

BIRMINGHAM

For our December meeting the branch gave a recital of Christmas music in the Touchwood Centre in Solihull. We were pleased to be joined by friends from the Leicester and Warwick branches of SRP and players from Rugby Recorders.

The music we played included a selection of Christmas carols as well as some beautiful pieces by Schütz, Palestrina and Victoria.

We enjoyed playing, and were gratified to see quite a lot of people who paused from their shopping to listen to us.

Our group included a range of recorders from descant down to contra bass. The larger instruments in particular aroused considerable interest.

CUMBRIA

Cumbria branch welcomed Margaret Shearing and David Scruby of Manchester branch to conduct our November workshop. Two groups ran concurrently and played some lovely music. The level was just right for members – a little challenging, but an opportunity to work on technical points and playing styles with expert advice.

The programme was well planned and players commented afterwards on the pieces they particular enjoyed – Corelli Sonata IV, Boyce Quartet in E minor, and William Lawes *Sunrise Fantasy*, with the interplay between the two descant parts being especially evocative. Our joint finale was Mendelssohn Andante from Symphony No.4, for change of mood and century.

Cumbria branch meets on the third Saturday of each month, with a break for August and December. Visitors are always welcome.

Our next playing workshop is 18th June 2016 at Witherslack village hall. On 19th November 2016 we are delighted to welcome our Pastoral visitor, Helen Hooker, who will be very well known to many players from her teaching and performance work. Please contact the branch secretary if you would like more information or directions for the playing days.

DURHAM

Durham SRP has again enjoyed an active and convivial year in 2014-2015. The usual sequence of monthly meetings under Mary Tyers's sympathetic yet ambitious direction has been well attended and the players have been as committed and ambitious as their director. Mary's enthusiasm for early music, especially that of the Renaissance and Baroque periods, has been infectious, and the branch has been developing experience of, and familiarity with, its styles and harmonies.

Two full days of playing further enriched the year's playing. The first, which took place in January, was a workshop on Tudor music by the ever-inspiring Moira Usher, which included commentary on the historical background as well as opportunities to master something of the dances of the Tudor age. The second was a playing-day in February led by the branch's pastoral visitor for this year, Sandra Foxall, and focused – very illuminatingly – on the music of Byrd and Lassus. At all its meetings and playing days, the branch has continued to enjoy Julie Phipps's excellent baking, which has contributed so much to the conviviality of the occasions. When she is not baking, Julie is turning her

accountancy skills to auditing the branch's accounts, so that its debt to her is twofold. The branch has also enjoyed the lunches supplied by a local Durham firm, the Picnic Basket, at the workshop and the playing-day. Lunch-time at the latter provided an opportunity for Sandra Foxall to make a presentation to Mary Tyers of a certificate, signed by the SRP Chairman, in recognition of her work and commitment over nearly thirty years in establishing, developing, and sustaining the branch. Sandra was a particularly appropriate person to make the presentation because, aside from her standing in the recorder world, she was one of the branch's founder-members. She also presented Mary with a card and a bouquet and a present from the branch-members.

The year has not, however, been without its sadness. Throughout the year, Nick Southern, a long-standing and greatly liked and respected member, was battling with cancer, and the branch was greatly saddened to hear of his death in July. Nick was not only a great player of the bass but also a composer and arranger, whose work included a moving piece in memory of the branch's late secretary, Flora Pitt. Always unassuming and charming, and invariably supportive to weaker players, he will be greatly missed.

EAST BERKSHIRE

We've certainly excelled ourselves this year in 'putting the recorder out there'

Last March, members entertained the W.I. at Watermead Aylesbury in the history of the recorder and played appropriate pieces from ancient to modern.

Rehearsals also started for the Cookham Arts Festival production of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* to be performed in May. Music before the play, within the play and linking the scenes was required.

First Schools in the Peppard / Caversham area pulled together to perform a musical, and SRP members helped out in rehearsals and the performances.

Members played at The Princes Centre in Princes Risborough in May and in June, joined a year 4 class at Oakley School for the afternoon playing music to each other and then altogether. Could we return as soon as possible asked the children!

December took us to Radio Berkshire and The Paul Ross Show for half an hour in the afternoon. He had painful memories of screechy whole class learning of the recorder and needed convincing that the instrument could be tuneful and pleasant to listen to. We convinced him!

We were asked to provide the Entry music for the production of the Aldermaston York Nativity Play over four nights, an annual feature which began in 1957.

We (as the Galliard Band) played at Stowe National Trust Gardens for a morning and an afternoon session in the restaurant entertaining visitors with seasonal music and carols.

A company, Concertini, organises concerts for baby and toddler groups with their parents. Each concert concentrates on a particular instrument and some members were asked to perform suitable music for one of these events. The contra bass and all of its keys was a great attraction, and out of reach-just!

A local choir in Maidenhead, Renaissance Voices asked a small group of players to play in their Christmas Candle light Concert. The Christmas Pastoral and items by Holborne were perfect for the occasion.

We have had really inspirational SRP meetings this year, as always, and as well as our musical director Andrew Challenger and Norma Herdson a Founder Member, we invited Graham Danbury, Harriet Oliver, Pam Smith, Enid Holmes, John Hawkes, Alyson Lewin, and are looking forward to Martin Ham, Sheila Richards, Jackey Birch, and a Playing Day with Pam Smith.

We already have a few plans for the coming months and are always eager to include newcomers to the area to join us. Many of our members are also U3A members and members of the Galliard Band and the Stubbings Consort.

We just can't get enough of playing the recorder. Need I say more!

GLASGOW

The Glasgow branch has been busy throughout 2015. In November we had a full branch concert at Sherbrooke St. Gilbert's Church. This was a very large affair, a charity concert with a big audience of paying customers and Nicola Cassells as the soloist. Nicola, described, as 'The Girl with the Golden Voice' is a multi-talented local classical Soprano from Ayrshire nominated for Best New Artist at the Scottish Variety Awards.

We were the only instrumentalists and performed in between choral groups from Glasgow schools, including Douglas Academy Chamber Choir, the current holder of the Anne Wiseman Trophy. Our choice of music went down well from, stately Pavan and Galliard by Holborne, *Afton Water*, an arrangement by Brian Bonsor, to the jazzy *Joshua* by Paul Richards. Members of the audience were both surprised and complimentary not only with the range of instruments but the variety of music that can be produced by the recorder. Many of our players had never performed before such a large captive audience and it was a little intimidating to be faced with a packed auditorium. Never have we kept our eyes so firmly glued on the conductor.

Our less formal group, the Kinmount Players, have been out on the road performing some light music gigs in a couple of venues. We played a Christmas gig at an assisted housing association that went down well with a mixture of simple pieces such as Spanish Airs and Dances by Sanz, Handel's *Lascia Ch'io Pianga* and *Afton Water* interspaced with Christmas carols for audience participation. As usual our audience were interested in the larger instruments and recalled their own schooldays of learning the decant recorder. David, our contra player, literally hit the roof, as the ceiling was rather low. Next time we do a gig we must check the ceiling height.

NUNEATON

We look forward to welcoming Alyson Lewin to conduct our pastoral meeting on Saturday 21st May at 2.30 pm in the Main Hall of Attleborough Baptist Church, The Green, Nuneaton CV11 4JZ.

YORK GUILDHALL

Many many moons ago, way back in 1994, the York Guildhall branch first emerged into being. We met for the first time in the York Guildhall on Monday 31st October 1994 as, at the time, they allowed groups that were registered charities to meet for free.

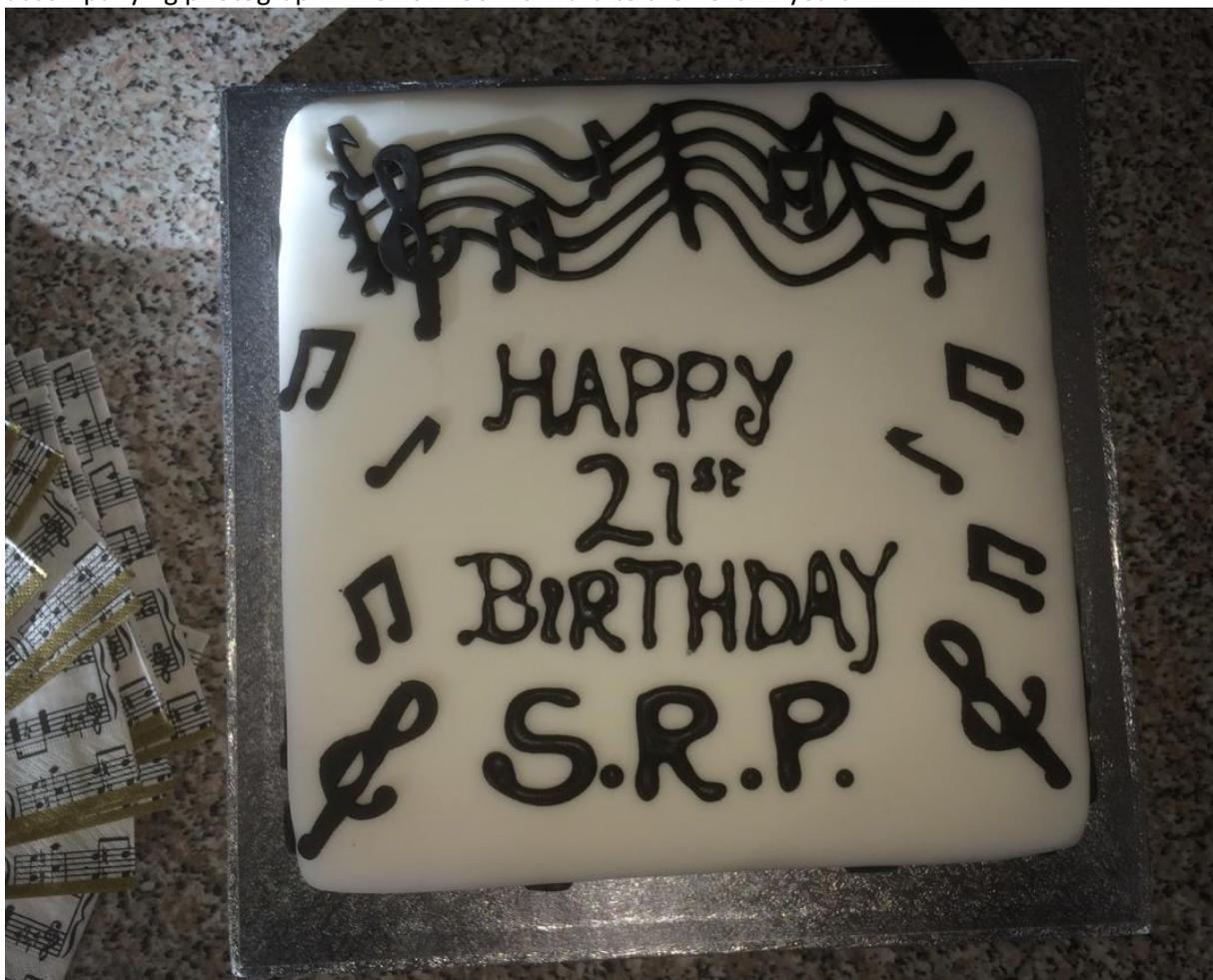
We have changed locations a few times over the years. We moved from the Guildhall when they changed their policy on free meetings, and went first to the vestry of St Thomas's Church in Lowther Street, and from there to a member's flat – both very small rooms but we were a small group at the

time. Eventually we moved on – to our current very comfortable and spacious location of Skelton Village Hall, which has enabled us to increase our membership considerably.

When we started we had David Grosvenor conducting us, which continued for many years until he retired from that position, and Mat Taylor took over his baton. Over the years we have enjoyed annual Pastoral Visits from many different tutors, as well as informal visits from tutors who live within reasonable travelling distance of York, and who have become firm friends of our branch – notably Sandra Foxall, Margaret Shearing and David Scruby, and Mary Tyers.

In 1998 an intrepid group of us ventured across the River Tamar into Cornwall to experience a recorder festival for the first time. Why – you ask... Well, in 1999 we hosted the National Festival for the first time, holding it in Milthorpe School. And then for a second time in 2007 when we held it at the Mount School. Both of these times Mat, with the able assistance of John Murdie, took on the enormous task of organising and planning everything, with willing helpers from our own branch and volunteers from surrounding branches on the day.

So - we have now reached our 21st birthday, and we celebrated the occasion by inviting David Grosvenor to come back and conduct the session with a large selection of his favourite pieces of music. To honour the occasion Anne Richardson organised a tea party with delicious cake – see accompanying photograph. We now look forward to the next 21 years



WARWICK AND NUNEATON BRANCHES PLAYING DAY

Church Lawford Village Hall was again an ideal venue for our extremely well-attended annual October event, with Marg Hall travelling all the way from Scotland to conduct us for the first time. The air of gravitas created by the first piece, Palestrina's *Exsultate Deo*, vanished with Marg's next choice – *The Waltzing Cat* by Leroy Anderson. Dignity was restored before lunch with Marg's arrangement of Purcell's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day*. After the break, during which many people took the opportunity to explore the delightful village, Marg conducted *Take 8*, her own jazzy composition scored for eight parts, followed by another solemn choral work, this time Charles Villiers Stanford's *Beati Quorum Via*, Op. 38. The second session ended with the lively *Celebration Jig* from *Hillfoots Suite*, another composition by Marg. Following tea, during which Helen kindly presented a surprise cake to celebrate Nuneaton branch's 45th birthday, playing resumed with Byrd's gentle Lullaby, *My Sweet Little Baby*. The soporific atmosphere was immediately dispelled by Marg's adaptation for recorders of *Seaside Rendezvous* by Freddy Mercury, arranged by Paul Hart, and the well-known traditional melody *Dashing Away With The Smoothing Iron*. Marg reprised *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* to conclude the afternoon, and received an appreciative thank-you with a hearty round of applause. We are all very grateful to Helen and everyone at Warwick branch for a delightful and memorable occasion.

Obituary

NANCY MELROSE

It is with great regret that the Glasgow branch has to announce the death of Alexandra (Nancy) Melrose. Nancy was an active and supportive member of the branch for many years, frequently accompanying us as well as playing the full range of the instrument, with her usual accomplishment. She was a versatile member of a quartet that was part of larger performances as well as a player in the Scottish Recorder Orchestra from its formation. She was able to enjoy regular playing until shortly before her death.

She was taught music at school by Brian Bonsor, with whom and his wife Mary, she became lifelong friends.

Nancy graduated from the then RSAMD with teaching diploma on piano with subsidiary French horn and clarinet and appointed to Bellahouston Secondary school to the department of the redoubtable Jean Kidd, founder of the RSNO Junior Chorus, for whom she became chorus accompanist. In this context her fine keyboard skills were not only utterly reliable but also subtle and supportive.

She completed her career by taking on the developmental role of Principal Teacher of Music in Gryffe High school.

Her abilities and her wry sense of humour will be much missed by all her friends.