Honorary Secretary's Report to the NDOA AGM 2017

Much of the Committee's time during 2016 has been devoted to planning and implementing the outreach scheme of offering free organ lessons to members of church congregations and pupils at the schools in the geographical region covered by the NDOA. The purpose is to encourage more people to learn to play the organ and to keep organ playing alive in the churches and elsewhere. To date the advertising and invitations have been completed and sent and responses are awaited by 31st May, 2017. This is an exciting venture and it is hoped that there will be a good response and that the teaching programmes adopted by the qualified teachers in the NDOA will be successful.

Throughout the year the eleven recitals at St. Nicolas Church were well-attended, although numbers were not always as high as in 2015. The dedication and planning that the recitalists devoted to their programmes was very much appreciated by all who heard their playing and the positive feedback from members of the audiences was warmly welcomed by the players. Looking back over the programmes, a wide range of repertoire was presented and explored

Recitalists in 2016 were:

14th January:    John Halsey (Windsor)

11th February:   Gill Blythman (Thatcham)

10th March:      Christine Wells (St. Mary the Virgin, Hambleden)

14th April:         John Mountford (Head of Co-Curricular Music at Bradfield College)

9th June:          Alistair Davies (St John's, Stockcross)

14th July:          Rosemary Evans (St. John's, Newbury)

11th August:     James Paget (St Mary Magdalene-in-Paddington)

8th September:  Stephen Holmes (St. Michael and All Angels, Lambourn)

13th October:    Roy Woodhams (Rector of Cranleigh, Surrey)

10th November: Jonathan Holl (Windsor)

8th December:   Rosemary Evans (organ) & Jenny Broome (harp)

Outside the recitals, the year began on 9th January with the NDOA playing visit to St. Mary's Church Calne, a 4 manual Conacher, and Marlborough College, a 4 manual Beckerath. Six playing members attended and a great many pieces were played by members on both organs. We all were made feel very welcome and Mr Ian Crabbe at Marlborough invited us to return again and plans are in the early stages to do just that later this year.

The following week NDOA member, Chris Burrows gave a talk to the BOA on ‘Bach the Mathematician, Bach the Painter and Bach the Mystic’ at St Andrew's URC in Reading.

Prior or the AGM in February, Chris Burrows also talked on 'Riddles and Reasoning" - an illustrated talk on Bach's Passacaglia in Cm and later on the same day Steve Bowey spoke on Steve-on-Shaw-Footing, a demonstration of the organ at St Mary's Church, Shaw-cum-Donnington after which members were welcome to play.

On 17th June, our Chairman, Rosemary Evans gave the monthly recital at Minster Church of St Mary the Virgin, Reading and the following day 20 people attended the Annual NDOA Supper at Bowler's Arms, Newbury.

The IAO Annual Festival Bath took place in Bath and three NDOA members attended as day visitors

Late in September, the Secretary gave a recital at Bowood House as part of their monthly series which entails a 30 minute recital in the Chapel for the benefit of visitors. This had to be using manuals only due to a fractured fifth metatarsal caused by a fall on uneven paving in Singapore, but it seemed to be enjoyed by those who were present.

In November three members, Rosemary Evans, Gill Lovett and Ann Turner attended the BOA dinner at Stirrups Country House Hotel, near Windsor.

The final social event of the year was annual NDOA Lunch which took place at the Bowler's Arms on 3rd December with14 people enjoying a mouth-watering meal and a good chat.

During the year, two members have been involved in the restoration of the historic, possibly Hill, instrument in Midgham church.of

Sadly, as Secretary, I missed many of the events listed above due to ABRSM examining commitments in Hatfield, Northern Ireland, Yeovil, Singapore, Hong Kong and China. It is a privilege to be enabled to see music thriving in so many parts of the UK and abroad, not to mention being paid to see so many beautiful places that I otherwise would not. Due to spending approximately 31 weeks a year away from the area and my almost permanent absence from NDOA events, I have regrettably decided to resign my position as Honorary Secretary of the NDOA. It has been a privilege to serve in this role on the Committee and I am very grateful to the Chairman, Rosemary Evans for all her advice and support over the past three years. I wish my successor well and will continue to support all the events and endeavours of the NDOA in the future.

Gill Blythman

23.2.2017