



2010 Autumn Conference—Ironbridge



LEFT—The Ironbridge that straddles the River Severn as it passes through the stunning Severn Gorge.



LEFT—The picture shows our Conference Hotel—the 18th Century Georgian listed building "Best Western Valley Hotel" set on the banks of the River Severn.

Ironbridge: October 2010

The Annual Autumn Conference was held in Ironbridge thanks to the organisational skills of Geoff Jones and rather than fill this magazine with details I decided to produce a special pictorial summary based on the actual Itinerary Geoff devised and which incidentally worked like clockwork with the Sun coming out on Saturday Morning (following the dreadful rain storms of Friday) and stayed with us all day Saturday—returning back to the rainstorms on Sunday.

This special conference summary will be posted onto our Web Site for all with internet access to see—however if you do NOT have this luxury just let the Editor know and I will post you out a copy of this 12 page special.

The Society's Website although viewed has NOT encouraged members to register so they can have access and so I shall be asking the Secretary (Elaine Page) to send out some more detailed instructions to help you gain access with the next Agenda she issues to assist you all. I'm sure that when our Web Site is fully operational and every Organ Builder registers on-line the newsletter will eventually die out BUT in the meantime I will do my best to keep producing copy and now on a more regular basis.

Mentioning our Secretary's name in the above paragraph reminds me of the unease many of us felt when in Shrewsbury and Elaine took a few minutes out to make some essential purchases—she was captured on film with her daughter dragging a very large "MOTHERCARE" bag around!!!!!! (Can you see here daughter hiding behind her?)

Sorry Elaine but I was unable to resist!!!! And it is a nice photo of you.



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BUILDERS – 1840 TO



VOX HUMANA

1900 BY JOHN POYSER

John recently retired as an Organ Builder but retains many links with the Organ World, especially in his native Derby. Anyone wishing to make contact with John can do so initially via The Editor

DERBY ORGAN BUILDERS – 1840 to 1900

Whilst sorting through some organ reference files a short while ago I came across the business card of a certain 19th cent. Derby based organ builder and suggest that perhaps a brief resume of those who had businesses in the area may be of interest to members.

The earliest reference to Derbyshire organ builders is found in the Calendar of Patent Rolls of 1502 and is of William and Nicholas Stroke of Wirksworth when they and over 100 others of the town and district were in a “Pardon to Roger Vernon of Wykesworth, co. Derby, gentleman, of all trespasses, congregations, burglaries and misdeeds for the taking, abduction or rape of Margaret Kebull, alias Kebell, alias Kebill and also to his aiders and abettors in the same”. The Pardon was granted to the said Roger Vernon at Westminster on 9th December 1503. There is no record of their particular misdemeanour or any later references to organs which they may have worked on.

Unfortunately, there also appears to be a lack of information about Derby based organ builders until the period which I am covering between 1840 and 1900. Certainly there were a number of well known firms that worked on organs in and around Derby but the first recorded locally based organ builder of the period was Joseph Gratian (b 1784 d 1863). A humorous account of this Belper silk stockinger, grocer, tooth drawer, poet, musician and part time organ builder was given in an article by Rodney Tomkins a few years ago. Without detailing that account, it is suffice to say that it is possible that he was involved in work on several organs, including some at Belper and at the old St. Alkmunds Church in Derby.

Already a widower, he married Sarah Warin when he was 66 and they produced a daughter, Rosa two years later and then a son, Henry two years after that. He is listed in 1835 as living at Chapel Street, Belper and then in 1840 and 1853 at Upper Brook Street, Derby.

A gap then appears from 1853 – the last trade reference to Gratian until 1870 when Alfred Noble (b 1849 d 1905) was listed as working from 63, Melbourne Street, Derby. Noble was one of a large family of organ builders, himself having six sons and four daughters. He originated in Norwich and came to Derby via Birmingham and his eldest son, Ernest (b 1875) was apprenticed to him.

Noble built or worked on a number of local organs, including Christ Church, Derby, Dale Road Methodist Church, Derby, Barrow on Trent Methodist Church, Middleton Wesleyan and St. Michael’s Church, Shirley, where he added the swell manual. His last local directory entry was 1905, the year of his death.

Just four years after Noble started in business, James Mitchell Grunwell (b 1835 d 1888) started trading - his Derby directory advertisement in 1874 reading “James Mitchell Grunwell, Victoria Street (congregational chapel), pedals fitted to piano fortes and harmoniums – res Beckett Well Lane”. In that year he built the small three manual organ for T.B. Mellor, organist of St. Peter’s Church, Belper and shortly afterwards installed the two manual organ in St. Paul’s Church, Quarndon, although the great organ of that instrument is quite a bit older. Other work included the organs at Wirksworth Congregational Church, Nether Heage Methodist Church in its former home, Fritchley Congregational Church and the original one for Kedleston Street Methodist Church, Derby.

By 1881 Grunwell was established at 59, Traffic Street and interestingly, also advertising in that year at 44 Traffic Street were the “Midland Electric Blowing Co., prop J. & A. Page”. The firm, from which in 1932 Arthur Fryer came and started the British Organ Blowing Co, (B.O.B. Co.) were still trading after the second world war.

In 1884, my grandfather, John Housley Adkins was indentured to Grunwell but in June 1887 he left to work for White (later White & Sentence) of Grantham. Grunwell died in 1888 so it is possible that he decided to retire for some reason and arranged for Adkins to continue his indentures with White.

In 1876 there is an entry in Kelly’s Derbyshire directory showing William Joseph Hall, organ builder, with the address at 7, Wardwick and Bells Mill, Cheapside. Unfortunately I could find little more about him, although there was a William Joseph Hall (b 1851 d 1886) with a Frank Hall in business at Birkenhead in 1882 to 1886. Was this the same man or alternatively an ex-employee of Noble or Grunwell ?



The business card which I mentioned at the start of this article was one from Henry Adams Weston (b 1826 d 1907) when in 1881 he first advertised in the Derbyshire directory as “Henry A. Weston, organ builder, 10a Jury Street, Derby”. In 1884 and now resident at 125, Ashbourne Road, he advertised his business address as “organ builder & joiner, 6 ½ St. Peters Street, Derby” however this odd address is clarified in 1885 when his address was given as Oakes Yard, St. Peters Street, Derby. Actually it is shown on my business card as Cantrills Yard but that may refer to one of the twelve business that were trading there. Oakes Yard was where the Yorkshire Bank and Co-op Travel are now situated in St. Peters Street and was opposite Nags Head Yard which eventually was bought by Marks & Spencer before being demolished in 1959.

By 1888 Weston, now listed as just “organ builder”, had moved his residence to 35, Wilson Street but by 1891 there appears to be no further reference. I have no knowledge of his work on any particular organ but over the ten years or so that he was in business there may well be records in some of our churches old minute books.

In the 1891 directory there appears a trade reference to “William Walker, (reed) organ builder, Oxford Street, Ripley”. It may not now be appreciated, but many churches and chapels as well as private residences owned reed organs and there was a healthy trade in them up until the cheaper electronic instruments became available in the 1950s.

In the 1895 Belper Trade directory we find John Stacey advertising as an organ builder of 24, Bedford Street, Derby and again in the Town & Country Derbyshire directory of 1905.

There was a John Stacey who was in business in Sheffield from 1861 to 1869, having worked for Brindley & Foster. It is of course possible for this to have been the same person as, allowing him the age of 30 when he started his business in 1861, he would have been 65 when presumably he retired. It does seem strange that there is a gap of 26 years between the two businesses and there is also a suggestion that the Staceys were father and son, but then the son, who would have then been a relatively young man, would only have been in business for about ten years – and there is no trace of him afterwards. I personally prefer the former explanation; in any case there are only four organs which can be traced as having been worked on by him –St. Michael & All Angels, West Felton, Shropshire, Holy Trinity, Tansley (swell added), the unusual two manual (great 3, swell 2, ped 1 coup 3) at Junction Street Baptist Church and in 1887 the three manual organ in Greenlane Primitive Methodist Church, although I always felt that the latter was an unusually ambitious instrument to be accredited to him – it did have his nameplate on it however !

The last organ builder to start up in business in the 19th century was John Housley Adkins who, having moved from White to work for Denning of Stamford in 1893/94 started up on his own in 1898. His first home was at 69, Nottingham Road but he soon moved to 37, Queen Street, having his works at the 1765 Wesleyan chapel in St. Michaels Lane. At one time it was suggested that Adkins bought out Grunwell’s business but as seen earlier that ended in 1888 so it was unlikely that there would have been anything left to buy ten years later. It should be remembered that in 1898 Noble was still trading and Stacey had established himself in 1885. Adkins son, Lewis, sadly died in 1897 so it would appear that he came back to Derby to start a new phase of his life, starting from scratch.

With the progress of the industrial revolution still in full swing much wealth was generated and a side effect was that a considerable amount was directed to building and furnishing not only Anglican and Roman Catholic churches but also an array of chapels – Congregational, Baptist, Presbyterian, Wesleyan and Methodists of sundry Primitives, Bethels, Ebenezers, and Mount Zions etc. Not only did the sponsors compete with each other in the splendour of their buildings but in their pipe organs as well and in the last half of the 19th century many were installed in this area. It is therefore rather surprising that during that period, of the seven or eight builders mentioned only a very few instruments were produced by them, and a considerable proportion were either enlargements or rebuilds of older organs.

I trust that this article has been of interest to our readers and that it has helped to fill in a few gaps in the history of our organ building predecessors.

John Poyser.



Presentation to Geoff Jones

Our President Mr. Robert Ince presented Mr. Geoff Jones with a suitable gift for the work in arranging a very successful visit to Ironbridge in October 2010.

I think someone just cracked a

joke! Possibly regarding the plastic bag Geoff has been presented with.

Here's a nice shot of Geoff—obviously by now having looked into the bag.



This particular Hotel was singled out by many as having excellent food and for those who wish to make a return visit at their leisure I can advise that the Hotel operates some subsidized weekend bookings that offer excellent value for money and we recommend getting in touch direct to see what is of offer via the Hotels Website :

www.thevalleyhotel.co.uk

AGM will be 26th March 2011—Venue to be confirmed.

Our Secretary will be writing to you all soon diving details of the AGM—we have been trying to find an alternative venue to the Motorcycle Museum and to date are unable to confirm a new venue BUT the date will not change—so look out for your Agenda through the post and check the Venue specified before setting out!!!!

Autumn Conference 2011— Cardiff

It is our intention to visit Cardiff for our Autumn 2011 Conference and we have enlisted help from Mr. Pat Burns to put together a program which will hopefully include the new Nicholson Organ at Llandaff Cathedral—so watch this space as they say and hopefully at our AGM we will be able to confirm that Cardiff will be our Autumn Event for 2011.

It is hoped that for future Autumn Events we can open up places for non-ISOB members to attend our visits—they will

obviously NOT be able to attend our General Meetings nor will they be able to purchase places at the same rate as our subscribing members BUT there is an interest which I believe we can and should cater for— what do you think? The Editor will be please to hear your thoughts and opinions and will pass these on to the ISOB Council for consideration.



DIDN'T HAVE A PICTURE OF THE NEW ORGAN READILY AVAILABLE BUT THOSE OF YOU WHO SUBSCRIBE TO THE I.B.O. WILL BY NOW HAVE VOLUME 10 OF THE JOURNAL IN WHICH ANDREW MOYES REVIEWS THIS ORGAN.

YOUR EDITOR WAS SENT NEWS CUTTINGS TAKEN FROM THE EAST ANGLIAN DAILY TIMES RELATING TO A NAKED CYCLIST WHO STARTLED THE QUIET VILLAGE OF ACTON, NEAR SUDBURY WHO TURNED OUT TO BE AN ORGAN RESTORER FROM NORTHUMBERLAND.

HOWEVER, YOUR EDITOR WILL NOT BE REPRINTING ANY PICTURES TAKEN AT THIS EVENT.

SORRY!

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The I.S.O.B. was founded in 1947 :

- *To advance the science and practice of Organ Building.*
- *To provide a central organization for Organ Builders.*
- *To provide for the better definition and protection of the professions by a system of examinations and the issue of Certificates and Distinctions.*

We're on the Web—at least we now have the site and is being brought up to date for you.
www.isob.co.uk

We hold regular meetings throughout the UK and sometimes venture abroad when the need and support dictates.

Taken from the November 2003 issue of "Sequencer" The Newsletter of the Nottingham and District Society of Organists.

Profile — : David Chapman F.I.S.O.B.

David Chapman retired in 2000 as Harrison & Harrison's London Tuner. The occasion was marked by an organ recital in Westminster Cathedral in which no fewer than seven cathedral organists took part, followed by a buffet supper attended by many well known names from the organ world. David now enjoys gardening, taking his fairground organ to steam rallies, singing in the East Leake Church Choir, and maintaining the Father Willis organ at Stanford-on-Soar.

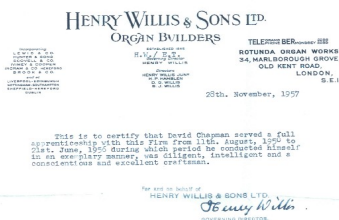
But to begin at the beginning

David was born in 1935 and grew up in the Ruddington area of Nottingham where he joined the choir of St. Peter's Church when he was ten. The Organist was Eric Peach, who was a bit of a character. After choir practice he would often entertain us, perhaps with an orchestral transcription such as William Tell overture, or, if the vicar wasn't about, some cinema organ music. The Organ had been rebuilt in 1934 by Roger Yates, and in 1946 Willis's cleaned and overhauled it. I remember seeing the pipes laid out all up the North aisle. David's first experience of organ maintenance came at about this time. The console was detached, and so the Swell Pedal was remotely operated. From time to time the shutters would get stuck, and I, as the smallest choirboy, was asked to worm my way in through a small hole in the organ case, and give the lever a nudge to free it.

In September 1946 David went to People's College technical school. The main curriculum was to train boys who were to enter the building industry, but our artistic development was not neglected. The music master was Harold Whitehall. He had a fine bass voice, and I well remember him leading the singing of 400 boys at the annual Speech Days in the Bridgeway Hall (Arkwright Street) accompanied by his Wife Grace on the Binns Organ (which later went to Loughborough parish church)

Alf Whitworth, the verger at Ruddington, was a fairground organ enthusiast. He took me to the Goose Fair, where we spent most of the time listening to the organs. In 1950 he suggested that I apply for an apprenticeship with Henry Willis and Sons. I left school on my 15th Birthday, and joined Willis's at their Nottingham Branch. Before long I was sent on my first job away from home, to Oxford, where we worked till 10 o'clock every night. Accommodation was a revelation, nothing like today's B&B's; there might be 5 beds in a room, sharing with complete strangers. At one place the landlady used to stand in the hall every morning with a hand bell, to wake everybody up. Food rationing was still on, and we had to hand over our ration books for the landlady to cut out the coupons.

In 1954 I worked for several months on the Birmingham Town Hall organ, and in 1956 we dismantled the organ at Broad Street chapel, and transferred it to the Great Hall of Nottingham University, where it still is today.



On leaving the RAF, David rejoined Henry Willis, and in 1959 was transferred to the Rotunda works in South London, where he worked on the console for Liverpool Anglican cathedral, and the rebuild at St. Paul's cathedral.

I enjoyed listening to the choir of St. Paul's rehearsing, and got to know Sir John Dykes Bower and Harry Gabb, the organists. I also met Alfred Deller, who sang in the choir, and who happened to live opposite my aunt's, where I was lodging at the time.

In 1960 I passed my driving test and bought my first car, a Morris Minor. When I proudly told my boss about this, he immediately responded; "Good, you can go to Ipswich next week on the East Anglian tuning round" This involved tuning some 20 organs in 2 weeks, four times a year, and became a regular part of my duties for the next 20 years. It wasn't just tuning, either. Any organ in a school was a challenge to the wilder lads to get inside and wreak havoc. Removing decaying banana skins was the least of my problems.

In 1964 I was asked to go to West Africa for five weeks to do overhaul work based in Freetown, Sierra Leone followed by Lagos, Nigeria. When I arrived I found that a large backlog of work had built up since the last European organ builder had been there; I could effectively pick and choose the work I took on and my visit extended to six months (indeed it could have lasted indefinitely!)

The 1890 Hill Organ in Freetown Cathedral was most impressive, being built entirely from Burma Teak, including the trackers, keys and bourdon pipes. This tropicalisation had paid off, as the organ had deteriorated little from new.

Some of my work was in village churches up to 30 miles from Freetown. There was always a good supply of enthusiastic local assistants, and ice cold drinks and tasty snacks appeared like magic in the most unlikely situations.

One problem was transport. Unlike the other Brits who mostly worked for the oil industry, I had no car and was dependant on lifts. On one occasion the local driver lost control of the car on the dirt road, we left the road, hit a large rock and I was knocked out. I came round to find that the driver had scarpered, and I was surrounded by a sea of faces peering in the car window. Fortunately, eventually someone came along who turned out to be a doctor, who arranged for me to go to hospital, where I had to stay for three weeks.

In 1981 I was appointed London Tuner to Harrison & Harrison, with responsibility for many prestigious contracts including the Royal Festival Hall, Westminster Abbey, Westminster Cathedral, Temple Church, Winchester Cathedral. All Souls Langham Place. Southwark Cathedral, Harrow School Speech Room and St. George's Chapel Windsor. Many of these organs were tuned fortnightly, and I would be tuning a large 4-manual organ nearly every day of the week.

My role has obviously been behind the scenes with little involvement with the public, except on one occasion..... Gillian Weir came into the dressing room and said would I mind fetching her glasses which she'd left on the console. I marched on to the stage, retrieved the glasses and marched off again—to the enthusiastic applause of a packed Royal Festival Hall!

Appointed Tuner at St. Paul's April 1959

Not many people have an Organ Recital in their Honour

Mr. Chapman,
15th April, 1959.
Mr. Chapman,
St. Paul's Cathedral - 7th 1959.
You will report to Mr. Lempach at the Cathedral on Monday April 20th, 1959 and will work there until further notice.
For and in favour of HENRY WILLIS & SON, LTD. Organ Builders & Restorers.
Copies to:- Mr. LEMPACH, Sup't. of Works, Works Manager, Files.

WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL
ORGAN RECITAL IN HONOUR OF THE RETIREMENT OF DAVID CHAPMAN
LONDON ORGAN TUNER FOR HARRISON AND HARRISON
7.30 pm, 15th September 2000

Fantasia super Konen Heiliger Geist (BWV 681) Performed by James O'Donnell	J.S. Bach (1685-1750)
Ave maria stella • Bruckner • Debussy • Dvorak • Chabrier sur les grands Joux Performed by Robert Quinlan	Nicolas de Grigny (1672-1703)
From Sonata in F minor • Allegro assai vivace Performed by Andrew Best	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Andante Cantabile (Symphonie IV)	Charles Marie Widor (1844-1937) Samuel Rousseau (1777-1847) Eugène Gigout (1864-1923)
Schizzo	César Franck (1822-1890)
Toccata Performed by Gerard Brooks	Marcel Dupré (1862-1947)
Pastorale Performed by Peter Wright	
From Tombeau de Titelouze • 24 Lues des cloches • 24 Lues des cloches Performed by John Scott	
Improvisation on "David of the White Rock" Performed by Martin Baker	chosen by David Chapman (see overleaf)



THE COLLEGE OF ST GEORGE
WINDSOR CASTLE
COMMUNITY NEWS
& INFORMATION
Sunday 16th July 2000
The Fourth Sunday after Trinity

Organ Tuner Retires After Nineteen Years

For the last 50 years, since leaving school at the age of 15, David Chapman has been tuning organs. On Thursday he paid his last visit to St George's before retiring. He has been tuning the organ here for the past 19 years, succeding to his father, Arthur Chapman, now 91.

They study the perfect music. Arrive six at the keyboard playing the notes, while David makes the required adjustments. The Chapel organ is just one of many famous instruments which David tunes. He also visits Westminster Abbey, Southwark Cathedral and the Central Hall Westminster amongst many other places. David is often standing by on his occasions and has, rather than a concert going out live with the organist present, and the organ playing up "that's getting too old now," says David with a smile. "So, it's time to stop. A farewell party for David was arranged by the Assistant Rector, William, the Chapel Organist, on Thursday evening.

His worst experience was at the Albert Hall: a concert going out live with the organist present, and the organ playing up "that's getting too old now," says David with a smile. "So, it's time to stop. A farewell party for David was arranged by the Assistant Rector, William, the Chapel Organist, on Thursday evening.

Wig & Wisdom
"There's a bit of a wig of wisdom to be had and plenty left!"
— John Ferguson
Organ Arts Course Chairperson
of Chapel Music

All items for Community News & Information should be sent to Edward Carter at No. 1 The Cloisters by 10.00am on the preceding Friday please.

Long Clergy Course Storms Ahead

Pictured are the participants and staff of the long mid-service clergy course, being held at St George's House this Summer, sheltering from the rain prior to the official photo on Monday.