

BRANCH REPORTS SUMMER 2015

BIRMINGHAM

Our conductors have continued to direct a varied programme of pieces chosen from different epochs and styles. Our music has ranged from the sublime beauty of Palestrina to one modern work which requires the players to hum as they are playing. The resulting “bagpipe” was most effective.

Our Christmas meeting at the beginning of December was a most convivial and entertaining afternoon. We played a range of Christmas music and enjoyed a splendid buffet during the mid-meeting break. One of our seasonal pieces was *Puer Natus Est* by Cristóbal de Morales. This was most ably conducted by David Winfield, who is probably the youngest conductor to work with us.

Our programme continues with the members’ concert and play through in July. There is always a good choice of music at our meetings, so do come and join us at Cotteridge Friends’ Meeting House on the first Saturday of the month.

EAST BERKSHIRE

Excitement and fascination grew within the branch last autumn when we were informed by our Musical Director Andrew Challenger, that he was going to a recorder event in Japan. The event was The Challenger Festival in Yokohama which featured several Japanese groups mostly under the direction of Minoru Yoshizawa. Each group had prepared a Challenger recorder piece - ten in all. On the Saturday there was a workshop during which Andrew offered advice to the different groups. All the players then came together to work on a new piece - *Patchwork*. After rehearsals on Sunday morning, the players each performed their piece to an audience in an afternoon concert, concluding with a massed performance of *Patchwork* with more than two hundred players under Andrew’s direction. The jacket, with the “happy” motive on the back (as in the photograph) was presented to Andrew at the Saturday *Patchwork* rehearsal.

East Berks Branch gave *Patchwork* its first British outing in January and thoroughly enjoyed playing through its different themes and rhythms very successfully under the guidance of its composer.

ESSEX

We were pleased to welcome Ross Winters to our February meeting as our visiting conductor for this year. Ross selected music from our branch library and suggested one or two additional pieces that we might like to purchase. He supplemented this with music of his own giving a range of music which led to an enjoyable afternoon. A highlight was Colin Hand's *In Nomine* 8, which was a new piece to us, and we enjoyed having a go at the more difficult Geminiani *Concerto Grosso Op. 3 No.4*.

In March we presented SRP Long Service certificates to members who have been involved in running the branch for 25 years or more – in some cases since the branch was formed in 1978. Congratulations to Christine Minns, Marion Panzetta, Madeline Seviour and Roy and Margaret Simons.

Naomi Okuda Wooderson was guest conductor for our playing day in April. It was a day of intensive study of three works from the baroque period – a minuet and a sarabande by Handel and a giga by Corelli. The music was not technically difficult – not having to cope with virtuoso semi-quavers enabled us to concentrate on posture, breathing, tone and understanding the structure of the music. Naomi has a wonderful repertoire of analogies – both verbal and physical – to explain the effect she asks for, such as walking through water and falling leaves. This produced a satisfyingly musical

performance. The day ended with a short unaccompanied recital by Naomi – a piece from *The Bird Fancyer's Delight* on sopranino and van Eyck's *English Nightingale* on descant, followed by more van Eyck on the voice flute. Bach on the treble and Boismortier on bass concluded the recital. A most satisfying and enjoyable day.

LEICESTER

In March we had the rare treat of experiencing a playing day with Evelyn Nallen. Amongst other delights, we had a fascinating demonstration of amplified recorders of different sizes, using an effects box to create an amazing array of beautiful and unusual sounds. This gave us an insight into what can be achieved by the recorder when imaginative amplification is used. Also on the day we played works by Handel and Dom Murray, but we also had tremendous fun with Cole Porter's *Under my Skin*. In addition to this we really enjoyed a native American song in which we were encouraged to practise our flutter tonguing and experiment with our ability to play and hum simultaneously. Needless to say we're working on it!

ROXBURGH

Roxburgh SRP maybe one of the smallest SRP groups and may be situated in quite a remote part of the country but we can pack a punch when it comes to our Recorders in the Borders days we have had for the past two years.

In February Eccles Village Hall, near Kelso, was ringing with the sound of thirty members enjoying making music together. Some members had travelled as far afield as Glasgow, Edinburgh and Newcastle. This year's theme was a 'Bonsor Day' in memory of Brian Bonsor who sadly died in 2011. His wife Mary took us through some of Brian's wonderful compositions and arrangements. We were put in the appropriate mood by playing some jolly *Happy Days*, played *Tig*, danced the *Soft Shoe Shuffle* (with genuine dance sounds made with wood and sandpaper made by Mary's father!), Celebration Marched, Morris danced and gavotted our way through the day. However the sound of the tenors playing Faure's *Cantique de Jean Racine* was the ultimate breath-taking piece (if possible whilst playing a recorder!). We finished quite appropriately with *Dusk* by Cecil Armstrong Gibbs.

We were ably accompanied on the keyboard by our own recorder player Molly Pringle. Mary said that Brian was rather reticent to conduct his own arrangements during his lifetime as he had exceptionally high standards and she was afraid she would not do them justice but there were no worries on that score. I am sure he would have been very pleased to see we were keeping his works alive 'in the Borders'. The general opinion was that event should be repeated.

The Brian Bonsor CD called 'Bravo Bonsor' is still available from national office if members would like to enjoy more of his wonderful music.

SHEFFIELD

Our monthly meetings, which continue to be held at St. John's Church Hall in the south of Sheffield, are being supplemented this season by three additional Playing Days, mostly under the batons of different guest conductors as we no longer have a resident conductor. Many thanks must go to our committee for organising all this. Ian Chesters, Moira Usher, Sheila Richards, Adam Dopadlik, Helen Hooker, Evelyn Nallen, Caroline Jones, Richard Lindsay, Sandra Foxall, Margaret Shearing and David Scruby have all kindly agreed to give their time to come to Sheffield from far and wide. The programme of music we play covers a diverse range, too large to mention here in detail.

However, we are also trying to encourage some local conducting talent. One member took our December meeting, and at the AGM back in the autumn several of us who had previously attended Moira Usher's conducting day were prevailed upon to have a go with the baton again after the formal business was over. I personally approached this task with a certain amount of trepidation, wondering if I could remember all the things Moira had taught us. In fact the most difficult thing turned out to be getting hold of sufficient copies of the music! Rather than select something from the branch Library, I had set my heart on doing the delightful Divertimento in B flat by Guiseppe San Martino as it is relatively easy, and I knew the score well, for we often play it in a small local consort. But I then realized that whilst it was written before 1750, it was arranged for recorders by Hans Ulrich Staeps and thus probably still under copyright. I contacted the publishers in Vienna to check this out. They confirmed it was, but did offer to sell me sufficient copies at an extortionate price! In the end, I borrowed a second set of parts and one other member bought a third set so we managed by sharing these three copies. After that the actual conducting was a bit of a doddlewell, sort of. I think I will hang on to the day job!

December marked a milestone for one of our members, Christine Eyre, who reached her ninetieth birthday. Although no longer in the best of health, she was nonetheless determined to come to the rehearsal and we celebrated the occasion with a large birthday cake. Sadly, her health continued to decline and she died a few weeks later. A short obituary is printed elsewhere in the Magazine. Chris was not only a founder member of the branch but served as a member of the branch committee from 1983, and acted as Treasurer from 1989 to 2008. As mentioned elsewhere, she was also heavily involved in running the Recorder Summer School for many years, and as if that was not enough, or perhaps because she liked playing as much as administration, she also ran a Thursday afternoon playing group at her home, of which I was a member. She had many friends, both in the recorder world and beyond, and will be much missed.

Jill Lauriston

SUFFOLK

Ramblings..... Well, Philip Thorby's visit in November was *fantastic!* We learned so much - how can one person get so much information from 8 bars of music? We only did two pieces the whole afternoon but it was so interesting we could happily have stayed for more. And in January we had Chris Borrett, who is a professional bass-baritone singer. He sings with the Monteverdi Choir under John Eliot Gardiner - three members sing in a local choir which Chris conducts. Moira arranged half a dozen pieces for us to play as a backing group for him and he did a solo with Alan Bullard accompanying on the keyboard - thank you Alan! We are unusual it seems in that the committee choose the music and the visiting conductors - it makes for such an exciting variety during the year and means Moira has to do some early stuff - it's good for her soul we think!

We have Evelyn Nallen coming in June for the afternoon, and Helen Hooker joining Moira for our playing day in September. Do come - what's not to like??

Anna Tender