

SRP BRANCH REPORTS – SPRING 2015

BIRMINGHAM

During 2013 we lost two long-standing members of our branch. Together with recorder players everywhere we mourned the passing of Paul Clark. Paul was MD of the Birmingham branch for many years and brought unquenchable liveliness and energy to his work with us.

Ian Shield was an enthusiastic conductor, arranger and player for many years. At one of our meetings we performed an arrangement of Palestrina's *Sicut Cervus* and *Sitivit Anima Mea* in an arrangement dedicated to Ian's memory. Sheila Shield came to hear this performance and was presented with some copies of the work.

At our July meeting we played through the music that we had worked on over the past few months. This included *Bachbyte* which was specially written for the branch by Roger Tempest. This work is on YouTube and is available for other branches to play by arrangement with our secretary. We also played *Withered Smoke* by Emily Wright and *Cascading Jesters* by Rosie Clements. These challenging but attractive pieces were written for the Erika Beckett Recorder Competition.

At our AGM in October 2014 Peter Cooke stood down as our Musical Director after holding this position for more than ten years. At that meeting a presentation was made to Peter to mark our gratitude and appreciation of his expert guidance. Our new MD is Caroline Jones whose wide knowledge and experience is great asset to our branch.

Our music for 2014 – 2015 includes works by Tallis, Palestrina, Boyce, Staeps and Warlock, among others. By the time this is published we shall have had our Christmas meeting when we play seasonal music suggested or provided by members and enjoy a bring and share buffet. A very good way to start the Christmas season. In May we are looking forward to a playing day directed by Sandra Foxall

We meet at the Friends' Meeting House in Cotteridge, Birmingham on the first Saturday in the month and we are always pleased to welcome visiting players. Ring our secretary beforehand to check that there have been no changes in our usual routine, and then all you need to bring with you is your recorder(s), your music stand and your enthusiasm.

DEVON

At our November meeting we had the pleasure of a visit from Steve and Ann Marshall. Our usually modest numbers were bolstered by a contingent from Cornwall who braved torrential rain to join us - many thanks to them!

On their previous visit we played some of Steve's pieces for recorders and strings. This time we concentrated mainly on concerto-type works, concentrated being the operative word as some found the counting of many bars of rest deceptively difficult! Among the pieces we played were Steve's *Lampeter Rhapsody*, *May Hill Rhapsody* and *Concertino No.5*, and Ann's *Lancashire Concertino*. We particularly enjoyed the *Concertino No.5* with its Spanish guitar influences and frequent changes of time signature. Our thanks must go to our brilliant soloist Harry Petty, who made a special trip from Cardiff to join us.

ESSEX

We look forward to welcoming Naomi Okuda Wooderson as tutor for our Playing Day on Saturday 11th April in Brentwood. Naomi studied the recorder at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in

London and now has a busy schedule of concerts, broadcasts, recordings and teaching. Repertoire for the day includes music by Handel and Corelli, and during the afternoon session Naomi will give a short recital. Booking information is on the SRP website, or email essex@srp.org.uk.

GLASGOW

In December we performed a Christmas concert in Broomhill Community Church. It proved a most festive occasion as along with set pieces we played Christmas carols and our conductor Neil Eckford encouraged the audience to join in, which they did with gusto. Perhaps the promise of refreshments afterwards was an inducement.

We included in our performance *On Christmas Night* by Rosemary Robinson, a suite of traditional Christmas songs but with a twist and some tricky rhythms, and the Allman from an English Consort by Brade.

With audience help we performed *Good King Wenceslas*, a lesser known carol *O Come O Come Emmanuel* as four-foot and eight-foot arrangements.

The group continued with Bach's arrangement of *O Little One Sweet*, Corelli's *Pastoral*, and *Celtic Cluster*, a cheerful suite of Irish tunes arranged by Steve Marshall. We finished the performance with *Hark The Herald Angels Sing* and *The First Nowell*.

Many of the audience expressed interest in the instruments, having confessed to learning the descant at primary school and not enjoying the sound. They were most impressed with the range and beauty of the instruments in consort. It was a friendly atmosphere and after the performance, we were joined by the audience for chat, tea and some Christmas fare.

GUILDFORD

At our October meeting we had an enjoyable return visit from David Burgess, as guest conductor. He brought an interesting selection of music, including Vivaldi's *Gloria* when we stood to play, the orchestra facing the choir.

In November we held our Autumn Branch playing day, when it was good to welcome so many visitors. Our conductor, Anne Martin, had worked hard to produce a programme entitled 'Cantus firmus, grounds and variations from Tye to today'.

In the morning we worked on In Nomine and cantus firmus music, including pieces by Taverner, Tye and Byrd. Before we began playing, Anne gave us a short history of the use of the In Nomine and cantus firmus in instrumental music. We found some of the rhythms rather challenging but under Anne's baton we gradually gained a better understanding of the music. We finished the session by moving forward to the Baroque, playing the *Chaconne* from *Dioclesian* and *Chacony* by Purcell.

After a welcome break for lunch we continued with music very different in style and content as we tackled two of Paul Clark's variations, the rather melancholy *Sandgate Lamentations* and the flowing *Waters of Tyne*. This was followed by Anne's clever arrangement *Swann Song*, in which the most famous of Flanders' and Swann's animal songs was the centre of variations with some reference to Purcell. Our final piece was the *Fantasia on Surrey Leaves*, which Anne had composed for the 2012 SRP Festival, held in Guildford. Although composed of course for a very large ensemble, it still

sounded as delightful as ever with around 40 players. The day concluded with this and a reminder of where we started, as we replayed Taverner's *In Nomine* and Purcell's *Chaconne* from *Dioclesian*.

MANCHESTER

The Manchester branch had a rare treat at its annual Autumn Playday 2014, as we were fortunate enough to be tutored by Helen Hooker and Philip Thorby. We shared the day with other SRP branch members and non-SRP recorder players from the area. The music in the six sessions ranged from Gabrieli's *Canzona XIII* to Steve Marshall's *News at Ten Blues*, but the highlight of the day had to be the short duet recital by Helen and Philip which included music by Paisible, Staeps and Telemann. We were also given the opportunity to browse a selection of recorders from *The Early Music Shop* and music from *Willobie Press* and *Hawthorns Music*.

Our usual branch meetings are the first Friday evening and second Saturday afternoon of each month at St Matthew's Hall, Stretford. Look out for details of our Autumn Playday 2015 and our other events. All are welcome.

NUNEATON

We look forward to welcoming Jack Brothwell to conduct our pastoral meeting on Saturday 16th May at 2.30 pm in the Community Room at Higham Lane School.

SOUTH LONDON

Since the London Recorder Orchestra uses the same rehearsal premises, our branch is fortunate in that quite a few players stay on for the afternoon SRP meeting, so we are normally blessed with great and contra basses.

I kicked off the conducting rota this autumn by adding dulcimer, long necked lute and percussion in an arrangement of Machaut's *Douce Dame Jolie*, coupled with a 1920s Dixieland favourite, *Nagasaki* and some Scottish boat songs.

In October Andrew Melville treated us to Peerson, Poulenc, a Melville original and a Klezmer Collection by Marg Hall that I, along with the other members, really enjoyed.

Jo Brown took over the baton in November. Jo has such a deft touch as an arranger when it comes to making orchestral pieces work for recorders. Her selection this time included the Overture to *Die Fledermaus* and Vivaldi's Concerto in G.

Our Christmas treat was Julie Dean, an inspirational teacher who boldly tackled the technical shortcomings of members replete with mince pies and other seasonal fare. *Regi Secularum* à 12 by Pierre Cadeac quickly focussed our attention, while chorale preludes by J.S. Bach and E.W. Link's *March de Joyeux Fetards* kept the contras on their toes.

In 2015 we can look forward to Sheila Richards and our pastoral visitor Moira Usher, as well as more from me and Andrew. I'm going to try and teach the branch members how to improvise. Wish me luck with that.

WESSEX

32 players attended our Playing Day, conducted by Pam Smith, at Colden Common Community Centre some 5 miles south of the City of Winchester. This is a new venue for the branch, in a community building with a number of different sized rooms, well suited to the spectrum of events hosted by Wessex Branch and will become our new monthly meeting venue from our January 2015 meeting.

From the outset in Elway Bevin's (1554-1638) *Browning (The Leaves be Green)* the need for precision was demonstrated. Bevin's reputation of producing "a great Number of Canons, of various Parts, and profound Invention" is not an overstatement; the tenor part is fiendish. Written in the English cadence style and no deviation from the rules, rich discordant clashes such as C versus C sharp result. If the parts arrived there together, superb; if miss-timed, it just sounds as if the players got it wrong! Pam was most patient in coaching us to that point and once we 'arrived' the satisfaction of achievement and understanding in the players was apparent. Armed with our new understanding, John Hawkes' (b1942), *Silver Suite* next came under our scrutiny, a modern piece, though the lilting Lament movement felt as if written unbarred. John was a university lecturer in physics until retirement and the precision required in the placing of the minims in the accompanying parts is perhaps a reflection of his rigorous scientific methodologies. As our lead into lunchtime, John Bull's (1562-1628) 3 *Dorick Fantasies* allowed us to explore the atmospheric of the high vaulted roof of our venue, the slow passing note clashing phrases sounding sublime. Technique wise, we were also learning to feel the phrasing of these pieces which in the main do not follow the placing of the bar lines. John Bull for part of his career also acted as a spy in the Low Countries for Queen Elizabeth I.

Post lunch we achieved a first for Pam in Matthias Maute's (1963-) *Oi Dortn* with over half the group playing either bass, great bass or contra bass. Quite a substantial foundation.

The dramatic motet *Auf Dem Gebirge* by Heinrich Schütz (1558-1672) provided the centrepiece of the afternoon and included intense dissonances caused by the contrapuntal motion of voices. Again Pam taking us through placement of where to breathe for each part and attention to phrasing enhanced the climactic nature of the various phrases. The afternoon was rounded off with Joshua arranged by Paul Richards, in which the bass section again had significant exercise.

Overall, a most enjoyable day. We had substantial learnings in enhancing our precision to improve the quality of playing and consequently our subsequent musical performance.