

News Letter

OF THE

Amersham Fair Organ Museum Trust

Registered Charity No: 1102001

Hello and welcome to the 2008-09 season of open days at the Amersham Fair Organ Museum! We would like to say how much we appreciate your support. The present financial climate is a concern for all of us, the price of fuel not the least of these worries. We know from our questionnaire that most of our regular visitors travel long distances to join us and appreciate your commitment very much.

The Trust relies on the revenue from our open days to pay the bulk of the general running expenses of the collection. Without your continued attendance, your donations and the money you spend on refreshments, we would not be able to open regularly. We do not charge an entry fee so all funding for insurance, heating, refreshments and building maintenance has to be found from the sale of teas, cakes, books, and second-hand books and records. We are also extremely grateful to our small team of regular helpers without whom there would be no "open days".

Refreshments

By the end of last season we were dissatisfied with the quality of the cakes purchased from a local catering company. During the summer we have looked for an alternative supplier, trying various options until we agreed our cakes should come from a local, long established bakery in Chesham. Their quality is far above the others we tried and we hope you agree that they are a vast improvement on our previous selection.

Raffle

This year we have decided to run a raffle at each open day to help raise funds for the museum. Two of our regular helpers, Alan and Malcolm have offered to take on the organisation and ticket sales so look out for them during the day and buy some tickets.

Kitchen staff

We are a little short-staffed in the kitchen this season, as you know Dave and Joan retired from their duties last year, their places being filled by Renee and Roy. This leaves us a little stretched with the washing up and crockery collection. If anyone would like to help with the washing up, please make yourself known to either Margaret Cook or Kevin Meayers. As our kitchen area is small please place your used crockery on the washing up table by the kitchen door.

During the summer the trustees have been working hard to open the collection to private groups and for special events, we have listed some of these below.

"A Taste of Waldkirch"

Our first ever afternoon/evening event at Amersham held in April was as a curtain-raiser to the 9th International Waldkirch Organ festival held in June. A buffet of typical German food was provided and sponsored by Paul and Alison Kirrage, and German beer, wine and amazing Black Forrest gateaux sponsored by Jory Bennett and Kevin Meayers. Jory also gave a talk on the organ industry in Waldkirch, including an audio-visual about Waldkirch shown on a large plasma screen (kindly sponsored by Anna Valley Displays). The evening continued with demonstrations by Paul Davies of some small barrel organs and the WBS organ from the collection culminating with a programmed concert on the model 36b Ruth organ owned by Paul and Alison Kirrage (on loan to the collection during last season). The event has been much praised in the preservation press and we have received a lot of very positive comments from our guests as well as letter of support from the Mayor of Waldkirch who sent his good wishes for the occasion. As well as being very enjoyable, the event raised just short of £700 for the collection.

We held a raffle during the evening with prizes donated by some of our guests and Trustees. The 1st prize was 10 metres of cardboard music for any scale (donated by Kevin Meayers). The lucky winner was Doug Charlett, another of our regular supporters who also very kindly lent us some of the model 36 music that was used in the main concert - see photo of Kevin presenting him with a copy of "My Brave Picador" for his 78-keyless Gebr. Bruder.



The Bumbling Bruder Tour

Do you enjoy organ music with your breakfast? In June we had a visit from a group of 50+ American collectors and enthusiasts en-route to the Waldkirch Orgelfest. We were their first stop on a mammoth trip in which they took in most of the major organ collections in Europe. They landed at Heathrow Airport just 2 hours before arriving at Amersham at 8am. We provided a hot brunch on their arrival and then some 4 hours of music to keep them entertained (and awake) after their long flight.

Private group visits

During the summer we have hosted a number of visits from local groups from the Amersham area all of whom have showed interest in seeing and hearing the collection. Our guests have included Rotary, church groups and the hard of hearing. These events are normally held in the evening, and take the form of a guided tour, which lasts about 2 hours. If you know of a group that would like to visit please speak to Kevin.

'Little Italy' Exhibition. Holborn Library.

Mr. Albert Chiappa was approached by Tudor Allen, curator of the local history department of Holborn Library, to take part in an exhibition celebrating the Italian industries that developed in the area known as "Little Italy" in Clerkenwell, London. As well as the head of the famous Clerkenwell organ builders Chiappa Ltd, Mr Chiappa is also a trustee of this collection. He thought the museum should be involved and suggested we took the Chiappa barrel piano along as part of the display. The exhibition was prepared over some months, some items being loaned to the library by Mr Chiappa and Kevin Meayers. It was found that the barrel piano could not be got easily to the second floor of the library so we took it along to the official opening and played it to welcome the invited guests. It brought back many memories for older people who can still recall the organ/piano industry in that area and we had several visitors eager to play a tune or two.

Italian Festival. Clerkenwell, London: 20th July 2008.

From the success of the "Little Italy" exhibition came the request from Mr Chiappa and the organisers of the "Italian Festival of our Lady of Mount Carmel" to bring the barrel piano to Eyre Street Hill to take part in the annual event. This we readily agreed to do. Supported by the Chiappa family's own 30-keyless organ and the 49-key Marenghi owned by Richard Evans, a display was set up outside the famous London factory of Chiappa Ltd. Richard is, of course, another of our trustees. Paul Davies roamed the streets with the barrel piano entertaining the thousands of people of Italian descent who were at the festival. The two organs made an impressive appearance outside the doors of the Chiappa factory and it was lovely to hear mechanical organ music again at such a famous address. A display of photographs and information compiled by Albert Chiappa and Kevin Meayers was also set up outside the factory. The event has been reported in the latest edition of "Old Glory" and there are some photographs of the day on the Internet.



A Recent Acquisition

The Amersham Fair Organ Museum has received another addition to its collection through the generosity of a donor. Last year the late Jack Hutchinson willed to us the Chiappa barrel piano. This year we are pleased to announce the donation of another organ to the collection. Norman Woodford, has decided to let us keep the 54-Key Moltzer barrel organ that has previously been on loan. The organ already plays a key part in our guided tours as it is our only example of a barrel organ! It has already been presented by us "on tour" at the recent "Organ Oktoberfest" held at Mizens railway, near Woking on 19th October. We attended with the organ and a small display of photographs/information about the collection. This was another great success for Amersham with members of the public.

Weber Unika

We are sorry to announce that this popular instrument is now defunct. The original factory bellows, which provide pressure and vacuum, have finally failed. A large split in the side of one feeders has made the instrument un-playable. Funding will need to be raised to effect the repairs needed and any suggestions or support in this area would be much appreciated. The most worrying factor is that the pneumatic relay is also still working on factory leather, the fact that the instrument cannot be played will allow this mechanism to deteriorate and may result in this part needing major attention after the bellows are re-leathered. If anyone would like to make a donation especially for this work please speak to either Ray or Kevin about a gift aid form!

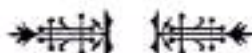


150th Anniversary of Charles Marengi

This year saw the 150th anniversary of the birth of Charles Marengi on 10th September 1858. Our trustees Kevin, Jory, Richard and Paul all helped to put on a special "150th" concert on the Anderton & Rowland Grand Organ (by kind permission of the owners and custodian Peter Phillipps) to celebrate the occasion. They produced a varied concert of popular music and classics ALL marked by Marengi factory arrangers, only one book ('For all eternity') was in such poor condition that it had to be re-cut. Jory and Kevin are currently working on a detailed article about Marengi's life and work expanding the notes that Jory wrote in the programme. Copies of the souvenir Marengi programme are still available price £1 from our bookstall.

Today at the Amersham Collection

Today we have decided to link together two anniversaries in music: the forthcoming 90th anniversary of the Armistice in November and the 50th anniversary of the formation of the Fair organ Preservation Society. So listen out for our Great World War Medley (marked by Charles P Chiappa and great favourite of the late Victor Chiappa) and also one or two tunes from the days when enthusiasts gathered in front of the ex-Marshall Hill 98-key Marengi at Tom Albert's premises in Bolton, Lancs. We also hope to have copies of the FOPS 50th anniversary book for sale on our bookstall if you have not already bought a copy.



We hope you have enjoyed this first newsletter which we could print annually to keep everyone informed about our events and activities. The newsletter is free of charge but you are welcome to make a donation for it if you wish and please take one away for a friend. Please remember we have a suggestions box for your suggestions in the tea room and if there is a budding newsletter editor out there who would like to put together the next issue please get in touch.

KM
Secretary of the Trust