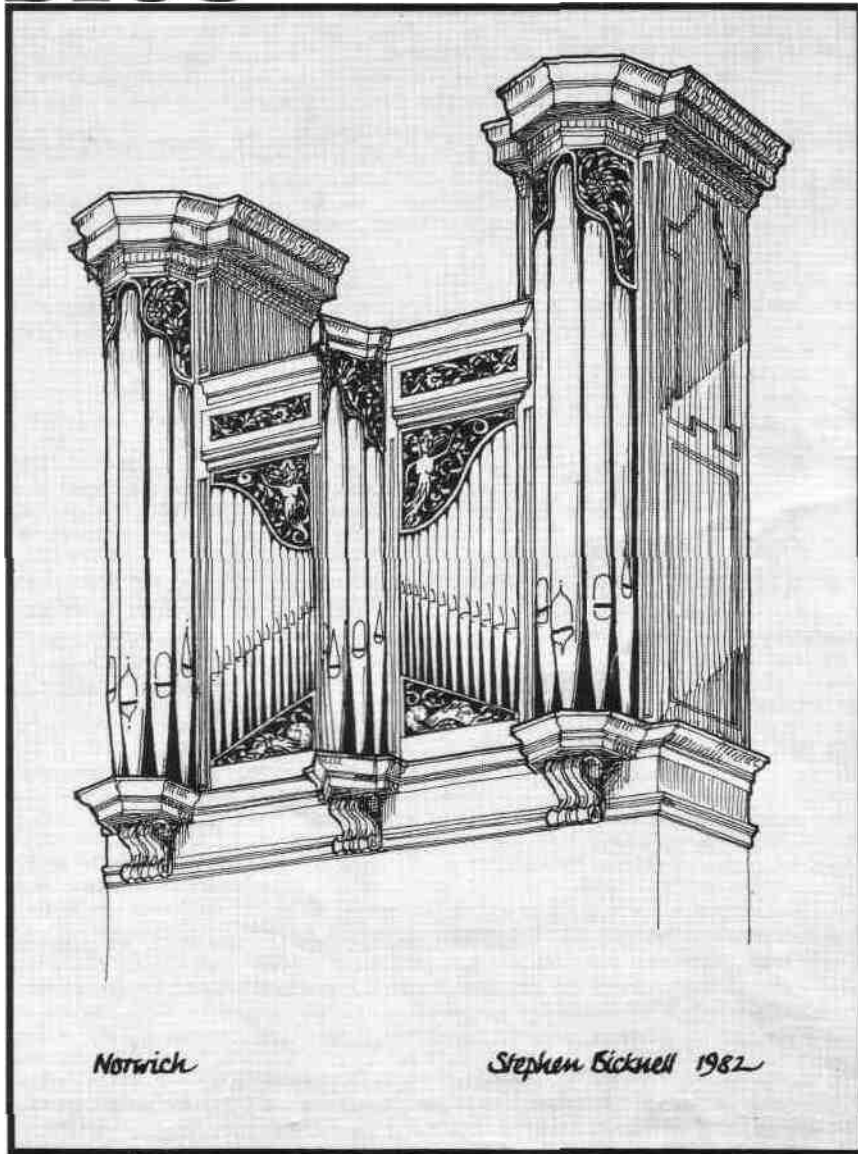


BIOS



VOLUME SEVEN, No. 1 (JANUARY 1983)

EDITORIAL

'Leave well alone' is a motto which (translated into a suitably ancient language) a conservation society might be expected to make its own with enthusiasm. As a motto, there is, indeed, something to be said for it: it underlines the principal concern of all conservers - that what is good should be left alone, and that we should not seek to 'improve' it. Enough has happened over the last 150 years for all who care for fine organs to sympathise thoroughly with the sentiment. But how does this work in practice? Can we turn a motto into a policy?

The answer is almost certainly in the negative. There are occasions when fidgeting organists attempt to have work done to organs which are in the best of health and will play for many years without further attention. On the whole, however, the prospect of alteration arises when mechanical failure or tonal irregularity make some attention inevitable. Under these circumstances 'leave well alone' hardly answers the case.

There is a school of thought - much to be commended for its caution - which says that when such a situation arises, the absolute minimum of work necessary should be put in hand. All alterations should be eschewed, the pipes merely washed and set on speech again, and a new action installed. The last proposal underlines the weakness of this approach. Occasionally we are fortunate enough to be dealing with the restoration of a surviving tracker organ, but in so many cases, the existing action is non-mechanical (probably post-dating the chests and pipes) and has to be replaced entirely. Can the work really be called restoration when an action is replaced - even if the tonal scheme is scrupulously preserved? Is it truly restoration when one is simply preserving an unsatisfactory status quo in which an organ originally on tracker, Barker Lever, or tubular pneumatic action continues to be actioned with something other than the original type? The motive is laudable (and infinitely preferable to ill-thought-out schemes for a total rehashing of the instrument) but how should we view such stalling operations?

It is an approach which most great builders of the past would have found bizarre. They endorsed the idea of progress, and so would have 'found it strange to think that an organ builder would have nothing to add in an instrument last worked on - say - fifty years earlier. Schnitger, Cliquot, Hill, and all the best builders in the period before the romantic movement and technological revolution overwhelmed the organ respected the best work of their predecessors, but they usually felt themselves able to improve upon it. Note, the 'best work' of their predecessors. Does that suggest part of our problem today? Perhaps we remain uncertain what really is the best work of previous generations and so tend to rush to the protection of anything that is old, just to be on the safe side. Certainly, our ignorance about organ builders of the past is frequently lamentable, and our caution derives partly from a lack of confidence as to how we ought to cope with these puzzling survivals, and how we may evaluate them. We are content to preserve the status quo even though we sense it is not entirely satisfactory, because we lack the knowledge needed to effect a proper restoration and the resources to make the right decisions concerning it.

We trust that all this doesn't sound too radical to BIOS members! No doubt in our present circumstances caution is normally the best policy, though we ought now to be a little more (justifiably) confident than we were 10 or 15 years ago in assessing old instruments. But it is worth mulling these things over from time to time if only to guard ourselves from complacency, and from the danger that certain organs will never be satisfactorily dealt with: neither restored nor properly rebuilt, they will linger in a sort of musical no-man's-land because no one has the courage to make a decision, or the resources to demonstrate that it is the right one. What do members think?

Redundant Organs

The German Church, Ritson Road, Dalston, E8 Hill & Son 1901. Divided on west gallery.

Stencilled patterns on pipes.

Specification Great 8.8.4.2.8
Swell 16.8.8.8.8.4.III.8.8
Choir 8.8.4.8

Pedal 16.16.8 Action Not specified by informant

Casework No details provided, but suggestion of A.G.Hill inspiration Dimensions
Height around 10' - no further details given Contact The German Pastor of the Church, at the above address

Bromsgrove Methodist Church, New Road, Bromsgrove

Organ by W.J.Bird, built as one manual c1910. Swell and extra Pedal stop added 1932.

Specification Great 8.8.8.8.4.4.2
Swell 8.8.8.4.4.8
Pedal 16.16.101.8

Action Mechanical to keys & stops, pneumatic to pedals Dimensions 15' high x 11'6" wide x 10' deep Casework No details Contact

The July 1982 issue of this journal contained details of the 1897 Hill organ in St. Ninian's, Leith, Edinburgh which was redundant. We understand that this instrument is to be re-housed in St. Andrew's Garrison Church, Aidershofc. No details are available of what is planned, though-it is good to hear that the Hill will replace an electronic: one sometimes wishes that pipe organ builders were as ready to advertise instances of pipe organs replacing electronics (of which there must be hundreds) as the electronic manufacturers are ready to advertise the displacement of pipes .

Briefly We have received an enquiry from the Librarian of King's College, London, to ask whether we can furnish any information about an organ built by Jehmlich of Dresden for the famous soprano, Jenny Lind. This apparently was made sometime after 1866, and Jehmlich's enquiry is whether the instrument is known to survive anywhere in the British Isles. Any member who can help is asked to contact the Secretary.

The Organ Historical Trust of Australia (OHTA) held its Fifth Annual Conference in Melbourne at the end of August last year. A large number of organs were visited in the course of 3 days, including instruments by T.C.Lewis, John Courcelle, F.W.Nicholson, Merklin & Cie., Alfred Fuller, and George Fincham - the two latter builders both carrying on business in Melbourne during the last century. Organ builders from Australia and New Zealand spoke about authentic practices in the restoration of historic organs, and the conference visited two new imported organs - the Casavant instrument in Melbourne Concert Hall, and the organ by Jurgen Ahrend in the Robert Blackwell Hall, Monash University. Our best wishes go to our Australian sister society: after Brittany, who knows ? - we may fly BIOS to Australia one of these days !

Under Threat: Barrow Hill

Sometimes an organ is 'under threat' not on account of any scheme to eject or rebuild it, but because its condition disguises its inherent interest and value. We recently received a letter from Mr. Victor Nixon of Staveley concerning an organ which seems to come into this category.

The organ stands in the small church of St. Andrew, Barrow Hill, between Chesterfield and Staveley, in Derbyshire. Mr. Nixon became organist in 1975, and the organ was then still hand-blown. It was clear that the instrument was of some age, and was in what Mr. Nixon describes as "a terrible condition"; all that was known about it was that it had previously stood in Barrow Hill School, and that a Pedal 8' flute had been added by Bower & Dunn of Sheffield in 1917. The specification is as follows:

Great Organ		Swell Organ		Pedal Organ	
Open Diapason	8	Double Diapason	16	Bourdon	16
Stop Diapason	8	Open Diapason	8	Pedal Flute	8
Keraulophon	8	Stop Diapason	8		
Principal	4	Principal	4	3 couplers	
Flute	4	Oboe	8		
Fifteenth	2				

The action is tracker, except for the Pedal Flute which is pneumatically operated.

At the time of his original letter, Mr. Nixon knew nothing more about the organ's history. Shortly afterwards, however, he wrote again, having discovered the following report in the Derbyshire Times for October 4th, 1856; it refers to the (then) new Barrow Hill School:

"The building consists of a lecture room - to be used as the church - it is provided with an organ expressly for the building by Mr. Holt of Leeds at a cost of £200."

It would seem, then, that this is the organ, now in a parlous state, in St. Andrew's Church. Mr. Nixon explains that the likelihood of a small community finding the money to restore the instrument adequately is remote and asks for advice; he adds that members of BIOS would be welcome to visit the organ.

The saga of Reading Town Hall and its organ organ goes on. The first thing to report is that a symposium, "The Organ in Reading Town Hall", has appeared, published by the Berkshire Organists' Association and available from them (price £2.95) at: 39 Hudson Road, Woodley, Reading, RG5 4EN. It is edited by Peter Marr, is amply illustrated, and includes contributions by Cecil Clutton, Nicholas Thistlethwaite, Michael Woodward, Martyn Reason, Eric Arnold, Gordon Spriggs, Catherine Ennis, Alan Fellgett, and Francis Jackson. The instrument is fully described in technical terms, its history is recorded, the acoustics of the Hall are scientifically analysed; there are appreciations of the organ by players, and articles on Henry Willis, the case of the organ, etc. etc.

It is to be hoped that the publication of this volume will make a substantial contribution to the cause of those who oppose plans to remodel the Hall and re-site the organ. Some years ago, proposals to demolish the Hall and dispose of the Willis organ were defeated; now the Borough Council is considering a scheme to divide the Hall at existing balcony level with a mezzanine floor. The organ, it is suggested, could be re-sited in the new, upper Hall. In fact, this would raise it in such a way that it was close to the ceiling - and who can say what it would sound like in a totally new acoustic? This can only be grossly detrimental to the organ, and BIOS has given notice to the Secretary of State that it wishes to lodge an objection if Listed Building Consent is sought for such a scheme.

Miscellanea C3)

COVER STORY . . .

The organ on the cover of this issue of the Reporter stands in the Old Meeting House, Colegate, Norwich. The instrument is not well known, and so this seems a useful opportunity to set down a few thoughts about its history.

First, although the records of the church date back to its foundation in 1635, they are silent on the subject of the organ until 1760, when a payment is made for painting and gilding it (1). Thus we do not know when the organ arrived, though of course in the 17th or early 18th centuries it would be surprising to find an organ in a non-conformist church. Tradition states that the organ comes from Norwich Cathedral, and indeed there is no doubt that case and front pipes are 17th century; it is also clear from the mouldings and panelling detail on the back of the case, and from the absence of old material below the present impost, that it is the chaire case from a double organ. The instrument that now stands inside the case is of later date, though historically interesting in its own right. It has been attributed to Renatus Harris (2) though the oldest pipework inside the organ would not appear to date from before the late 18th century at the earliest.

Whatever the truth behind the Norwich Cathedral legend, the theory that the case is specifically from the George Dallam organ of 1664 does not bear examination (3). Renatus Harris rebuilt this organ in c.1689, and the accounts for his work make it clear that the cases were extended but not replaced (4). The chaire case had the implied receding perspective beloved of the Dailam family, and indeed it still looked like a Dallam case after Salvin's drastic recasting in the gothick style in 1834. The chaire case survived the fire of 1939, and now stands in the King Edward VI Grammar School in Norwich. Herbert Norman has kindly confirmed that it still contains some 17th century woodwork, though rather mutilated.

What, then, is the date and provenance of the Meeting House organ? There remains the possibility that it is part of another organ from Norwich Cathedral: perhaps the temporary instrument of 1661 (5) or even a relic from before the Civil War. To date it accurately, a digression is now necessary.

In the agreement dated July 5th 1666 for the building of a new organ in Worcester Cathedral, Thomas Harris states that the pipework shall have the dimensions of

"8in. diameter in the 10ft. pipe, and 4in. diameter in a pipe of 5ft. ..." (6)

The chaire case from Salisbury, where Thomas Harris worked in 1662-3 survives at Parkend in the Forest of Dean. There the largest of the original front pipes conforms to Harris' description, having a speaking length of five feet from languid to pipe top, and a scale of four inches. At Norwich, the largest pipe in the front is exactly the same, though a small piece has been soldered onto the top of the pipe and its former length is thus not certain.

At Parkend the 5ft bottom note is marked C, corresponding to the bottom note of a C keyboard. Obviously, a five-foot pipe would not play a C that we would recognise today, and the pitch of the organ was nominally F. Thus the Salisbury organ, in common with many church organs built in Britain before 1670, automatically transposed down a fifth. This curious feature was once widespread in Europe, and is described by Schlick (7) The confusion caused by such an arrangement is apparent in organ parts of 17th century English choral music, and in many early organ contracts (8).

At Norwich, no pipe-makers' marks are visible under the thick layers of paint and gilding, but the fact that the dimensions of the largest pipe conform exactly to Thomas Harris' quoted standard suggests that case and front pipes almost certainly belong to a transposing organ, and thus are unlikely to date from later than 1670. The pipes themselves, as at Parkend, are of plain metal, and have varied mouths.

At Parkend painted scroll decoration is still visible under the present 'gold' finish: at Norwich there is so much modern paint that it is impossible to see what the original finish may have been. The case itself has been painted bright blue in recent years: the effect of this is indescribable.

It would be tempting to ascribe the organ to a member of the Harris / Dallam clan, but dangerous, for we do not know how many other builders may have been working to the same standards of pitch and scaling. One thing is clear: that the organ belongs to a brief transitional period. All early English organ cases, and all the cases in France by members of the Dallam family between 1642 and 1690, rely on a stout framed construction, in which the front, sides, and back are all tenoned into square or rectangular section corner posts and secured with dowels. After 1660 in England it is more common to find that front, sides and back are pre-assembled units of panelled construction, merely located with dowels, and held in place by the framing of the tower cornices. All Bernard Smith and Renatus Harris cases are of this latter type. The Meeting House organ does not have structural corner posts, but interestingly the joint of front and side panelling is disguised as a square-section member, complete with channelled decoration down its length. This indicates a date either very shortly before the Commonwealth or very soon after 1660.

The high quality of the joinery and the fine carving in the case tend to weigh against Thomas Harris himself as a possible builder. The main case at Gloucester, and the chaire case from Worcester, now at Mistley, are not well made. Although at Gloucester a valiant effort was made to copy features from the pre-Commonwealth chaire case, both examples are roughly executed and bumpy in outline, and the carving at Mistley is very unimaginative. High quality of joinery and carving do, however, tend to point to Robert Dallam as a possible builder. His domination of English organ building in the 1620's and 30's was complete, and one suspects that the very high standards that he demanded go a long way to explaining his success. Certainly there was no comparable figure of his generation, and no-one else with influence and contracts covering the entire kingdom. In the Meeting House organ this sort of quality is illustrated in the fine detail of the mouldings, though of course they are naive by strictly Classical standards. The presence of architrave and frieze over the flats, though there are only cornices over the towers, is similar to other Dallam cases. The very good figure carving in the pipe shades is also notable; though it bears no comparison with the virtuoso work of Gibbons and his followers, it is nevertheless exuberant and soundly executed. The strong nautical motif - dolphins below and curious mer-angels above, blowing shell trumpets - may have had a particular significance in the organ's original home. Particularly interesting is the treatment of the awkwardly shaped carving over the centre tower, which is not glued up out of several pieces, but apparently carved out of two solid blocks of oak. If this is indeed a Robert Dallam case, then it can be dated between c.1620 and 1665. Certainly the evidence that it once housed a transposing organ suggests that it cannot be later than c.1670, and its accomplished pre-Classical style and transitional construction date it after 1630.

But where does the case come from? The answer to this question is obscured by the silence of the Meeting House records. If it was known when the organ arrived it would be easier to guess at the place from which it came. As yet the solitary date of 1760, when it was painted and gilded, suggests nothing that could help to unravel the mystery of its provenance and builder.

Stephen Bicknell NOTES

- (1) Information kindly provided by the City of Norwich Architects Department, whose help in preparing these notes has been invaluable.
(2) Organ vol XLIII, pp 199-201 (3) *ibid.* (4) Organ vol XIV, p 67
(5) BIOS Journal 5 p.16 (6) *ibid.* p 21 (7) Spiegel der Orgelmacher... (1511) (8) Copiously illustrated in J. Bunker Dark's Transposition in Seventeenth Century English Organ Accompaniments and the Transposing Organ (Detroit,197^)

Children, and of the Sons of the clergy - the instrument is not found to be sufficiently powerful. By adding another set of *pedal pipes*, two *open diapasons*, a *principal*, a *trumpet*, and an octave *clarion*, to the great organ, the majesty and dignity of the instrument will be so increased, as to render it superior to any organ in Europe; - the Cathedral being so favourable to sound. All foreign organists, who have played upon the instrument, pronounce it (for the size) the finest, as to quality of tone, which they have met with.

There are other accounts of this instrument in the Gentleman's Magazine, Monthly Magazine, and Encyclopaedia Britannica. For the above description, we are entitled to a MS. work, entitled, "An Historical Account of the *English Cathedral and Parochial Organs*, from the settlement of *Schmidt* and *Harris* in this Country to the present time: containing also a full Account of the Size of each Organ, the *Number of Stops, Pipes, Builder's Name, Price of Building, Quality of Tone, &c. &c.*; with Biographical Notices of celebrated English Organ Builders, &c." in the possession of Mr. Cooper, the assistant organist of St. Paul's Cathedral. In successive numbers we shall extract from the same source a similar account of the principal Cathedral and parochial organs now in use.

* See a biographical account of this famous artist, in Sir John Hawkins' and Dr. Burney's Histories of Music.

The Christian Remembrancer 1833, pp 430-431

COMMENTS

The reference to a nephew of Smith by the name of Bernard is presumably a mistake, as is the dating of his settlement in this country.

The varied manual compasses would not be regarded as unusual at this period: the Great compass, of course, commences at 16' C.

The curious allusion to the Pedal Pipes speaking only "when operated upon by the feet" refers to the fact that a small number of Pedal "divisions" of the 1820's and 30's could be played from a finger keyboard, as well as from the pedals. An example (no longer connected) survives in the J.C. Bishop organ in St. James' Church, Bermondsey, London.

Conferences

Saturday, September 24th at the Royal College of Organists

Organ, builder, and consultant. This conference, announced in previous issues of the Reporter for March 26th has had to be postponed, owing to circumstances beyond our control: we apologise to members for any inconvenience this may have caused. It will now take place on the last Saturday in September, and will incorporate the society's Annual General Meeting, which we hope will consequently be better attended than has sometimes been the case. We shall be concerned with approaches to organ design, and especially, the relationship of builder and consultant. The day will close with a recital by Patrick Russill.

Saturday, June 18th, in Peterborough and district.

The Rebuilt Organ in Peterborough Cathedral. In the **recent rebuilding** of the organ a conscious decision was made to alter the tonal scheme of the instrument as little as possible. By comparison with other recent cathedral organ rebuilds, this attempt to preserve the character of a great early-twentieth century scheme was unusual. We shall look forward to hearing (and hearing about) the organ. The afternoon will probably include a visit to another local instrument of some celebrity.

April 5th - 9th, in Brittany

Details of this, our residential conference for 1983, were circulated with the last, much-delayed issue of the Reporter. Please return your form without delay if you wish to join the party.

Notes and Queries

Once upon a time, O Best Beloved, there was a cloth merchant of Eastcheap who delighted to play the organ in St. Paul's Cathedral. His especial joy was the dulciana stop, newly added, and so when the tragedies of time left him with no surviving relative save an infant grand-daughter, he had her named 'Dulcianna'.

In due course he made his retirement home at Leatherhead, taking with him Dulcianna, then a maiden of sweet seventeen. At that time, says the chronicler, Snetzler was building his organ there, and the work was inspected daily by the old man, who hoped to be appointed organist. But the snag was young Horace. Horace, a superficially clever musician, shallow and self-centred, was adored by Dulcianna whom secretly he despised. To cut a long story short, when the election of Horace to the post was announced, the old man fell dead with a heart attack, and Dulcianna drowned herself. Horace speedily acquired a new girl-friend, and took her into the church to admire his playing. When she left to go home, the ghost of Dulcianna put her arms round Horace in the old familiar way, and pulled him over the gallery parapet to his doom.

"Dulcianna's Revenge" is an amusing melodrama, but it does raise a query. A Dulciana did not arrive at St. Paul's anyway until 1826, fifteen years before [according to Sperling] (1) a Snetzler of 1750 was moved to Leatherhead from Watford. The storyteller, whoever he may have been, seems to indicate a local belief that Snetzler built his organ at Leatherhead. My money is on Sperling. And yet I don't know: he wasn't always right ! Perhaps the tale fits better the 1826-1841 chronology, and it was Walker whose work the old man inspected every day. Of course, it might have been Snetzler's ghost !

Joseph Hart of Redgrave is credited with making a chamber organ for Mendelssohn which after sojourning in the churches of Sibton and Angle is now at Castlemartin. Joanna Williams is engaged upon a dissertation and is anxious to find evidence about the history of the organ and especially its reputed Mendelssohn connexion. She has enquired in several directions but I'm afraid was only referred to me ! I tried many years ago but could extract no information from anyone except the above, which anyway is on a plaque at Castlemartin.

It has been stated that an organ was built for Jenny Lind by the Brothers Jehmlich of Dresden, who were Court Organ Builders. An enquiry relayed by the R.C.O. librarian seeks information about this and its possible whereabouts in this country. Roy Williamson enquires about a mid-eighteenth century 2-manual organ, destroyed by fire in 1947, at Himley Hall near Dudley. It is rumoured to have borne a plaque engraved with Handel's name. Has anyone ever worked out how far 'Handel' organs would reach if they were all laid end-to-end ? Another query is about Athelington in Devon. I can only contribute that it has a nineteenth century case.

I am asked about a Loosemore organ at St. Saviour, Dartmouth. I think this is only a rumour spread by a writer a century ago (3) who ascribed it to "Loosemore of Exeter 1782", the cost being £350. Either the date or the builder must be wrong for Loosemore died in 1681; perhaps he made an earlier one there ? Since 1887 the organ has been removed from the west gallery and rebuilt by Bryceson. It had "diagonal bellows with no reservoirs" and an oak case of Chippendale style which has been retained, and a modern counterpart added facing down the aisle. I suspect that it was Micheau of Exeter who was really the maker. (4)

Was David Hemingway (c.1784) an organ builder ? He may have been connected with John England, James Jones, or John Snetzler, but his actual occupation is uncertain. He lived in the Soho neighbourhood. "F.Oxtoby, September 10, 1879, Leicester" occurred on a label inside the organ at East Farndon. The organ was somewhat

reminiscent of Forster & Andrews, so he might have been a Porritt man; but information is lacking. When were Fincham & Bryceson in partnership? Godmanchester has been attributed to them. And who or when was William Downes White of Leamington? The Dyers (5) were Bryceson men; Joseph went as foreman to Bishop & Son, and Henry Dyer set up for himself. Dates at present somewhat vague, but somewhere in the 1900 area.

Of Halliday of London I could only tell the enquirer that he was a Speechley man, his name was Fred, and his base in Holloway; the then new church of St. Aldhelm, Edmonton, has (had?) a 1905 Halliday with, I seem to remember, a reasonable case; 1908 rebuilds at Chertsey and Much Hadham, work on the Father Willis once at St. James Holloway, an organ at St. John R.C., Hertford, and a 1912 rebuild at Parke-sfcone, Essex, complete my list. The last-named could have had a pleasing Renaissance case, had the side towers not been used as an 'umbrella stand'. Of Richard Heslop of 16 Burma Road I know nothing except his date of setting up, 1888, and a few examples of his work.

Renatus Harris as composer was written on by Betty Matthews. (6) 'Hopkins & Rim-bault' tells us of a MS Book of voluntaries inscribed "John Harris, given me by my brother Renatus, A.D. 1712" which was then "in the possession of Mr. Smee, Jnr., of the Bank of England". (7) This prompts the query as to how much of the other Harris work might have been by Renatus Junior.

I have often wondered why the title of Vaughan Williams' well-known Prelude on Rhosymedre is nowadays more often than not given as 'Lovely'. Rhosymedre is the name of a place in the Ruabon industrial area and could not possibly be translated as 'Lovely'. However, a correspondent has pointed out that 'Hyfrydol' could be. It looks as j_f titles of two of the Preludes in the set have become confused; so please may we be correct and revert to 'Rhosymedre'?

The chamber organ at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York is ascribed to Chapman of London 1779, and the Organ Historical Society enquires about him. A query in these pages very early on (8) brought no information, but a suggestion, was made that he might have been related to James 'Chapman Bishop. Incidentally, if you can answer any of the queries in N. & Q. please don't assume that someone else will do so - they probably won't! A very large proportion of the queries remain unanswered, many no doubt unanswerable.

So, probably, will your queries for a while. By the time you read this, I expect to be in the throes of moving house. I do not propose to 'do a Prospero' on my books, though sorely tempted sometimes, but they will of a surety be unavailable for reference while packed for transit, and perhaps for some time afterwards. I have to get the contents of the schoolroom, a large loft, the lobby, and the darkroom, into ten-foot-square and a large cupboard. When my problem is solved it will be service more or less as usual for your problems. Meantime, I will **try** to do my best 'off the cuff'. I will endeavour to secure the appearance of the next spasm of 'Bernard's burlblings' as I gather they are termed in some quarters. Till then, adieu; and I will now steer my way across the ocean of papers to the next packing case.

B.B.E.

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| (1) 1.169 | (5) IV.3 |
| (2) Address removed for website | (6) V.1 |
| (3) <u>Musical Opinion</u> , 10 / 1887 | C7) 1855, 92 |
| (4) <u>ReporterII.4</u> | C8) 1.2 |

*** We wish Fr. Edmonds well for his impending move, and look forward to the packing cases being emptied safely at the other end. - Editor