

# *The Cornopean*

April 2025

EXETER & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION





# EDOA Newsletter

April 2025

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Front page: The 1999 Kenneth Tickell organ, St Paul's Church, Honiton

*[all photos in this newsletter are by the editor, unless otherwise stated]*

## Forthcoming events

**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> May, St Margarets, Topsham EX3 0HL, 7.30pm.** Ian Curror is leading a workshop on all aspects of Sunday Eucharist playing. Refreshments at 7pm. With Ian's wealth of experience, you will find something useful for your playing. Ian was for many years organist at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and he is a very experienced teacher. He would like a few volunteers to play the standard congregational settings.

**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June Organ visit to East Dartmoor, possibly to include Bridford /Christow /Lustleigh and Bovey Tracey.** TBC - Keep a look out for more information from your Honorary Secretary.

**Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July President's Event 3pm Crediton P.C. EX17 2AQ.** This is an enjoyable social event with Nigel and Tina Guthrie, who will give a small recital, tea and cakes will be available.

**Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September Educational event at Buckfast Abbey TQ11 0EE with PipeUp Devon, afternoon.** We hope to encourage youngsters who play keyboards to take up the organ. David Davies will be leading the event, hope you will come along to support it.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> October visit to Exmouth TBC.** Still in planning stage, but we hope to visit some churches in Exmouth, possibly, the delightful Point of View Chapel EX8 5BD with a pulpit organ, then St. John the Evangelist EX8 3 AE, Lunch, then Glenorchy EX8 1PL finishing at All Saints EX8 1PX. TBA

**Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> November Annual Dinner at Devon Hotel EX2 8XU, 7-7:30pm.** Due to the overwhelming response we will be returning to the Devon Hotel again; the speaker will be Tim Parsons, organist at Wells Cathedral.

## The EDOA Committee

Nigel Guthrie (President), Andrew Millington (Past President),  
Paula Taylor (Secretary), Peter Johnson (Treasurer), Tony Yates (Vice-President),  
Gerald Hird, Penelope Cowman, Marco Bresolin, Michael Farley,  
Peter Johnstone (Membership Secretary, corresponding member only),  
Graham Willson (Webmaster, corresponding member only)

## The EDOA Website:

<http://www.exeterorganists.net>

Administrator Graham Willson. The website includes EDOA events, Find an Organist, Newsletters, Gallery, Links, Opportunities, Contact Us, Committee. Graham is always looking for new content, including text and photos. The post of Deputy Webmaster is also currently vacant, and Graham would be delighted to hear from any potential volunteers.

**Stop Press!**

**Details may change! Follow bulletins closer to the time from our Secretary for more up-to-date information.**



## Editor's letter

### Crediton Parish Church 18<sup>th</sup> January 2025

See an account of this visit on page 5.

### Quiz 8<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Following comments from members in the recent questionnaire, it was decided to hold the Quiz at lunchtime on a Saturday, instead of a weekday evening as previously. The location was the comfortable room at the Bridge Inn, Topsham, with its roaring stove. Our quiz-master was Tony Yates this time. Members mostly chose the cooked food prepared by the Inn, instead of bringing their own food. It was generally felt that the new arrangements were a success.

### Organ visit to East Devon 15<sup>th</sup> March 2025

Once again, Andrew Millington organised a wonderful day out, this time in East Devon. Not only were we able to play 4 very different organs, but the social side of EDOA was cemented by a convivial lunch at an Italian restaurant in Axminster. Read Iain Morison's authoritative account of this on page 7.

### AGM 12<sup>th</sup> April 2025

The AGM was held again at Broadclyst Parish Church. Prior to the actual AGM, members were able to play the organ, and an organ recital was given by our new President, Nigel



Nigel introduces his recital programme, photo by Gerald Hird



Nigel concludes his recital, photo by Gerald Hird.

Guthrie. The editor was unable to attend, but Paula reports: "We had 24 members and 1 guest at the AGM, and 17 for lunch, which was excellent".

Gerald Hird writes: "It really was a good recital, addressing the registration and enhanced by the buildings acoustic. Perhaps we should have a retiring president recital next year !! 😊"

### Our new President

Nigel, whose election as President was formalised at the AGM, has written a President's Letter, that expresses much of what I feel characterises EDOA and our purpose. See page 4.

### Home organs

Following my previous comments, the latest Hauptwerk sample set to be installed is the Cavaillé-Coll organ at St Etienne Abbey in Caen, France. This *mostly*-unaltered organ will be superb for playing all the wonderful French organ music that has been gathering dust in the organ music cupboard.

Piers Howell, Editor.

[piershowell@msn.com](mailto:piershowell@msn.com)

## A Devon Organ Book

### From our treasurer, Peter Johnson:

Based on the popularity of our initial print run we commissioned a further 50 copies to be printed and several have been sold already. We can continue to offer these books at a selling price of £12.50 (Postage and envelope, if appropriate, is currently £2.80). Copies of "A Devon Organ Book" are excellent value and can be obtained by contacting me either by telephone or by e-mail: 01297-599086, [peteraj@talktalk.net](mailto:peteraj@talktalk.net) ... Perhaps an idea for a present for a friend or relative?

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Little did I think when Andrew Millington tapped me on the shoulder eighteen months ago to ask if I would stand on the EDOA committee that I would be serving as President of the Association quite so soon! But I'm happy to do so because the Association promotes things which I value very much.



Photo supplied by Nigel Guthrie

I've enjoyed organ music from my childhood and, having started on the piano at the age of seven, I loved learning the organ in my teenage years. I progressed because people gave me opportunities to play in public. Firstly, just to play a piano piece at the end of assembly, then to accompany the hymn on the organ in assembly in senior school. I was asked to accompany fellow pupils at a local music festival and finally started as organist at Bishop's Stortford URC just after taking my O levels, in 1976. Without those early opportunities, when my playing was not at all advanced, I doubt that I should ever had the confidence to take the organ on to university level. I didn't make a career in music, but it has been a lifelong passion and

I have made many friends through singing in choirs and playing the piano and organ. Retirement had brought new opportunities to sing and play.

I'm so pleased that our Association promotes not only the organ and organ music but also that spirit of encouragement and friendship through music which I have felt over the years. Our membership includes amateur, professional and semi-professional musicians of very varied skills and musical tastes. But we are brought together by a shared love of an amazing instrument and incomparable body of music. I hope that we can not only encourage each other in appreciation, learning and performance but also be keenly aware of opportunities to inspire others to learn the organ. Our links with PipeUp Devon are a great example of this.

I don't play regularly for church services these days, as I am more often taking them. But I enjoy accompanying choirs, including the Chagford Singers which is conducted by my wife Tina. But whether we are involved or church or community music let us resolve to give others, and especially the young, the opportunity to spread their wings at the organ console and to share our enthusiasm with them.

With kind regards,

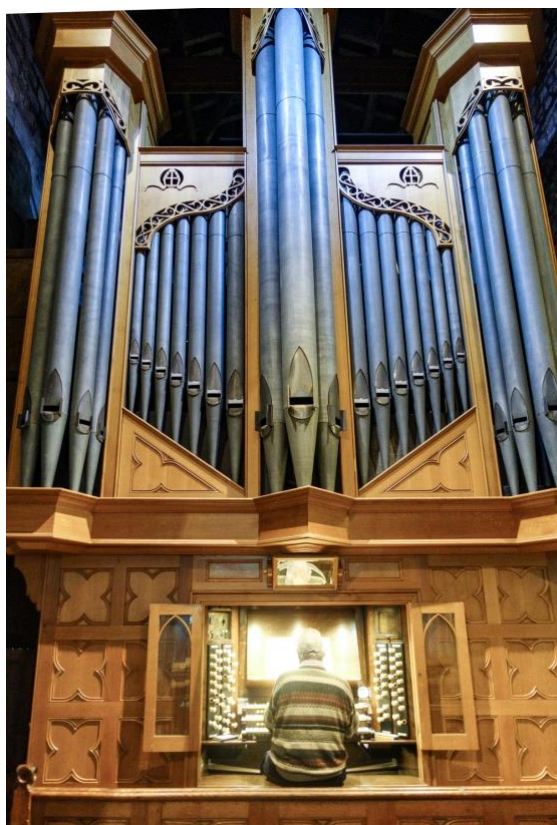
Nigel Guthrie.

April 2025



## CREDITON ORGAN VISIT 18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025

### By the editor



EDOA members were grateful to be allowed to play the 3-manual 1921 Harrison & Harrison organ at Crediton Parish Church on 18<sup>th</sup> January. This classic organ from the era of Arthur Harrison is always a popular destination for organists. The visit was a suitable replacement for the Association's normal visit to play the organ at Exeter Cathedral, which was out of action for scheduled maintenance.

The organ is quite unusual in being relatively unscathed, unaffected by the changing fashions in the organ world; especially the "organ reform movement" of the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in many more famous organs having high-pitched mixtures bolted on, and the then-unfashionable multiple 8' Diapasons and other fundamental and expressive stops removed. It was intended that these "improvements" would make organs more suitable for the music of JSB and other music of that period, but of course the main result was that the original character of the organ would be destroyed. In Crediton's case, this "benign neglect" was a result of lack of money and local indifference to the treasure in their midst (I will take shelter now).

Happily, the fashion tide has turned, wiser attitudes have prevailed, and the more famous organs (King's College Cambridge, St Mary Redcliffe Bristol etc) have been returned, more or less, to their original character. In Crediton's case, after a long campaign, the H&H organ was subject to a sympathetic restoration by Michael Farley in 2001. There were a few additions, notably the 32' bottom octave of the Double Ophicleide (half-length); a top octave to the Choir 16' Orchestral Bassoon, to make it available at 8' pitch; the Great 16' Geigen made available at 8' pitch, creating a 3<sup>rd</sup> "Diapason" on the Great Organ. The icing on the cake was the provision of a fine organ case in oak, which had not been



Martin Watkins, another H&H fan



Iain Morison, a super-fan of H&H organs

possible originally because of the shortage of funds. Some purists may object to the removal of the pneumatic action, and replacement with electric action (with pneumatic motors at the final stage). They may also object to the few additions, but of course, organists don't have to use them.



Harrison & Harrison organs of this era “are what they are”, and should be treasured as such for their rich sound and superb craftsmanship. If you don’t like this sort of organ, there are plenty others to suit all tastes. We in EDOA all know members who love them, and members who don’t.

*Editor’s note:* In 1992, I met Theo Church, who was the son of the organist Cyril Church who was mainly responsible for the installation of this organ. Theo, then in his 80s, recalled the organ being constructed, and Arthur Harrison himself, sitting at the front of the nave area, having runners bringing pipes to him for voicing and balancing. To this day, that area produces the best balanced sound of the organ. Later, in the 1930s, Theo was apprenticed to H&H, and was personally responsible for constructing the quinting machine for the bottom 5 notes of the 32’ Double Open Wood. As a slim young man, he was lowered inside the longest 20’ pipe, bottom F, with a pot of glue, to seal joints in the woodwork. On Sunday afternoons, the apprentices would have tea with the great man.

*Further editor’s note:* This information has been produced from my own memory, as a previous organist here, and I apologise for any inaccuracies.

### **Some photos of the installation of the half-length 32’ Double Ophicleide pipes in 2001**

I attended one of the tuning sessions for these pipes, and can only describe the sound as wondrous and other-worldly, and also possibly suitable for a horror-movie!



Double Ophicleide pipes in the N aisle



Space was found for the pipes, somehow, in the east side of the organ chamber, in the north transept.





## EAST DEVON ORGAN VISIT 15<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2025

By Iain Morison



St Paul's Church, Honiton

The morning started off at St Paul's Church Honiton, which is a relatively modern Romanesque style building in the centre of town. Its stunning organ was dedicated in 2000 by the Very Reverend Patrick Mitchell formerly dean of Wells and Windsor who came to retire near Honiton. The builder was Kenneth Tickell, sadly recently deceased. It is a two manual instrument of generous specification, beautifully voiced, every



Penny Cowman playing

action and pistons, perhaps the best of both worlds? Organs are seen more than heard so they really need to look lovely, which this one does admirably. Digital organs please note!

*[Editor's note: This beautiful organ was installed brand new at Honiton, after a long campaign by the local organist, John Mingay, who is a past-president of EDOA.]*

What is it about the organ that is so fascinating and addictive? I think the sheer diversity of their size, appearance and tonality has a lot to do with it, to say nothing of the lovely venues in which they are often found. All this is unique to the organ and the four instruments we visited illustrated this well.

I lived in East Devon in the 60's as a boy when living at Colyford and used to play three of the older instruments all those years ago which we visited on 15th March.



The handsome case of the 1999 Tickell organ

stop being of excellent quality, whose sound projected very well into the church from the organ's position placed on a new west end gallery. It looks beautiful too, with brightly burnished pipes set in a handsome case. The action is mechanical and wonderfully light and precise with electric stop





The Minster Church, Axminster

We then went to the Minster church at Axminster, which is their parish church. Here we heard and tried a medium sized 3 manual instrument based on a Norman and Beard 1920's scheme. It had been modernised with changes made by Deane organ builders some years ago featuring an H&H style console. It seemed to be good of its type and had a fair complement of stops with a certain amount of borrowing and extensions. It certainly was quite powerful, the louder stops and the pedal open 16' making the windows rattle above the north entrance porch!



Impressive Millennium window, near the organ



Gerald Hird playing at Axminster, with organist Peter Parshall



Convivial lunch at Belluno Italian Restaurant



Matt at lunch





Bevington organ at Musbury



St Michael's Church, Musbury

We had a delightful lunch at the Belluno Italian restaurant opposite the church before the third visit to Musbury just 3 miles or so south from Axminster. St Michael's church is the epitome of a country church in a tranquil setting backed by rolling hills. I am its organist and play the Victorian Henry Bevington



Prize medals, inscription above keyboards, Musbury

dating from 1870. Fortunately it is virtually intact with just 12 stops over two manuals and pedals. The original short pedal board was not independent only coupling to the manuals. About 30 years ago Michael Farley restored it using a full pedalboard from Broadclyst church which was not needed, adding a Bourdon 16' and Bass Flute 8' otherwise the instrument is as Bevington left it but with a Swell 15' added. Michael Farley was very careful to retain the authenticity of the instrument. It was a great pleasure for

me to hear it from the nave as it sounded quite different than from the console position. In fact I thought it sounded quite lovely, the great flutes being most noteworthy. Although limited I think most of us really appreciated it with its original mechanical key and stop action working well. It certainly is

adequate for the Church as Michal Farley has indicated. We are indeed fortunate that his firm looks after it.



Effigies in the south aisle, Musbury



Iain talking about the organ



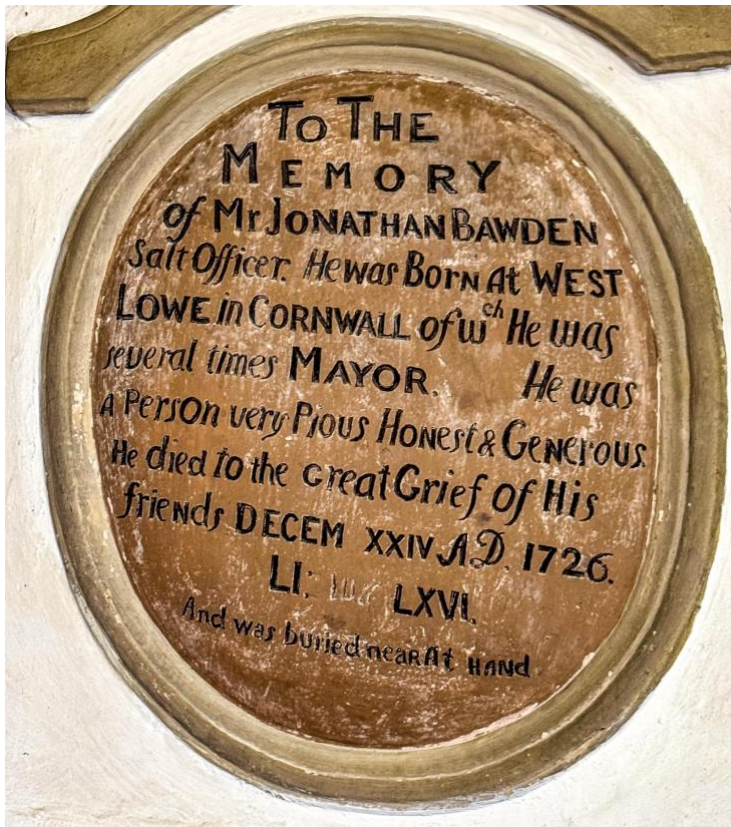


St Gregory's Church, Seaton

Our final visit was to St Gregory's Church, Seaton which is some way from the town centre. It is on the edge of the Axe estuary being part of the old town.



The organ at St Gregory's, Seaton



Memorial tablet, Seaton

The organ's history is not fully as was explained by their organist. The present instrument can be traced back to 1883 to the builder Lewis. In the 70's, Hele of Plymouth revised the scheme creating strong upper work, notably Great 4' Principal and mixture. This was no doubt done to help carry the sound up the nave as the organ only directly speaks across the chancel, its west side facing the nave being blanked off by a wall. A 4' flute on the Great was added by Michael Farley no doubt to counter the rather strident Great Principal. I found the

main chorus to be rather overpowering but found it less so heading up the nave.

Our thanks go to the organists of Axminster and Seaton for showing us the instruments. Also to Andrew for organising a most enjoyable day and to Paula for keeping us up to speed.

We look forward to the next visit.

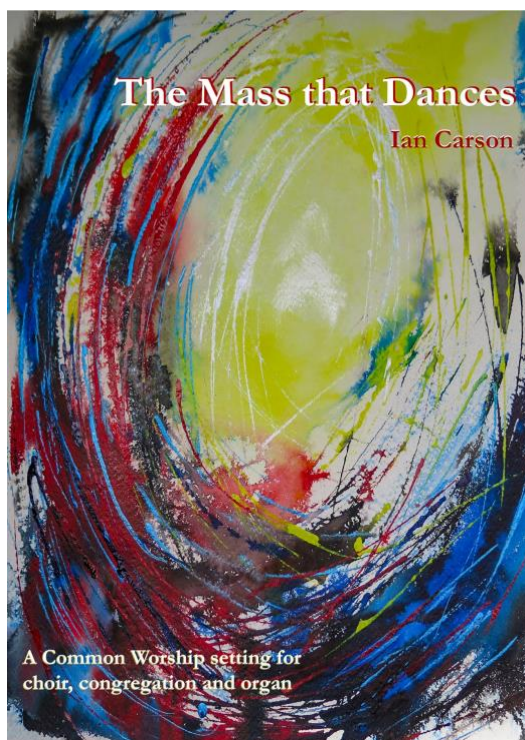
Iain Morison.



## A UNIQUE RECORDING SESSION

### Ian Carson on recording his church compositions at St Peter's Church, Budleigh Salterton, January 2025

So how did I find myself involved in a recording project in a freezing cold church in January when I could have been at home in my slippers feet sipping port and watching The Seaside Hotel on tv? It could have started after my daughter Amy completed a project for Convivium Records, a recording of some children's songs called A Million Little Diamonds by the late family relative Canon Anthony Caesar. She was very impressed with the production team and plans were discussed to record some of my church music. Then Covid got in the way and the whole plan was postponed indefinitely. But my family revived it, which is why I found myself in St Peter's Church Budleigh Salterton last week with a group of top singers and instrumentalists assembled by Amy – and with four members of my family taking part – Amy herself – soprano soloist, Jessica – soprano, my wife Mary – violin, and Aaron - photographer.



What was really good was that most of the artists taking part are based in the West Country, because Amy and husband Tim are determined to establish a professional group of singers in our part of the world – some came from as far as Bristol, but then there's the Blackdowns, the Levels, Ilminster, Porlock, Taunton and Bruton. The exception was the alto Patrick Craig, a legend of St Paul's Cathedral, but since Mary and I had known him since infancy, he was practically family. The wonderfully empathetic conductor, Andrea Brown will be known to some in Exeter through the Exeter Festival Chorus. The producer was Hampshire based George Richford, who has a CV to die for, partnered by audio engineer Adaq Khan ('Gramophone Editor's choice') and the most supportive organist Stephen Tanner will be familiar to members of EDOA.

Having experienced the irritations of dominant egos in my past careers as a recording engineer, producer, organist and conductor I was grateful that I could just be available as a consultant and encourager with complete confidence in the team, who conscientiously but constructively exposed an embarrassing number of typos in my scores!

The solo instrumentalists Rachael Parvin (saxophone)(Head of Guildhall Young Artists Taunton), Tiggy Brearley (oboe)(Central Band of the RAF), Mary Carson (violin)(freelance veteran of many performances in Exeter Cathedral) all coped well with the cold and the low pitch of the organ, but there was an interesting moment tuning-wise when the handbells were first played – giving them nice warm hugs seemed to help bring the pitch down!

We began with my Common Worship Communion setting – 'The Mass that Dances' – and the singers soon adapted to the swing of the dance rhythms rather than the sanctity of their more usual repertoire, then came the most difficult piece by far, an anthem 'My Beloved Son' - topical at the time of recording since it describes the baptism of Christ (in a soundscape based on a Wordcloud). I expected it to be dismissed as impossible, but they performed it with real power and





confidence after minimal rehearsal. To end the day, by contrast, 'A Psalm of Thanks', written deliberately to be naively simple and tuneful, and they found the idiom immediately.



The instruments arrived on the second day, and I wait to hear how the handbells sound in 'I will Arise' setting words by St Brigid, similar to *St Patrick's Breastplate*, all pentatonic for a Celtic saint, though people were going around muttering 'gamelan' – maybe! Why St Brigid – well her most fervent wish was to provide a great lake of beer for the King of Kings – what's not to like?

We followed that with 'Stitch the Fragments Together', a poem by my friend, retired priest and author Hugh Allen. My setting is blended with John Jacob Niles' 'folk tune', *I wonder as I wander* – (to be added in a performance by primary

schoolchildren). There was a substantial organ part for Stephen – I doubt he has ever played so many glissandi in so short a time; and Mary with her quartet friend Jacqueline Evans provided the string *obbligato*.

Then another scary piece, in which I take Liszt's *Evocation of the Sistine Chapel* one stage further, with pp top C's for Amy's voice and Rachael's saxophone, which they achieved as if it was routine. If Liszt was haunted by the ghosts of Allegri and Mozart in the Sistine Chapel, I could sense the Liszt expert Peter King's possible expression of disapproval not far away; but it's my personal favourite!

It was the turn of the oboe to mutually dissolve with the voice in 'What is the Lord's meaning?', based on



Jessica and Amy



Ian Carson and organist Stephen Tanner

the writings of Mother Julian of Norwich, while the choir quietly intoned the plainsong of *Ubi caritas et amor*.

The final major piece was an anthem 'Shalom' based on John Williams' wonderful theme for the film *Schindler's List*. I'm told Mary reduced professional singers to tears as her violin playing mingled with the simply expressed words from Isaiah sung by the choir. It was one of many moments in these sessions that I don't think I or my family will ever forget. I didn't identify with the music as 'mine' at all, but as something that is 'out there' which I happened to tune into and transcribe. I learned a great deal, my gratitude to the performers and their approach knows no bounds.

IC 14/01/25

[photos supplied by Ian Carson]



## ORGANUS EXPERIENTIAL

### Letter to the Editor, from Gerald Hird

As many organists are also raconteurs, with experiences and story- books by the score, I thought I'd suggest a new small item labelled "Organus experiential". This might include some story containing humour or wisdom for others to laugh or learn. These are inclined to be the kind we all enjoy at dinners and organists' talks. In good faith they need to be factual or true as the "mind's eye" is treated to such with reverence. My own offering is not unique but never the less interesting.

#### **Organ or chorister inflagation - nearly**

In the 70s I was a tenor in the college choir which was of high calibre. We often visited cathedral and churches in high season. Notably, a yearly visit at Trinity for weekend services at Coventry Cathedral and similarly for Advent at St Peter's Walworth.

The Christmas Advent and carol services at college were jam-packed occasions. The chapel was very warm due the immensity of candle power and many in the congregation. Imagine the scene, if you will. The choir is singing a tasty Advent carol. The conductor is conducting with his eyes and we are all locked on. Suddenly, in front of me, I am aware of a burning smell. The alto in front of me has wandered (with her splendid curly locks) too near the candle on my choir stall. I continued singing while delicately smothering the burning hair (as in singe-ing!) locks and removing the danger. To her credit after the service, she asked why I was doing what I had been doing, to which I replied (and was confirmed by my colleagues nearby [*just as well-editor*]) "You were on fire". It was the story of the week. I was a local "hero" for not disturbing the mood of the service!!!

Scroll forward 30 or so years to a similar service. It was my turn to be the conductor. The Advent service at our local church. Again, all was going well. During one glorious Advent Hymn our jolly tenor gained a greater light when his cassock caught on the candle in front of him. This was followed by a great flapping and smothering. Safely distinguished, but with a great gaping hole in the cassock. Again, a much-shared story for years that followed.

Again, some years later I was the organist at a village Benefice in Dorset. The descant for the carol was in full voice. Unbeknown to me a candle has reached its lowest level and was gently warming the wood of the organ case, getting excited having found "new fuel". My wife, who was stood beside me in full voice singing the descant, turned and saw the *swelling* danger. Without any thought she climbed the organ bench, whilst still singing, and smothered the candle, thus extinguishing the growing flame from the smallish candle, averting a very serious possibility of fire. The only person who noted this occurrence was the vicar who was smiling broadly while he continued singing also. Much was that story related. He said he thought my wife was moved by the spirit to gain height in order to sing God's praises!!

As I had no idea the candle had been placed above me on the woodwork of the casework - I made a vow: NEVER use candles near an organ unless protected (in glass) and ALWAYS look and check before the service to remove any !!!! And thank goodness for those with a presence of mind to act quickly.

I suspect there are members with similar stories and experiences. And maybe the reason we have so many electric candles for procession etc.

*O for that flame of living fire  
Which shone so bright in saints of old;  
Which bade their souls to heaven aspire, Calm in distress, in danger bold.*

## BIBLE STORIES

At post-service coffee recently, a very sober and respectable lady (with a twinkle in her eye) handed the editor a crumpled piece of paper that nearly had him spraying coffee over everyone.

*The following Bible stories were apparently written by real students and are genuine, authentic and not re-touched. They appeared in National Review magazine on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1995.*

- *The Jews were a proud people and throughout history they had trouble with the unsympathetic Genitals.*
- *Noah's wife was called Joan of Ark.*
- *Moses went up on Mount Cyanide to get the Ten Amendments.*
- *The seventh Commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.*
- *The people who followed the Lord were called the 12 decibels. The epistles were the wives of the apostles.*
- *One of the opossums was St. Matthew who was, by profession, a taximan.*
- *St. Paul cavorted to Christianity. He preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage. A Christian should have only one wife. This is called monotony.*



Steven Martin, with "Beryl", at Musbury  
15<sup>th</sup> March 2025



Detail of organ pipes, Honiton Church  
15<sup>th</sup> March 2025