly, the importance of the pipe organ seems to have shrunk; perhaps, though, a process of distillation has occurred and the residue that we have left is full of quality - or at least potentially so.

The organ, always full of variety in its forms and styles, is like a living organism in that its very changeability allows it to evolve and mutate to suit changing circumstances. How else could a musical instrument of mediaeval development have survived and grown during the industrial revolution while others sank into obsolescence and obscurity?

We may not know what the future of the organ is, but we can be sure that while music is made that future still exists.

The organ lives.



Conferences

Huddersfield - Annual Residential Conference - 27th July - 31st July 1992

Schulze and the Yorkshire Organ Builders

The 1992 residential conference, organised by David Wickens will look at an important regional school of organ building, examining the craftsmen and musicians associated with it. Visits will include Doncaster Parish Church and the workshops of the Conacher firm - a rare surviving 19th century organ factory. Accommodation will be at Huddersfield Polytechnic. Full details and an application form are enclosed with this issue of the Reporter.

Combined AGM and London Meeting - 17th October 1992

This meeting will be centred on the Catholic church of St. Anne's, Underwood Road, London E1, with its 3-manual Bishop organ dating from the 1850s. Full details will be announced in due course.

Is the Pipe Organ the Right Instrument for Church Worship today?

*In the January 1992 issue of the Reporter we reprinted part of **Reframing the Questions • A guide to the reordering of existing churches and the building of new**, prepared by Derek L.S.Philips RIBA FASI and commissioned by the Bishop's Council of the Diocese of Rochester. The section in question, carrying the title given above, was written by The Venerable Norman Warren, Archdeacon of Rochester. The following Editorial commented on the piece. Following Archdeacon Warren's response to this issue of the Reporter we were happy to give him an opportunity to reply - Editor.*

The book Reframing the Questions was intended to be provocative and to challenge many aspects of church life in the face of ordinary parish churches struggling financially with huge bills to maintain the fabric and ministry.

The necessary brevity of the article did not help and I appreciate this opportunity to answer criticisms that were raised in the Editorial. I am, by the way, a professionally trained musician with a Cambridge degree in music and one who has a great love for the pipe organ, both as a composer and player. I have no desire at all to see the demise of the pipe organ.

My work as Archdeacon, however, brings me face to face with the harsh reality that many ordinary parish churches are neither able nor prepared to pay large sums of money on a pipe organ repair for something that is used for just a couple of hours per week. PCC's have other more pressing calls on their limited resources.

I am aware of the long history of the pipe organ but it is an historical fact that it was introduced into most parish churches in the late Victorian period, and it was an innovation.

I have no illusions whatsoever that pipe organs are expensive to maintain. Here in Rochester Cathedral we have organ tuning bills of over £4000 per annum and on top of this the heating throughout the whole Cathedral has had to be increased, at considerable cost, to stop the organ going out of tune. Furthermore, I have first-hand evidence of organ needing considerable repairs after about twenty years. No doubt the way that churches are heated, for just a day a week, contributes to this, as does poor workmanship and neglect.

The rebuild of our Cathedral organ cost £480,(XX) and a similar sum at a local parish church has put

them in dire straits financially. I know of a mediaeval church needing £45,000 urgently for an organ repair but an even larger sum is needed for a collapsing side-aisle roof. It is perfectly clear where the PCC's priorities must lie.

I go into two or three churches every week and I constantly hear noisy organ actions, raucous out-of-tune-sounding reeds, (though I am aware that it is not the reeds that actually go out of tune), uneven tone due to poor voicing and the pedal little more than an amorphous rumble. Very often they take up valuable, much-needed space.

I have to say that the new digital organs are infinitely to be preferred to many of these pipe organs. The advances have been so great that the digital organ is totally different from the earlier electronic organ; there is no comparison!

My phrase 'the pipe organ is non-rhythmic' is, perhaps, unfortunate but I was not thinking of a top recitalist playing Messiaen on a fine organ, but the organs I hear most weeks - which are incapable of anything with a syncopated rhythm, as in many modern worship songs and hymns.

I have seen the files of an internationally known organ builder, where he has been called in on numerous occasions to try to rectify disastrous work done by certain small organ builders. It was clear from the correspondence that the work had been authorised by a Diocesan Organ Advisor - no doubt a superb performer but who clearly knew little about organ building.

The reason why I suggest a digital organ can be played in situ is certainly not to subject unthinking people to high-pressure sales techniques but to enable people and musicians critically both to hear, and some to play, the proposed instrument in the church itself, with the benefit of the local acoustic. I have been present on many such occasions.

Some makes of digital organs are good, others are poor and I have simply mentioned in my article a few that have a proven track record. To call my comments 'a paid advertisement' is totally unjust. I am not uncritical of the digital organ but I do ask organists and musicians to exercise the same critique for the pipe organ as they do for the digital. I have known distinguished organists being pleasantly surprised by the delightful and varied tone of some modern digital organs, once they put to one side their prejudices.

Not to take this instalment seriously is to adopt A head in the sand attitude to the reality of church life in the majority of our parish churches and chapels. I still maintain that the pipe organ may not necessarily be the best, nor the only, accompanying instrument for church worship today.

I will support the repair and up-keep of a fine pipe organ with all my strength but if a church, and there are many in this situations, cannot afford the repair and maintenance, there is now an excellent alternative - as a growing number of churches are discovering.

Norman Warren, Archdeacon of Rochester.

N.P.O.R. : New national initiative, 1992

The National Pipe Organ Register, following the IAO/BIOS survey of 1989, is growing slowly - in fact very slowly. The original survey form, designed by John Whittle with Martin Charlton and Donald Wright, and kindly distributed by the IAO via the Organists Review, has proved to be a useful method of gathering details of instruments and also for recording the history and development of pipe organs in their current locations. This snap shot process has revealed many useful and occasionally remarkable details about our national heritage. The rate of 'returns' of the forms has almost dried up to a mere trickle from the initial deluge and the Information Technology group within BIOS has been addressing the task of stimulating a new initiative to press forward in distributing, collating, verifying & analysing and ultimately publishing details of the database as it grows.

The starting point for our new task was in assessing the forms as received. Since July 1991 a computerised database system based on an input program running on a relatively simple desk-top PC, which is then fed into a larger system called ORACLE, has been used to process the IAO/BIOS forms. The typing up of the forms, at a piece-work rate, has been undertaken by two BIOS members Emlyn Jones and Andrew Abbott (respectively current and former Barber Organ Scholars at University of Nottingham). Having organ and computer literate operators has been helpful in ironing out the teething troubles in the software and logistics of remote or 'out-workers'. As a consequence of the data processing so far, Dr. Mike Sayers - Information Technology Officer and designer of the software system implemented for the NPOR, has produced the following summary table of the 1567 forms processed:

The table shows which counties are well represented and those that are surprisingly under surveyed. The totals to date, include the data stored on the loaned PC just before it failed at the beginning of April (now replaced) and are:-

Avon	19
Bedfordshire	9
Berkshire	11
Borders	1
Buckinghamshire	28
Cambridgeshire	10
Central	5
Channel Islands	2
Cheshire	10
Cleveland	4
Clwyd	4
Comwal	15
Cumbria	10
Derbyshire	223
Devon	17
Dorset	24
Durham	11
East Sussex	20
Essex	28
Gloucestershire	154
Grampian	1
Greater London	77
Greater Manchester	18
Gwent	6
Gwynedd	1
Hampshire	20
Hereford and Worcester	6
Hertfordshire	6
Humberside	15
Isle of Wight	1
Kent	28
Lancashire	34
Leicestershire	21
Lincolnshire	9
Lothian	5
Merseyside	75
Norfolk	11
North Yorkshire	34
Northamptonshire	16
Northern Ireland	4
Northumberland	3
Nottinghamshire	31
Oxfordshire	118

Powys 1
Shropshire 129
Somerset 10
South Glamorgan 1
South Yorkshire 48
Staffordshire 8
Strathclyde 15
Suffolk 17
Surrey 19
Tayside 5
Tyne and Wear 6
Warwickshire 9
West Glamorgan 2
West Midlands 7
West Sussex 14
West Yorkshire 36
Wiltshire 6
TOTAL 1468

Blank county fields 78, Unrecognised Counties 21

GRAND TOTAL 1567

The blank counties are the result of the typing in exactly an excellent set of forms for villages that had been completed but without the county being specified. Its an uphill struggle to sort them out, but this type of problem will hopefully be smoothed out in the current activity. Unrecognised counties include those such as "East Yorks" etc which officially don't exist. These types of problems emphasise the quality control and verification details that apply equally to the technical content of the returns. The spelling of Gedact, for example, is one that varies widely both within and across the returns.

New Survey Form

Enclosed with this copy of the Reporter is a double-sided, A4 size NPOR survey form and an accompanying information and set of guidance notes. The new, revised form has been devised by Drs. Mike Sayers and John Whittle and is much more comprehensive than the earlier IAO/BIOS proforma. Our task, as members of BIOS, is to consider the twelve month period May 1992 to June 1993 as National Organ Survey Year. The excellent work undertaken by BIOS members (and non-members) in completing the IAO/NPOR forms speaks for itself in the above table. The enclosed form is not being distributed via the Organists Review, though this may be possible in the future. This new initiative is being directed by and to BIOS members. It is clearly going to be a very long drawn out task to reach the target of 10,000+ NPOR catalogue computerised entries unless we can all do our utmost to accelerate the visiting, recording on the new forms and returning them as soon as possible. Please make as many copies of the form and its instructions as you need. If you do not have access to copying facilities BIOS will supply your wants. With fine summer days and holidays nearly upon us put a bundle in the car etc ready for use. Please do not worry if you think an organ may have already been listed - it would be better to have duplicates than no entry at all. If the country church or chapel is locked or the organ not visibly accessible for completing the form, a short note of advance thanks to the organist asking for the form to be returned is the next best approach. In Nottingham we have been providing an s.a.e. on such rare occasions and this has worked well. If you can ask the local organists association secretary to help with circulating the notes and forms please do so.

John Whittle.

Dear Sir ...

Dear Sir,

I have just received my copy of the latest BIOS Reporter and like other members, have read Archdeacon Warren's views on the organ in church today.

My first reaction was to read the matter for what it is and treat it as an ill-informed and misguided assessment of the current state of the organ in Britain. Were it not for the fact that his opinions are likely to be influential in deciding future church policy vis a vis reordering etc., then I wouldn't bother further.

I wonder though, whether we shouldn't cast the Archdeacon in the role of devil's advocate and regard his writings as a challenge to us as champions of the organ and everything this instrument stands for.

Perhaps we should begin by asking what it is that could have prompted a man in his position to put such ideas down on paper? It is a sad fact in my experience, that the Archdeacon speaks for more than a few in the Church of England and probably quite a few more in the Free Churches.

Why does the organ command so little respect as an instrument of music in the service of God and why, for example, does it seem that PCC's choose the organ as an object within the church to be pilloried and cast aside at the least thought of having to spend money on it?

What is it in musical culture in the British Isles, perhaps uniquely in the whole of western Europe, which treats the organ as a musical lame duck, of value only to an odd few and which led, for example, to the discontinuation of regular recitals at the Festival Hall in London?

I have just embarked on a career as a recitalist and am fortunate in having custody of an instrument of considerable musical and historic value (St. Andrew's Hingham, Norfolk, Forster & Andrews 1877, 18 stops, largely untouched). I am increasingly struck by the difference in attitude towards the organ between Britain and mainland Europe. This ranges from the reception given to visiting organists by the general public to the protection in law afforded to the organ as a cultural good. Why?

Unless we are prepared to answer these and other similar questions in a satisfactory manner, tendentious and ill-conceived pamphleteering such as that issued by the Archdeacon will remain on the increase. Furthermore, the state of the British organ will degenerate from its present precarious position to nothing short of a nightmare.

It is perhaps a mean, solitary crumb of comfort to note that there does appear to be one manufacturer of electronic organs in this country who has the humility to acknowledge the relative merit of his work in the face of the finest achievements of British organ-building down the centuries.

Remember George Street Chapel?

Yours faithfully,

A. Hayden BMus, MPhil, FTCL

Redundant Organs

Tyne and Wear

B inns 1907

Disposition Gt 16.8.8.8.4.4.2.8. Sw 8.8.8.8.4.III.8.8.
Ch 8.8.8.4.8. Ped 32.16.16.8.8.

Action tubular-pneumatic key action, electric stop action

Casework pipe-rack

Dimensions h 16', w22', d 11'

Gloucestershire

A.L.Pease cl 870-80

Disposition Gt 8.8.8 (b+t).4.4.2. Sw 8.8.4.2.8. Ped 16.

Action mechanical; compass 54/30

Casework outer towers & intervening flat; vestigial wood supports

Dimensions h 16', w 8'3", d 7'6" plus 20" for pedalboard

Lancashire

J.Nicholson 1861 rebuilt Jardine 1905

Disposition Gt 16.8.8.8.8.4.4.4.4.3.2.III.II.8.4. Sw 16.8.8.8.4.4.2.III.8.8.4.
Ch 8.8.8.8.8.4.4.2.8.8. Ped 16.16.16.8.16.

Action tubular-pneumatic; compass 56/30

Details of casework and dimensions not known.

Northants

Barker (Northampton) c 1860

Disposition Man 8.8.4.2.; one octave of pedal pulldowns

Action mechanical; compass C-e''' (53 notes)

Casework architectural, painted light blue.

Dimensions no information

Cheshire

Steele & Keay 1904

Disposition Gt 8.8.8.4A2. Sw 8.8.8.8.4.2.8. Ped 16.

Action mechanical

Casework pine pipe-rack, panelled sides

Dimensions not known; organ overhauled two years ago, now in store.

Surrey (reavailable)

anon - late 18th century chamber organ

Disposition Man 8.8.4.2.II; compassGG, C - e''', no pedals.

Action mechanical

Casework mahogany with inlaid woods

Dimensions h 9'5", w 4'11", d 2'11"

The following organs are still available and in urgent need of new homes.

County Durham

Bevington

Disposition Man 8.8.8.4.4.II Ped 16.

Action mechanical

Casework pipe-rack front

Dimensions h 15'6", w 8'6", d 7'6" (+1*6")

Gwynedd

P. Conacher 1910

Disposition Gt 16.8.8.8.4.4.2.8. Sw 8.8.8.8.4.2.8.8. Ped 16.16.8.

Action tubular-pneumatic

Casework front of towers and flats, silvered pipes

Dimensions h 17'5", w 12'5" d 9' approx.

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

Notes and Queries

Bernard Edmonds

Tucked away in the Bentley Library at Doncaster can be found the agreement between John Harris, of Red Lyon Street, Holborn, organmaker, and the Rev. Hollis Piggott, Vicar of Doncaster, dated 19th March 1738. It is the formal contract for the erection of "a good tunefull and compleat Organ with one handsome front and a case according to the modell or draught delivered and signed by the said John Harris with the said Trustees to contain the severall stops and other particulars hereinafter mentioned (without any communication or any sett of pipes made to serve in a double capacity in or upon both Organs) that is to say: The Great Organ to contain twelve stops to witt one open diapason of mettall in the front with fifty two speaking pipes, one stop'd diapason with fifty two pipes, one twelfth of the like, one fifteenth of the like, one tierce of the like, one sesquialtera of five rows of pipes, one comet of five rows of pipes, two trumpets with one hundred and four pipes and one clarion with fifty two pipes: The Chair or Quoir Organ to contain one stop'd diapason with fifty tow pipes, one flute with fifty two pipes, one fifteenth with fifty two pipes and one bassoon with fifty two speaking pipes: the Echo Organ to contain the following stops which shall eccho and swell to express passion in degrees of lowdness and soffness as if inspired by human breath vizt. one open diapason with twenty seven pipes, one principall with twenty seven pipes, one comet of three rows with eighty one pipes, one trumpet and one hautboy with twenty seven pipes, for the Great and Chaior Organ fifty two pipes in each sett being from GG to D la Sol in alt., The keys of the Echos and Swelling from C Solfa ut Cliff to D la Sol in alt., being twenty seven keys and the speaking pipes in the whole organ to be in number one thousand three hundred and thirty nine and the front pipes to be gilt with leaf Gold."

This was to be at a cost of £525 and was to be set in a loft or gallery specially built before June 1740. Power of attorney to collect debts due to Harris was given to 'John Byfield, organ builder, of the Parish of St. George the Martyr, but now at Doncaster". One or two points of interest will be noticed.

A few corrections, with apologies. In 'Discs and Buttons' (1) I should have said that the button was turned to point up for 'on', down for 'off, and horizontal for 'neutral'. And as regards the Daniel Gray at Weston Colville (2), Charles Hall tells me that it is still there; it was its previous home which was pulled down, the Congregational at West Wrating, where it had gone after the Parish Church there, for which it was built.

Several people say they have heard about the south coast brewery organs (3); none have seen them or have particulars. Queries come about Skeats of Brighton, who did work at Hurstpierpoint about 1850, and T.E.B. Brooke of Uckfield, late 19th century.

The remark that the pedal bourdon is too quinty is often made as an adverse criticism. Reading it in a 1944 article about a Father Willis of 1878, John Compton countered the criticism in a letter from which I quote. (4)

I am of opinion that for small organs this kind of bass is of greater value, by reason of its better

blending properties, than most of those of recent years. It is not, one must admit, an ideal bass for a quiet manual dulciana or gedeckt, but this criticism applies equally to the modern high-mouthed bourdon with its heavy fundamental and almost total lack of harmonics. The old Willis bourdon had a fairly pronounced quint, a clearly perceptible amount of tierce and a not negligible trace of the septième, all contributing to the completeness of the tonal ensemble and enabling the pedal bass to blend with the coupled manual voices instead of standing thunderously apart from them."

This of course is not to say that every quinty bourdon is a good thing! It was Vieme who said that a septième on the pedals produced the effect of a muster of double basses, though we rarely find one; a septezt sometimes, maybe. Compton's letter was some time ago, before the 'refined' era had passed away, and Henry Willis III commented on it 'When will our so-called experts realise that the soul of a pipe or reed lies in its harmonics which, in correct proportion, are essential, not only for the production of beautiful tone, but to ensure clarity and blend in ensemble?'

Compton had many interesting things to say in this correspondence, (5) about the ravages wrought on Victorian organs by unsympathetic and irresponsible 'improvers'; how 'excellent Hill and Lewis and Walker diapason have been converted into clumsy imitations of Hop-Jones "phonons", and good healthy Willis and Cavallé-Coll trumpets have been emasculated in attempts to "refine" them. In too many cases the upper work has been put in the pot and replaced by "pretty" stops; anything, in fact, except real honest organ tone; and "improved" by the scrapping of a perfectly good tracker action. Legally, perhaps, the owners were fully entitled to do as they pleased with their property, but morally they were only the temporary custodians of works of art whose worth they were not qualified to assess.'

We may wonder, if we think of the typical later Compton organ, at hearing these sentiments from Compton himself. Even then there were those who, like Sir Richard Shirley who built Staunton Harold church during the Commonwealth, 'hoped ye best things in ye most callamitous times.' As someone else said in the correspondence, 'I felt obliged to meet the strongly pronounced views of organist-critics - mea culpa!'

The organ at Fordham (the one near Newmarket) brought an enquiry as a result of the good account it gave of itself on the telly, which unfortunately I missed. Built in the west gallery in 1854, with a £135 enlargement in 1875 (no names), it was completely rebuilt and enlarged in 1911 by Arthur C. Lever, London NW, with tubular action, in its present position at a cost of £480; overhauled by him with minor additions, 1933. He was then 'of Cambridge' (6) and from his sisters via a mutual friend came the information that he had once done work in Buckingham Palace. The date I know not, but it might give a clue to where he was trained. In London for a time he was with R. Watson & Co. Patentees and sole maker of the Imperial Pipe Organ, 59 Bayham Place, Camden Town, as Watson, Lever and Company. I am short on dating. After Cambridge he moved to Kings Lynn. Fordham is the only Lever I know of, though he seems to have sent one to a Baptist church in Shantung in 1914. What was his work like? Any information welcome, please.

I am in the throes of an unexpected move into leafy Bucks, so if any correspondence is unanswered, please forgive me and let me know. Here is a fairy story to conclude with.

"Over the West door is the front of the 18th century organ, the first to be played in England since the Puritan oppression." Thus ran the note in the leaflet for visitors to this most interesting church. (7) So much for the Smiths, Harrisses, Dallams, et al. 1763 would seem to be the date of the organ, whose interior was sold and lost trace of in 1925. Whence do folk get these wonderful romances?

(1) BIOS Reporter Vol. 15 No.3/4 p. 11

(2) op. cit. p. 19

(3) op. cit. p. 18

(4) Musical Opinion 10/1944 p.26; 11/1944 p.58

(5) Musical Opinion 8/1945 p.346

(6) Musical Opinion 12/1933 p.254

(7) West Wycombe, Bucks.

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 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 illustration on the cover is of the organ in St. Mary's Nottingham, and is taken from the Illustrated London News for Saturday 2nd December 1871. The organ, by Bishop & Starr, in its case by Scott, was opened in October of that year..