

SRP BRANCH REPORTS – WINTER 2014

DORSET

Month by month visiting conductors have set before us a wide variety of music from the vast treasure trove of the recorder repertoire. We have explored Renaissance gems, luxuriated in an afternoon devoted to Baroque music, been accompanied by guitar, paid tributes to Paul Clark, tackled contemporary pieces, and so much more.

“Now for something different” could have been the title of our Christmas 2013 meeting, although it was programmed as a DIY afternoon without a visiting conductor. Seven players responded to a request to conduct one or two items, providing between them an eclectic programme of pieces from Holborne to Andrew Lloyd Webber. Players needed no encouragement to decorate their music stands, some also sporting Father Christmas hats and even reindeer antlers. Chairman Sue brought cake for tea which, with the twinkling lights from the meeting hall Christmas tree, made for a festive and happy afternoon.

Jack Brothwell, as our Pastoral Visitor, made his first visit to Dorset branch in March 2014. In honour of the occasion Jack had arranged Thomas Hardy’s humorous short story *Absentmindedness in the Parish Choir* for narrator and recorder ensemble. Jacky Brothwell read the story of the title while we played Dorset folk songs under Jack’s direction. We are looking forward to Jack’s return visit in April next year to lead our Playing Day.

Apart from their musical abilities, many of our players are gardeners and cooks as well. On two occasions a trading table in the tea break has displayed the dexterity of their green fingers and expertise in baking and making preserves. Similar events are planned, as are quizzes for those who like a cerebral challenge.

If you are visiting Dorset do join us for an afternoon’s playing. We meet at the URC Hall in Blandford Forum on the second Saturday of each month, except August.

DURHAM

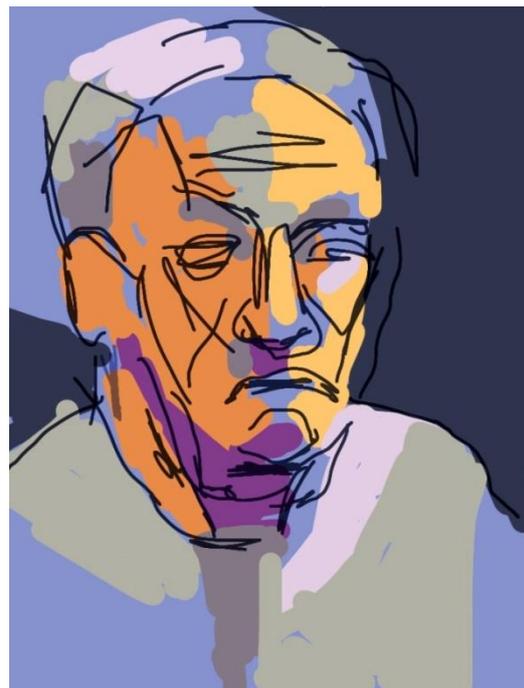
Durham branch of the Society of Recorder Players has continued to flourish in 2013-14, and has moved to a larger hall in its regular venue, Antioch House in the heart of Durham City, in order to accommodate larger numbers at its meetings. Players from Durham and its area, as well as many from Newcastle-upon-Tyne and some from Cleveland, have learned and achieved much under the firm but sympathetic and humorous direction of the branch’s musical director, Mary Tyers, and have benefited also from the conducting of Briony Watkinson, who brings a new perspective and a new musical flavour to the ensemble. The convivial atmosphere, which makes attendance a real pleasure, owes much to Andy Phipps’s organisation of the hall and the excellent refreshments; for the spectacular cakes which form the climax of them, the branch is very grateful for Julie Phipps’s tireless baking. Julie is also the branch’s auditor and her work, together with that of the treasurer, Sarah Curtis, means that the branch has financial confidence when embarking on its activities. Those activities have included this year a Christmas playing day led by Helen Hooker and well attended in festive style; and a demanding but illuminating workshop on Baroque ornamentation led by Evelyn Nallen, whose lecturing skills equal her musical skills. In the coming year, the branch looks forward not only to its regular meetings conducted by Mary Tyers, together with Briony Watkinson and Joan Reeve, but also to a playing day in February led by Sandra Foxall and devoted to the music of Byrd and Lassus, and a workshop on Tudor Music led by Moira Usher, whose return to the branch is eagerly anticipated. We hope that as many recorder-players as possible will join us for these or for any of our meetings.

EAST BERKS

This branch of the SRP started officially in 1993/94 although there had been several small meetings before until we got to the required number of members. So we are 21 years old!

To celebrate, members have been sitting for their portraits at a Class organised by Maidenhead Painting Club. This means that we have approximately 10 portraits, all different, of each member who sat. Different artists used different media - water colour, pastel, oils, charcoal - and iPad.

We showed them to all members at the first meeting of the new season in September. Here are some of the iPad drawings. The artist is Mark Rhymes and he has given permission for them to be published.



LEICESTER

The group continues to thrive with an active membership of 34 players regularly rehearsing at our fortnightly meetings. Two one-to-a-part workshops, which we introduced for the first time last year, have been very successful at developing our playing and will definitely be part of our schedule in future. A Playing Day in April led by Chris Burgess was also a great success, bringing plenty to challenge us and lots of new music to enjoy. A concert at a local church was enjoyed by all, as was the opportunity to introduce the instruments of the recorder family and a wide range of music to children at a local primary school.

MACCLESFIELD

The branch played their first concert on 27 July 2014 to a very receptive and delighted audience of almost 80 people in St. Peter's Church, Prestbury, Cheshire, as part of the summer music series. The 45 minute recital in aid of church funds and a charity featured 16th century dances by Praetorius, Maineri and Dowland, Handel's *Fireworks Music*, excerpts from Purcell's *Dioclesian* and a Gabrieli Canzona. The group played with 2 descants, 4 trebles, 4 tenors and 2 basses, but also performed James Hook's 2nd Terzetto as trio with 2 descants and a treble and Bach's *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring* as a quintet with 1 descant, 2 trebles, one playing the tenor 1 part, tenor and bass. You can see clips and read press coverage on the branch website. The concert led to various invitations to play at further charity events. The first took place on 21 September when the branch performed three sessions of approx. 10-15 minutes duration each during a Sunday Afternoon Tea at the Village Hall in Prestbury, Cheshire. Music included pieces by Holborne, Purcell, *Song of Vilja* by Lehar, the Hornpipe from Handel's *Water Music* and traditional English folksongs, such as *The Lark in the Clear Air* and *The Oak and the Ash*, beautifully arranged for recorder by Richard Foxcroft, one of the branch members, who played the descant part himself. Work on a new Christmas programme is now underway with one public performance already scheduled at the Unitarian Chapel in Macclesfield on 19 December.

NUNEATON

We welcomed Alan Perkins as guest conductor in September with a programme of his own arrangements. The moving *Ave Verum Corpus* by Mozart was followed by Peter Warlock's rhythmical *Balulalow*. *The Hen's March O'er the Midden*, a jaunty traditional Scottish tune, lightened the mood, followed by more Mozart, with Alan's transcription of Theme and (Some) Variations from Serenade for 13 Wind Instruments, K.361. The second part of the afternoon was devoted to two *Nunc Dimittis* settings, the first *An Evening Canticle*, by Alan, and the second from Evening Service by Henry Purcell. There was an exuberant end to the meeting with *March of the Tin Soldiers*, Op. 123 by Leon Jessel, which was the signature tune to *Toytown*, a children's radio programme broadcast during the 1950s.

PETERBOROUGH

Looking back to before our summer break, we had an exciting new venture for the group, accepting an invitation to play at the Oundle Fringe Festival. This excellent event showcases a variety of local performers, in informal settings. We played in conjunction with the Food Festival in the bustling market place, at least we were assured of a large audience! Our programme was based on our "ancient to modern" repertoire that we worked up for our summer performances. The weather threatened but thankfully was (relatively!) kind to us. For more about Oundle fringe see <http://www.oundlefringe.org/>

A very enjoyable and successful day, we certainly attracted some interest, and hope to welcome some new players as a result. We were also invited back for a similar pre-Christmas event.

As always, new members and visitors are always welcome at our regular playing sessions in Peterborough.

SUFFOLK

Ramblings..... As I write we've just had our playing day. Marg Hall flew all the way down from Edinburgh (the day after the referendum, so she didn't need a passport) to join Moira for the day - what fun! As usual we had a real mix of styles from Palestrina to Marg's own swing-style piece, via *Keskan* (from the Truro Festival) and Bach. We also had 17 bass instruments including Greats and Contras - wow! Who could ask for more? Marg is gentle and friendly and we're very grateful that she came such a long way - it was a great day. Back in June John Allen came again for our annual dose of early music (plus the odd modern one) which counterbalances Moira's mild allergy to pre 1550 music, though she is getting better at it. She even ventured into unbarred territory at one meeting. Yes, really!

WALES



This is what we got up to at the SRP Wales Summer School, with our truly magical tutor Andrew Collis, and gracious Paradise Farmhouse hosts John and Gloria Howard. You'll be relieved to know that we're now all safely back on the ground! Many thanks to Trevor Waller, photographer extraordinaire and husband of SRPW member Julie Waller, who concocted this amazing image.

The SRP Wales Summer School accommodates twenty students, all of whom are expected to play at least descant, treble, tenor and bass, and to be able to hold their part in intermediate level music. We also had two great basses and two contras this year, so were able to field 4' and 8' choirs in *Canzon Primi Toni* in 10 parts by Giovanni Gabrieli. We also studied Zielenski's *Magnificat*, Bach's cantata *Komm Jesu Komm* and Vaughan Williams' *Suite for Pipes*, and split up into quintets to study Michael East fantasias.

I think we all found the music fabulous although hard work, but relaxed each evening with memorable meals out - at Westonbury Mill Water Garden, Shobdon Airfield, and the gorgeous black and white village of Pembridge. Then of course there was that flight on the giant recorder...