

ABERDEEN

It had been ten years since the branch had organised a Playing Day. So we were delighted to welcome Caroline Jones to the “frozen North” on 28 February.

There was a variety of age and experience within the 16 participants but we all shared a great enthusiasm for the music. The Playing Day ran from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm to make it feasible for participants from outwith Aberdeen to attend and we were pleased to welcome visitors from “down south” and “further north” including members of the Scottish Recorder Orchestra.

We started with *Kojo no tsuki*, a simple but effective traditional Japanese melody. We then played *The Leaves be Green* by Byrd, which was the most difficult piece attempted on the day but we managed to get through the work in the time allotted and the final play through was a great success. Our final piece of the morning was *Farewell to Stromness* by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies. This was the inaugural playing of an arrangement by Mirjam Morat. Mirjam had travelled to Aberdeen with Caroline and participated in the playing day. She had the dubious pleasure of hearing us attempt her arrangement but she was pleased with the results. We certainly enjoyed playing it and, again, the final play through went well.

We then stopped for lunch. The committee would like to thank the branch members for the array of home baking and other food which they had brought along.

Suitably nourished, the afternoon session began with *Beauty* by Peerson, an enjoyable yet challenging piece. Finally, we played *Hava Nagilla*, a traditional Jewish piece. This was a great choice with which to finish - relatively light but still quite challenging and fun to play. All too quickly we were at the final play through and the playing day was finished.

We were very impressed with Caroline. Her choice of pieces was excellent. They were all challenging in their own ways but at the same time enjoyable to play. Caroline’s conducting and teaching style successfully struck the fine balance between being informative but not overbearing, making it very engaging to participate.

So we thank Caroline and Mirjam and all our visitors for making the journey to Aberdeen. The Playing Day was a great success. We all enjoyed it and benefited from it. It certainly will not be another 10 years before we organise the next one!

BIRMINGHAM

In the course of many years as a member of the Birmingham branch Renate Barany has contributed a great deal, including acting as secretary for several years. At our June meeting we celebrated her ninetieth birthday. There was a cake, of course, and we played Paul Clark's set of variations on *Happy Birthday to You*. We look forward to seeing Renate at our meetings for many years to come.



We aim to have a wide variety of music in our branch programme for each year. This year's music ranges from Palestrina to Peter Maxwell Davies.

We were delighted to find that Sandra Foxall has the same approach. The music she brought to our Playing Day ranged from the sixteenth century to the twentieth, from Arcadelt's wonderfully expressive *Il bianco e dolce cigno* to some very pleasing arrangements of twentieth century music by way of a most entertaining *Echo Song* by Lassus. Her attention to details like articulation and breathing and her clear and helpful conducting encouraged us to give some good performances of this varied programme. Many thanks to Sandra for a lovely day's music.

Recently we played a remarkable piece of contemporary music. Mirjam Morat's arrangement of *Farewell to Stromness* by Sir Peter Maxwell Davies is a great achievement. Mirjam listened to this piece many times and skilfully transcribed it for recorder players to enjoy. Sir Peter has generously given his permission for this arrangement to be used in SRP contexts.

Recorders are not only for early music fans!

CAMBRIDGE

As summer makes a belated appearance, the school term drew to a conclusion, and with it the summer term of Cambridge SRP, which meets every week in the main rehearsal room of the music department of a local community college. Thus we meet 30 times a year, and this means we can work at a wide range of pieces and are able to maintain regular contact with a number of excellent guest conductors: Evelyn Nallen (who is of course based in Cambridge) and also Glynne Parry, Jan Theedom, Helen Hooker and Helen Walker. At the same time the frequency of our meetings enables members of the branch also to take a turn at conducting, which adds to the variety and jollity of our proceedings!

As has become customary in recent years, our last meeting was a 'Bring a Friend' event. The idea is that we have the opportunity to play a few of the pieces we have rehearsed during the year to an audience. Since the average size of our consort each week is 18-20 and we have a total membership of more than thirty, we can always count on a substantial attendance of friendly 'listeners' - enough to create a sense of occasion without the potential trauma of a formal concert. It is also an opportunity for some of us to prepare and play one-to-a-part trios, quartets, etc. in a context where occasionally slipping up and starting again is completely forgivable, and quite compatible with some very polished performances, including (this year) three movements of a suite by Praetorius played by a quartet of pupils of Yuzuru Yamashiro, an active performer and teacher and the branch's general recorder expert and consultant. Some of the branch are also members of a University of the Third Age recorder consort, which gave a very effective performance of Purcell's *Sound The Trumpet* (arranged by Joanna Brown). The SRP branch and the U3A group combined to give the first performance of a beautiful arrangement by Steve Marshall of the *Siciliana* from Bach's Flute Sonata No.2 (BWV 1031), commissioned in memory of Paul Jennings, a much loved colleague who died suddenly quite recently.

Coincidentally, it was Steve Marshall who conducted our annual Playing Day in June, which was also a great success. During the day, we awarded Christine Gibbons an SRP Long Service Certificate. The SRP centrally awards these certificates to those who have been a branch member for more than 25 years, and have made an outstanding contribution to their branch. Christine joined Cambridge SRP in 1974 and served on the committee for more than 16 years. Even in supposed retirement, she is still a major contributor as a branch conductor, always providing help and advice to the committee, and she was also presented with a small gift as a thank you.

Steve directed the day with great zest, presenting us with a variety of music including his own jazz arrangements, some more traditional pieces, and some renaissance music arranged by his wife Ann, who also came and played with us. His humour and skilful direction made the day not only instructive but enjoyable and entertaining. It will be some time before I forget the moment when having taken us through a very moving and uplifting piece by Palestrina, Steve rolled his eyes heavenwards and, after a short appreciative pause, murmured, "Hmm, this Palestrina guy: he should go far - as long as he sticks to it!"

So now we're looking forward to returning to SRP in September.

CUMBRIA

Cumbria branch were delighted to welcome John Hawkes for a return visit for our Pastoral Day in June. John had previously visited in June 2014, and it went so well had a repeat.

The full and varied programme journeyed through the 16th to 21st centuries from Andrea Gabrieli to Lance Eccles. The group particularly enjoyed playing Gounod's *Petite Suite*, John Hawkes own *Silver Suite* (2010), and Lance Eccles *Purple Neon* and *Nuclear Winter* (2005).

Players and visitors got helpful advice on pitfalls and pointers for the different pieces: listening for balance between parts, ensuring the lead tune is heard, separating notes to get clean sound, intonation and phrasing to convey the different styles.

Cumbria group attracts players from a wide area, and visitors are always welcome. The group meets on the third Saturday of each month at Witherslack Parish Hall, just off the A590. Our twice-yearly playing days are a great opportunity to meet new players and try new repertoire. Our next full playing day at Witherslack is in November, when we welcome Clive Walkley as conductor.

GLASGOW

The Glasgow branch has settled in to a new venue on the south side of the city, a big improvement from the previous one where we had an accompaniment of dripping rain through a leak in the roof. It wasn't even keeping time with the conductor!

Early in the summer we were invited to participate in an all-day performance with the Early Music Forum at the Burrell Museum. We had two slots but as it was a continuously passing audience we could repeat our repertoire for the second slot. Neil, our conductor had chosen music that showed the range of instruments. This included Palestrina's *Sicut Cervus*, Symphony No.1, a lively piece by Boyce and a very good arrangement of the *Alla Hornpipe* from Handel's *Water Music*. This seemed to go down well with our listeners and one member of the public even thought that we were a professional group. That certainly boosted our morale.

In June we hosted a very successful Pastoral visit play day with Pam Smith who literally took us by storm as we chose the worst day of the month with gales and rain. Despite the weather Pam brought a lively and cheerful presence to the company.

Her programme for the day included some early music such as *Quemadmodum* by John Taverner, the famous *Lobet den Herrn* by J.S. Bach and an old favourite Sonata à 5 by Schmelzer. Pam was such an inspiration helping us to understand the style and construction of each piece. The 'Moderns' were not forgotten either as we finished off a wonderful experience with Gershwin's *Scarborough Fink* arranged by Richards and Evry's arrangement of *Summertime*, appropriate for the season but not the weather. Honestly Pam we do get some sunshine in Scotland - you just missed the day!

LINCOLNSHIRE

It is two years since Lincoln submitted an article for this magazine....and wow!...has our branch moved on.

Several new members have been added, giving us a total of 37. These new players have proved to be a real asset to our group and often travel long distances to be with us. I am sure that this pattern is

repeated many times over in other branches, but it still amazes me how truly enthusiastic our players are, throughout the country.

As a result of much general enthusiasm and commitment in our branch we have been able to present a number of public concerts recently.

..... Recital for harvest festival service at Normanby-le-Wold, a charming village church at the highest point on the Lincolnshire Wolds.

..... Workshop afternoon in Lincoln..... we invited people to listen, to try our instruments and to ask questions about the SRP. We demonstrated the range of instruments and built up a piece one part at a time to show how the parts are put together. This was very well received and not only addressed the questions from the audience but also served to boost the confidence of our own players.

.....Recital with 8 players at Barnby-in-the-Willows near Newark. We raised £650 for the disappearing lead from the roof.

.....School workshop near Boston. We performed and demonstrated, in an interactive hour, with a hall full of junior pupils. Music was written especially for this event and pupils learned parts before playing with us on the day.

.....Summer Concert At Laxton village church in Nottinghamshire. Some of our players joined The Dukeries singers and the Notts. SRP branch to perform several recital pieces and also a new work composed by one of our branch members, Nicholas Wynne. *Little Lamb*...a poem by William Blake was set by Nick for eight-part choir and recorders and was very well received. A delightfully-scored atmospheric composition well worthy of more playing.

.....Lincs.Music & Drama festival Some of our members also play in other groups between our monthly meetings. Congratulations to those who always bring back a trophy from the Festival.

.....Open gardens. Several players braved a rainy day under a flimsy gazebo to provide music for Skellingthorpe village open gardens day.

.....Christmas music as part of a musical extravaganza at the Bailgate Methodist church in the heart of Lincoln. A bright and happy performance.

These events feature as our main performances, but throughout the year many of our members play in other local groups and join with choirs, or other instrumentalists to give performances.

Finally....our branch meets monthly on a Saturday afternoon.....but many players gather for a couple of hours in the morning to play new compositions and arrangements created by our own members. This session is becoming more and more popular and useful for us all and enables us to look at repertoire for our next public event.

So.....Lincoln is a happy....going ahead branch...speaking of which.....

National Festival 2016. April 2nd and 3rd. We are most pleased to be hosting this in Lincoln next year. Please join us..... Come and see an historic city...home of the Magna Carta, Tennyson, the Wesleys, Joseph Banks, the Red Arrows....and so it continues. You will be very welcome.

NOTTINGHAM

Spring was a busy season for Notts branch with two concerts, a pastoral visit and a treble workshop. In April the branch gave a lunch-time concert in Southwell Minster and the inspiring venue was perfect for the Tudor programme which featured music by Tallis, Holborne, Byrd, Gibbons and Morley. Terry Gill, the branch's Musical Director, introduced the crumhorn for *Pastime With Good Company* (which is attributed to Henry VIII) and also provided informative introductions to the pieces. This enhanced the concert which was well received.

The treble workshop and branch pastoral visit took place in April, and we were delighted to welcome Moira Usher to lead us. In the morning we worked with Moira on improving our treble technique. She knew exactly where our weaknesses would be and worked on things like the high notes on ledger lines and on playing "A up"! Moira extended the group in ways we hadn't even thought about, like playing all three parts of a treble trio to show the importance of understanding more than just our own line. We also had a go at playing a Handel Sonata to a recorded accompaniment. Thank you, Moira, for inspiring us to move onwards and upwards!

After lunch all the other recorder players arrived and Moira presented us with a challenging and interesting range of music including Alan Bullard's *Triple Fipple* and a rousing arrangement of Fred Stone's *Bos'n Rag*. The trebles were able to put their morning workshop session to good use in Byrd's *Resurrexi* and Morley's *Nolo Mortem Peccatoris*. There were no bar lines in this setting which came as something of a shock! It was an extremely enjoyable afternoon of wonderful music.

In May the branch joined forces with the Dukeries Singers (a well established, mixed voice choir based in Notts) for a concert in Laxton Church. The singers performed a range of music including a hand-clapping, foot-tapping rendition of *This Little Light of Mine*. The recorders played various pieces including arrangements of the traditional Welsh songs *Lisa Lan* and *Bard of Eve*. Then recorders and singers joined together to perform *Little Lamb*. This was a new setting of William Blake's poem, *The Lamb*, composed by Nick Wynne which was very well received by the audience. Singers and recorders ended the evening together with Bach's *Jesu, Joy of Man's Desiring*. Excerpts from the concert as well as more information about our branch activities can be found on our website: www.srp.org.uk/notts

NUNEATON

Jack and Jackie Brothwell brought a delightful selection of Jack's own musical arrangements, which he conducted at the May pastoral meeting. *O Magnum Mysterium* by Tomás Luis de Victoria was the first piece played. The mood then switched completely with Thomas "Fats" Waller's *Ain't Misbehavin'*, accompanied by Jackie on bass guitar and Jack on cajon drum. The first session concluded with another change in style, this time in the form of Concerto Grosso Op.3 No.4 by Francesco Geminiani. Next came the traditional folk tune *Hares on the Mountain*, followed by Pavan *Paradys* and Galliard *The Sighes* by Anthony Holborne. In conclusion, Glenn Miller's nostalgic *Moonlight Serenade* perfectly captured the atmosphere of wartime, in the month of the 70th anniversary of VE Day.

PETERBOROUGH

Early summer was an interesting time for us (to put it mildly!). We managed three performances, all of which in different ways illustrated the challenges involved in showcasing the recorder.

The big event was participation in our local musical umbrella organisation's "takeover" of Peterborough City centre. Admittedly we played to a massive audience, but competing with thousands of shopping feet and the sound of escalators, while our sound disappeared somewhere upwards, was a challenge, especially as one end of the group could not hear the other!

We accepted an invitation to play at our home venue, St Jude's Church, trying out a musically successful combination with the organ playing of Gwilym Beechey. The only problem was what turned out to be unfortunate timing, so that we considerably outnumbered the audience!

Finally, a return to a favourite occasion, playing at the open gardens day in the lovely village of Elton. Located next to the Pimm's stall on a summer's day, what could go wrong? The weather of course! Unseasonably cold and windy, it froze our hands and instruments. We were to be honest almost glad when our two sets finished. Despite that we are grateful to all those who paused to listen, and who paid us some nice compliments.

The branch had worked very hard on the programme for these events, so while in a sense the term was a little disappointing, we can take pride in our efforts towards fulfilling the SRP's charitable aims, we have done our bit!

WARWICK

At our meeting in May we celebrated the 90th birthday of Eileen Crook (pictured on the right). Eileen has been a stalwart of the treble section for over thirty years. On the left is Elizabeth Howells who achieved this wonderful milestone last August. Elizabeth has been a trusty bass player since joining us in 1995. They are such an inspiration to us all. We are so proud of them.

