



JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF RECORDER PLAYERS

President: BENJAMIN BRITTEN, O.M., C.H. *Vice-Presidents:* LANOUE DAVENPORT, IMOGEN HOLST, KURT PITSCH, GUSTAV SCHECK, MICHAEL TIPPETT. *Chairman:* EDGAR HUNT. *Musical Directors:* CARL DOLMETSCH, C.B.E., FRED A DINN, WALTER BERGMANN. *Secretary:* JOAN M. DAVIS, 26, Delamere Road, London, W.5. *Treasurer:* R. JAMES. *Membership Secretary:* V. L. GRAY, 415, Pinner Road, North Harrow, Middlesex.

THE SOCIETY OF RECORDER PLAYERS

How it began and what it has achieved

Edgar Hunt

THOSE WHO founded our society had two aims—to provide a meeting ground for the growing number of recorder players and to spread the knowledge and understanding of the instrument and its music—and an ideal—to raise the standard of recorder playing. This was happening some thirty years ago. A few of the original members still belong to the society, but they represent a small proportion of the present membership; so it may be interesting for more recent members to read how it all happened.

In 1937, outside the little circle of those who played or had friends who played the recorder, it was still rather an obsolete instrument, and its mention would generally call for some explanation as to what it was. There was certainly no risk of confusion with tape recorders, only a blank ignorance. Recorders were being made, of course, at Haslemere, and some were being imported from Germany 'with English fingering'. A class had been started at Trinity College of Music, but there was nothing to link together the various isolated recorder players outside London and co-ordinate their efforts.

It is now history that the idea of forming a Society of Recorder Players came separately to Carl Dolmetsch and to the writer, and that two separate societies might have been formed but for the happy intervention of their friends Max and Stephanie Champion, who learnt of both sets of plans, got both together, and helped to form one society.

Inauguration in 1937

So it was that the Society was inaugurated on 7 October, 1937, in the Hall of the Art Workers' Guild, Bloomsbury, London. Of about seventy people present at that meeting, fifty-six enrolled as members. By the following summer membership had risen to 191.

Arnold Dolmetsch was the Society's first President, and the officers were: Max Champion (chairman), Stephanie Champion (secretary and treasurer), Carl Dolmetsch and Edgar Hunt (joint musical directors) with a committee of eight. Max Champion is known to recorder players through his editions of Loeillet (Trio-sonata with oboe) and Bach (aria from Cantata 46), and the Method he and Stephanie, his wife, wrote

for Curwen's. He was an amateur flautist, a pupil of Albert Fransella, who did much research into the history of the flute, made an interesting collection of early flutes and was responsible for the article in 'Grove'. He has now retired from these musical interests. Stephanie was an excellent violinist and pianist whose interests were mainly in chamber music. She was not at first convinced that the recorder was capable of being a really musical instrument, but it was not long before she took up the treble and tenor, forming a trio with Max and the writer.

From the start the society recognised as recorders only those instruments which answered to the true recorder fingering. At the inaugural meeting Max Champion said that instruments which were made according to the German system could not properly be regarded as recorders by the society . . . and it was not possible for all the literature of the recorder to be played on such instruments.

In its first year the society held four meetings and brought out three publications, including the *Fantasia, Aire and Jigg* by Arnold Dolmetsch which our President had presented to us—all this on a subscription of 5s. per annum—including also 'The Recorder News' which provided an annual record of events! The meetings in London took place at the Hall of the Art Workers' Guild which provided us with a central meeting point. There we spent a lot of time trying to get in tune together and trying to play the music which we had published. There were also performances by smaller groups—five at one meeting—and we all visited the Dolmetsch Workshops in May.

There were no branches such as we now have, but the first issue of 'The Recorder News' reported the activities of groups of players in nineteen centres, from Bristol (Miss Hunt) and Hampshire (Miss Donington) to Scotland (3) and Ireland. From the very start the society was aware of the need for some qualification for recorder teachers and had instituted its own Teaching Test. There were ten successful candidates at the first examination which was held in February 1938, and five more the following year.

The year 1939 was important for the recorder as it saw the first of Carl Dolmetsch's Wigmore Hall recitals, and the first performances of some modern

The Recorder News

recorder pieces at a meeting of the London Contemporary Music Centre. It also saw the first Summer School for Recorder Players at Downe House. But, for the society itself, the outbreak of war imposed restrictions on meetings and publications, and a general slowing down of activities for the duration. The fourth issue of 'The Recorder News', dated 1940-41, listed eleven music publications, and recorded a meeting in July 1941. From then until after the War the Society remained dormant.

TO BE CONTINUED

4-1=3, but:

AS THE number of issues of the magazine is being reduced from four to three per annum, the Executive Committee is considering some form of annual publication for circulation to SRP members, to take the place of the fourth issue.

Stanley Taylor

THE MANY friends of Stanley Taylor will be glad to know that he is now at home recuperating after his recent operation. We all wish him a speedy return to health.

Joyce Tadman Fund

THE TOTAL amount subscribed is £66 5s. This is being sent to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund.

NEWS OF THE BRANCHES

London

IT IS SOME TIME since we gave an account of our activities, but this is due rather to the inactivity of the branch secretary than of the branch. In fact, apart from our regular monthly meetings, we have in the last year held our usual concert, given by members for members and friends, visited Little Benslow Hills, Hitchin, for a summer meeting, celebrated Christmas in the traditional way and, at our meeting on 22 January, had the annual treat of a concert from the Dolmetsch family.

The summer meeting at Hitchin has become a regular part of branch life and we hope it will continue to be so. Last year about forty members attended and, ably organised by Theo Wyatt, we played partly in small groups, and partly all together, an arrangement which allowed everyone to enjoy the best of both worlds. The music was mostly old friends, but since the weather was not as kind as in the previous year all temptation to laze in the sun was removed and we worked very hard at the music instead. We look forward to repeating this very pleasant outing this summer.

At the Christmas meeting the tradition of playing carols accompanied by strings took on a new life with probably the best team of string players that we have ever played with. Apart from the carols we played with the strings the Pez 'Pastorale,' without which no London branch Christmas would be complete, and the Bach 'Christmas Concerto.' We were

BRANCH SECRETARIES

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Mrs K. Philip, 66, Cornhill Road, Aberdeen.

Bristol

Miss E. Hunt, 14, Belgrave Road, Clifton, Bristol 8.

Cambridge

Miss J. Hancock, Newnham College, Cambridge.

Devon

Mr. B. Crispin, 1, Barton Crescent, Dawlish.

Dorset

Mrs Darby, 31, Brownsea View Avenue, Lilliput, Poole, Dorset.

Edinburgh

Miss E. Murphy, 13, Eglinton Crescent, Edinburgh 12.

Glasgow

Miss F. Barker, 5, Kessington Drive, Bearsden, Dunbartonshire.

London

Miss K. Murray, 3, Chalk Lane, Cockfosters, Barnet, Herts.

Manchester

Mr Stanton Ambler, 28, Redburn Road, Manchester 23.

Merseyside

Mrs L. Taylor, The Round House, Magazine Lane, Wallasey, Cheshire.

Midland

Miss F. A. Clitheroe, 158, Benedon Road, Sheldon, Birmingham 26.

Newcastle

Mr J. N. Atkinson, 70, Nuns Moor Road, Newcastle upon Tyne 4.

Norfolk

Miss G. Bullock, 5, Louie's Lane, Diss, Norfolk.

Northampton

Dr R. B. Coles, 23, Billing Road, Northampton.

West Riding

Miss M. Hargreaves, 14, Sandy Bank Avenue, Rothwell, near Leeds.

Country Members

Miss M. Wright, Heather Bank, Bell Lane, Amersham, Bucks.

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THE STORY OF THE SRP II

Edgar Hunt

THE SOCIETY WAS in abeyance during the war. Messrs Schott & Co looked after our publications, but meetings were out of the question. During this time the Society lost its President, Arnold Dolmetsch, and three of its vice-presidents: Major Benton Fletcher, Canon Galpin, and Dr Hubert Hunt. But, in 1946 moves were made towards its revival and reconstitution.

Having set in motion this revival, Max and Stephanie Champion, who had helped to found the society in 1937 and had been respectively Chairman and Secretary since the start, resigned to give opportunity to others.

During the war the recorder had prospered at Morley College with Dr Bergmann's classes and through the appearance of the instrument in some of Michael Tippett's concerts, and this helped to give the Society new life. Dr Bergmann joined Carl Dolmetsch and the writer as a musical director and Mr C. Kenworthy became the new secretary and later editor of *The Recorder News*.

The work of CEMA (later the Arts Council) was indicative of the move towards decentralisation in the Arts which was going on at this time. This was reflected in the reconstituted society by the formation of branches during 1947, the first five being in Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, Bristol and Oxford. Although linked with 'head-quarters' in London financially and through the annual visits of the Society's Musical Directors, the branches were encouraged to work out the scope of their meetings and other activities according to local needs. Of these first five branches three continue to flourish. The initial impetus in Leicester and Oxford was insufficient to carry them forward, but others have been gradually added bringing the present total to seventeen (including the country members and those overseas as a 'Branch').

In pursuing its aims of spreading the use and understanding of the recorder, and of raising standards of playing, the Society has often started a new activity, eventually handing over control or retiring from the field when other bodies were ready to take over. For example, in July 1947, a Festival for Young Recorder Players was organised by the Society at the Froebel Institute, Roehampton. This was reported in *The Times Educational Supplement* as follows: 'During the afternoon nearly 400 children and their teachers separated into three classes under the festival coaches. In one room, accompanied by a small string orchestra, they studied folk-songs under Miss Freda Dinn, of the Froebel Institute; in a second room they played classical melodies in unison with pianoforte accompaniment, under Dr Walter Bergmann, of Morley College; while the third group studied three-part unaccompanied music with Mr Edgar Hunt, of Trinity College of Music and the Birmingham and Midland Institute. After tea all joined in a final rehearsal and a festival concert, in which the simplicity of the melodies played by the massed children alternated effectively with the dexterity of Carl Dolmetsch's solo playing'.

Such festivals became annual events, and a Junior Section of the Society was formed which had its own magazine and music publications and branches in centres

such as Bristol, where teachers could be found willing to help with the organisation. Freda Dinn was mainly responsible for this part of the Society's work and these activities were only discontinued when it was felt that Local Education Authorities were ready to take up some of these ideas. There was also some conflict between the Society's interest in the child as an individual and some teachers who wanted an impersonal block membership.

Eventually in 1948 the team was formed with Freda Dinn, Walter Bergmann and Carl Dolmetsch as Musical Directors and the writer as Chairman under the Presidency of Dr Percy Scholes.

Having held out the 'Teachers' Test' as a proverbial carrot, there seemed to be a shortage of 'donkeys'. With notable exceptions recorder teaching in schools was lamentable and training colleges were not equipped to turn out sufficient recorder teachers. This was the period when it was usual for the teacher to be one lesson in advance of the class. As a positive contribution to improving this state of affairs 'The Recorder in Education' summer schools were started in 1948. The writer had been running the summer schools for recorder *players* at Downe House since 1939; but the new summer school was for *teachers* and employed a larger staff - consisting of the Society's officers plus Thurston Dart who was keenly interested in the recorder in those days.

The first of these summer schools was held at Templeton, one of the Froebel Institute's houses at Roehampton, and catered for about 40 students. After the first experimental years responsibility for running the course was taken over by the Dolmetsch Foundation, until now it is strong enough to be independent. It was a bold step when after four years in places with accommodation for about 40 students, it was decided that Grove House, Roehampton, should be taken with places for more than double that number - the step was justified and the course continues there each summer. The students now number about 200 each year.

Twenty years ago the recorder was not often to be heard in concerts apart from Carl Dolmetsch's Wigmore Hall recitals and the Haslemere Festival, and it was important for recorders to be heard integrated with other instruments and voices playing their rightful part. The Society's annual concert was such an occasion, including perhaps, a Bach cantata or a Telemann concerto with strings. After concentrating on London these concerts were taken in alternate years to the provinces to show the flag and to help recruiting. The expense was justified as a form of advertising. These concerts were discontinued with the more general acceptance and use of the recorder in recordings and on the concert platform: they had not noticeably influenced recruiting. There were however, some notable performances, and many well-known musicians have been among those taking part as guest artists, including April Cantelo, Josephine Veasey, Maurice Bevan, Alfred Deller, Gerald English, Antony Hopkins and Erich Gruenberg. After the death of Dr Percy Scholes Benjamin Britten became (in 1959) our third President.

These are some of the things that the Society of Recorder Players has done. Many other achievements are

perhaps not as obvious, being the result of the Society's influence through individual members rather than a policy decided in committee. All, however, can share credit for the high standard of playing at some of the Society's meetings – much has happened since the early struggles in the Hall of the Art Workers' Guild.
(*Part One was published in March 1966*)

Week-End Recorder Course at Northampton.

THE ANGEL HOTEL, NORTHAMPTON, almost certainly for the first time, but one hopes by no means for the last, became a focal point of intense recorder-playing activity during the week-end of 28-30 October last.

Dr Richard Coles, who was assisted in his organisation by a number of members of Northampton Branch, S.R.P., had booked the major portion of the hotel for the period and over fifty Course members assembled on the Friday evening. More than thirty of these were resident and the catchment area extended as far afield as Manchester, Hull, London and Devon.

Two large rooms each acoustically satisfying, accommodated two graded groups of players under the direction of Edgar Hunt and Paul Clark respectively. In these the main work of the course was done and a variety of music, both ancient and modern, studied.

"Music-for-all" sessions were a prominent feature, that on the Saturday evening being distinguished by the appearance of a particularly heterogeneous collection of instruments, consisting of crumhorns, kelhorns, bassoons, viola da gamba, cello, harpsichord and a mass of recorders of all sizes. The tonal vagaries of this group were as remarkable as they were piquant. Equally enjoyable ensembles of a different, but more homogeneous, nature gathered from time to time at the lounge bar.

The grand climax came on Sunday afternoon with a performance of William Byrd's *The Bells*, with Edgar Hunt directing and A. L. Redgrove as campanologist. This made up in general impressiveness and atmosphere for what, towards the end, it may have lacked in accuracy, and formed a fitting finale to the course.

We are all indebted to Dick Coles for a most memorable, well-organised and enjoyable week-end. He is already planning a Course on similar lines and at the same place, for the autumn of 1967.

BRIAN CRISPIN

Halsway Manor Recorder Playing Week-end November 1966

IN AN ELIZABETHAN MANOR HOUSE near Taunton, set in the splendid countryside of the Quantocks, about 40 players spent a November week-end in ensemble work and consorts. Devon Branch were strong supporters of this project but visitors also came from as far away as London and Birmingham. Music ranged from 13th century pieces to the Choric Quintet of Staeps. Both ensemble work and consorts, one to a part, were coached by Paul Clark and Brian Crispin. This was a fine antidote to the grey days of Autumn. Those who might like to join us should note that a provisional booking has already been made for next year.

J. FELL

Annual Conference 1967

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE will take place on May 6 and 7 at 48 Great Marlborough Street, London W1, (by kind permission of Schott & Co. Ltd). Any two members of the Society may make nominations for election of officers and Committee by sending such nominations in writing to the Secretary with an assurance of the consent of the nominees not less than two weeks before the Conference. Resolutions may be moved by any Branch which shall give notice thereof to the Secretary at least four weeks beforehand.

London Branch Annual Concert

THIS WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY April 8th at 7-30 p.m. at the Marylebone Institute, Rutherford School, Penfold Street, NW1, (corner of Bell Street). It is hoped that as many members as possible will come and bring guests. No charge will be made for members or visitors. Anyone wishing to take part should send a note of their name, proposed items, and time taken to perform it to the Secretary, Miss K. Murray, 5 Chalk Lane, Cockfoster, Barnet Herts, not later than March 28, 1967.

Remaining meetings of London Branch: 2.30 p.m. to 6 p.m. at Waldegrave Hall, Duke Street, W1. on March 4, April 8, May 6, June 10.

MICHAEL ARNO performed Walter Bergmann's sonata for descant in St. Olaf's Church, London, on November 25, 1966.

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Dr R. B. Coles, 23, Billing Road, Northampton.

Roxburgh

Miss J. Alison Walsh, 26 Howdenbank, Hawick, Roxburgh

West Riding

Mrs A. Hind, 7, Estcourt Grove, Bradford 7, Yorkshire.

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