

2018 - 2020 Addenda to the History of the SFO

The 59th annual conference in 2019 commenced in the High Kirk of Edinburgh (Saint Giles' Cathedral) on the evening of Friday 3rd May with an invitation to all to "Come and Sing" G F Handel's *Messiah* directed by Les Shankland. It was a delight that over 150 delegates and members of the public came to the cathedral for the event and that about 130 of them took part in the performance seated in the choir stalls and the crossing while about 20 people sat in the nave to enjoy the performance. The performance was bolstered by the presence of members of the Chapterhouse Singers of Saint Mary's Episcopal Cathedral and the accompaniment was provided by a specially established professional orchestra, organ continuo on the 1992 Rieger organ played by Joseph Beech and harpsichord continuo played by Dr John Kitchen. The soloists were Sally Carr (Soprano), Catherine Backhouse (Contralto), Malcolm Bennett (Tenor) and Sean Webster (Bass). The evening was an indisputable success.

The following morning, Saturday 4th May, forty delegates attended the Annual General Meeting of the SFO in the Concert Room of Saint Cecilia's Hall, Cowgate, Scotland's oldest purpose built concert hall, built by the Edinburgh Musical Society in 1762 and now home to a world renowned collection of historic musical instruments. After the meeting delegates were able to view the extensive instrument collection and then enjoy a fascinating talk/recital on four of the historic instruments given by David Gerrard and John Kitchen. The instruments used were the c.1775 possibly James Jones chamber organ of the Concert Room, a Clavichord, a Spinet and a Virginal. The programme even included a duet for Spinet and Virginal. There was much laughter when Dr Kitchen, introducing this duet, told the assembly that he and Mr Gerrard had recently been playing several pieces of music that the audiences did not know they wanted to hear!



Saint Cecilia's Hall, University of Edinburgh, 4th May 2019.

Walking half a mile down Cowgate to St John's Street, a sumptuous lunch followed in the Royal Order of Scotland, the oldest purpose built Masonic premises in the world. Robert Burns was a Mason here. After lunch delegates gathered to hear Joseph Beech play the Royal Order's 1757 Snetzler organ.



Lodge member and SFO retiring President Malcolm MacRae explains some details of the Royal Order's 1757 Snetzler organ to Rev Tom White, SFO Vice-president, and another delegate, 4th May 2019.

A happy walk onto the Royal Mile and up the hill took delegates to Old Saint Paul's Episcopal Church where, in my opinion, the highlight of the whole weekend took place; a special SFO Conference Solemn Choral Evensong and Benediction took place under the direction of Dr John Kitchen, Director of Music at Old Saint Paul's, and Calum Robertson, his assistant. This remarkable moving service featured music by Peter Backhouse (former Assistant Organist, Saint Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh), Thomas Laing-Reilly (late Director of Music, Parish Church of Saint Cuthbert, Edinburgh) Charles Wood, Edward Bairstow, John Kitchen, Arthur Sullivan, Edward Elgar, Charles-Marie Widor and Olivier Messiaen.



Old Saint Paul's Scottish Episcopal Church, Edinburgh, 4th May 2019.

Following this uplifting service all delegates gathered at the back of Old Saint Paul's to enjoy refreshments and to welcome the installation of Dr Iain Galbraith as President of the SFO by Mr Malcolm MacRae, President 2018-19.



Retiring SFO President Malcolm MacRae
installs Dr Iain Galbraith as President, 4th May 2019.

Following the happy Edinburgh Conference the affairs of the SFO continued uneventfully through 2019 until the September committee meeting in Perth Saint Matthew's Church when Douglas McBay intimated that he felt unable to continue as Treasurer. Given that there were one or two matters that needed attention sooner rather than later this left the committee with an urgent need to appoint a new Treasurer. Volunteers were called for and there was a silence! Given the urgent matters that needed attention Donald Maclagan agreed to take on the position on a temporary basis and deal with any outstanding matters.

2020 started with the anticipation of a happy annual conference in Glasgow in May. The arrangements were attractive and promised well.... The month of March dawned and news was beginning to spread of a nasty virus having jumped from animals to humans in China. Before long a new Coronavirus (COVID-19) was spreading rapidly round the world and by the end of March the UK government had virtually shut down the whole country apart from services essential to maintain life. This included the closure of all churches and the suspension of all services.

The result of the crisis was that within a few weeks all the SFO affiliated organists' societies had cancelled all face-to-face meetings until at least the Autumn of 2020, and probably longer. In October 2020 there was still no certainty of when meetings might resume. Obviously, the SFO annual general meeting planned to be held in Glasgow during the May 2020 conference was one of the casualties and so the 2019-20 office bearers, by default, remained in office.

All through the months of summer and autumn 2020 the Scottish Government continually issued civic advice and legally enforceable instructions on how the crisis should be managed. As the 2020-21 season approached both the Edinburgh and Glasgow societies started to formulate syllabi for the coming winter that would allow virtual meetings to take place on-line using such facilities as Zoom etc.

However, as the crisis deepened, the Lanarkshire Society of Organists, fully supported by the SFO committee, decided that the May 2021 SFO Conference that they were due to host should also be cancelled.

Just what the future pattern of annual SFO conferences would be was a matter for discussion once the COVID-19 crisis improved.

Referring to page 50 of our 2018 book, in late September 2020 an enquiry was received from Mr Bill Stevenson, SFO President in 1995-96, about an Organ Day held in Glasgow in October 1995. Investigations resulted in that the SFO archive held no record of the event but, almost needless to say, Dr John Kitchen did have memories of the day and also still had some papers about it. On Saturday 21st October 1995 the SFO collaborated with the IAO to arrange the **First** Scottish Organ Day within the University of Glasgow and with a recital also in Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum. (Dr Kitchen pointed out with some amusement that there was never another such organ day!)

The main participants in the 1995 organ day were Stuart Campbell, Gordon Stewart and John Kitchen himself. Mr Campbell led a study session on 18th century English organ music, Dr Kitchen led a workshop on 17th and 18th century music and Mr Stewart led a workshop on 19th and 20th century music. John Kitchen and Gordon Stewart closed the day with a composite recital on the Lewis organ of Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum.



*The
Incorporated Association
of Organists*

President - Peter Hurford, OBE



*The
Scottish Federation
of Organists*

President - William Stevenson

Present

The Scottish Organ Day

Saturday 21st October 1995

at the University of Glasgow



Souvenir
Programme

Souvenir Programme of the First Scottish Organ Day,
Glasgow, 21st October 1995.

2018 – 2020 Addenda to Appendix 1

Conference Locations

2019 Edinburgh

2020 Glasgow (*cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis*)

2021 Lanarkshire (*cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis*)

The future locations of annual conferences will be looked at by the committee once the COVID-19 crisis allows; the following are the planned locations at present:

2022 Stirling

2023 Aberdeen

2024 Borders

2025 Tayside

2026 Edinburgh

2027 Glasgow

Presidents

2019 – Dr Iain B. Galbraith, Glasgow
(*Dr Galbraith remained in office due to the COVID-19 crisis*)

Vice-president

2019 – Rev Tom White, Lanarkshire
(*President elect when the COVID-19 crisis allows*)

Treasurers

2017 – 19 Mr. Douglas McBay, Glasgow

2019 – Mr Donald Maclagan, Edinburgh, *interim pro tem*

Conference Recitalists

2019 Joseph Beech, B.Mus.(Lond.)

2020 Kevin Bowyer (*conference and recital cancelled due to COVID-19 crisis*)

2021 (*no conference due to COVID-19 crisis*)