

Conducted by Andrew Challenger.

It was very good of Andrew to step into the breach at terribly short notice after Somerset branch heard from Chris Burgess that his illness would prevent his being able to conduct the branch for the day. We send our sincere wishes to Chris for a speedy recovery and hope to see him soon.

However, our 40<sup>th</sup> birthday was going to go ahead as Andrew had saved the day. I had looked back over copious amounts of paperwork from my predecessor in the secretarial position, Sheila Dickens, and discovered that the earliest mention of Somerset being an SRP was 1973. Prior to this it had been the *South Somerset Recorder Group*, still emblazoned on much of our library music. 2 original members still attend - Mary Green frequently conducts the branch and has been made a life member due to her stalwart work on the committee, and Rosemary Berry declares that she was only a young girl at the time, and the youngest in the group. Rosemary was able to attend the 'birthday party' but sadly Mary was taken ill, so unable to join us. (and I know that she was very much looking forward to the day) .

So with the balloons blown up (thanks Gill and Sue), the tables and chairs out, Diana and Felicity doing a sterling job to get the food organised, we were ready to begin our day. We began with coffee - a great idea! - and reminiscences, and then Andrew called us to order.

He began the day by teaching us a simple 3 part round (no dots!!!) Having mastered it in one key, we then went on to learn it in another - and could have carried on all day changing from key to key, but some people were anxious to have some music to look at. So we began with a fugue from *JS Bach's 'Art of the fugue'*. It was a good piece to play us in, and after hard work from Andrew we managed to give a credible performance. Staying in 4 parts we then moved back a few years to *Obrecht*, playing his **le Draghe de Mutse Clutse**. With the absence of Dutch speakers we imagined what the title might mean. There were some tricky sections, and with Andrew's patience we played it rather well - hopefully Obrecht would have enjoyed the performance. A quick coffee break and stretch of legs before moving on to *Heinrich Isaac's A la Bataglia*. During this we were encouraged to play harshly, as if at a battle. The overall effect was quite exciting once we had ironed out the problems with the printed score. Finally for the morning session we moved to the 21<sup>st</sup> century and *Raymond Harvey's Suite number 5 - in Sherwood Forest*. Sadly we didn't have time to play all of the movements, but did tackle 4 of them, and I feel that it would be good to get a copy for the branch library and have a go at playing the remaining movements. We finished on a sad note with Robin dying, but it didn't null our appetite for the amazing 'bring and share' lunch. Everyone had worked very hard to bring a wonderful dish, but I do think that Diana's summer pudding was excellent! (personal view...)

After an excellent lunch we resumed to play the highlight of the day's music, our especially commissioned piece **A Flourish** by *Andrew Challenger* himself. There were some very tricky quaver passages in all parts - and although Andrew had taken the precaution to write a few

slightly simpler 'alternative parts', everyone attempted the main part. Excellent finger practice! The great bass and contra basses were kept very busy - a good thing in all music. Luckily it is a 2 choir piece, which means that whilst one choir were being challenged by the quavers, the other choir was either resting or playing beautiful, gentle harmonies. We worked on this piece for most of the first part of the afternoon, and the final result was very impressive - obviously a few more weeks practicing quavers would help the clarity, but the overall effect was superb and very fitting for the occasion. Very exciting, vibrant and happy music.

Now the cake cutting - Vivien had made a wonderful anniversary cake, iced with the SRP logo (good job it hasn't just been changed!), and displayed to excellent effect. We have been told about the cake for some time as Vivien has been adding various amounts of alcohol to the mixture - and it proved to be just as good as she had described. For those who didn't like fruit cake (is there anyone??), which was also well presented. To a fanfare the cake was fittingly cut by Vivien and our chairperson - Miriam. To wash the cake down we had various home-made fruit juices - what a resourceful branch we are!

Then the raffle followed - with lots of prizes won by a number of members and visitors, and the final work of the afternoon was tackled - a **Canzon Prima** by the little known Venetian composer, *Pruilli*.

So down with the balloons, all the washing up and putting away of furniture to restore our hall to its normal state, and Andrew whisked off to catch a train, but we were all still humming bits of the wonderful music we had played all day. So, many, many thanks to all who made the anniversary a success, and particularly to Andrew for both composing the wonderful music (which will be played many times in the future at the branch) and for taking over at very short notice. Now to another 40 years of thriving recorder playing in Somerset!