**Otago and Southland Organists Association**

**President’s Report – 2016**

Our Annual General Meeting in 2016 was held on Sunday 20 March at St. John’s Anglican Church, Roslyn, Dunedin. There were 15 members present, and we appreciated the modern gathering space that links the Church to the original hall complex.

The officers and committee elected for the year were:

President Mark Hughes

Past President Robert McLintock

Vice President Robert McLintock

Secretary / Treasurer Jean Kirk

Committee Stephen Chalcroft

Southland Representative Sherry Shelton

NZOA Representative Peter Stockwell

Peter noted again that he wished to retire from the NZOA role, but was prepared to continue through to Congress 2016.

Following the meeting, Robert McLintock presented an interesting overview of the history of St. John’s, and that of the pipe organ. A number of members then enjoyed the opportunity to play the organ. Thank you to Alan Edwards, resident organist, for hosting the Association at this event.

In late May a centennial celebratory organ recital was organised at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Port Chalmers. The afternoon of Sunday 29 May was windy, wet and cold, so hopes of a well attended event were dampened. However, thanks to plenty of advertising, and a promotional feature article in the Thursday Star community newspaper, before the event, people turned up, resulting in the Church being quite full, with approximately 70 people present. Robert McLintock opened the event with a history of the establishment of the church in Port Chalmers, culminating in the installation of the Jardine pipe organ one hundred years ago, and the subsequent ups and downs the organ has endured over the years. Peter Stockwell played several pieces, then David Burchell accompanied Noel Townshend and then Mark Hughes who both sang solo pieces. David Burchell then presented a varied programme that was much appreciated by the audience. Afternoon tea had been organised by the parishioners and several of our members. It was quite a squash in the adjoining parish lounge as nearly everyone took up the invitation to stay on for afternoon tea. There was even a birthday cake made by parishioner Noel Townshend.

The centennial celebration of the Jardine organ was most successful, and Robert’s research was subsequently published as an article in New Zealand Organ News (Vol. 52, No.2 August 2016). Incidentally, later in the year, during the 39th annual conference of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia, they visited Holy Trinity Port Chalmers late afternoon on Friday 30 September. The New Zealand Organ Preservation Trust took the opportunity on this occasion to present a certificate to the parish, acknowledging the significant worthiness of the Jardine pipe organ, and the fact that it is very much in its original condition as designed and built in 1915-1916.

The big event of the year for some was the annual Congress, held over Queen’s Birthday Weekend in Christchurch, the first time the city has hosted the Congress since the devastating earthquakes. It was interesting to see how the classic wooden colonial Canterbury churches had withstood the ravishes of the earthquakes, whereas the former brick and stone church buildings had feared so badly, often to the peril of the pipe organs housed inside them. It was also very sobering to hear the number of stories where key church office bearers were not interested in rescuing their Christian heritage, but rather have it swept away and start afresh. The glorious craftsmanship of previous generations, in many cases, was laid to complete waste by the quick action of bulldozers and dawn raids. Where there was a will to rescue heritage items, such as pipe organs, the tradespeople could exercise genuine kiwi ingenuity and do so without threatening loss of life in doing so.

It was indeed another very successful Congress, and the Christchurch Association are to be congratulated for organising a varied and enjoyable programme. Warner Haldane wrote a glowing account in the August 2016, Vol.52, no.2, issue of “New Zealand Organ News”, with the title: “The Christchurch Renaissance Congress”.

With the onset of winter, and post Congress, we were delighted to be hosted in a warm home, this time that of Robert & Sue McLintock on Friday 24 June. 11 members were present and we enjoyed hearing from the good number of members who had attended Congress, on their impressions of the Congress weekend. We also enjoyed seeing and hearing a DVD Stephen Chalcroft had put together of time he and Doris had spent in Liverpool during a ‘work’ trip made there in May/June 2016.

It was with sadness the Association learned of the sudden death of Robert Watt, who’s funeral on 20 August many members attended. A quiet, gentlemanly person, Robert will be greatly missed, particularly by the congregation of Iona Presbyterian Church in Port Chalmers. He had been involved in plans for the relocation of the pipe organ, and the ongoing care of it. Over recent years he had been at the organ console, playing during the day when cruise ships have been in at Port Chalmers

On the evening of Friday 26 August, a very wet wintery cold evening, a number of members ventured out to visit the pipe organ in the Forbury Road Reformed Church. Representatives of the congregation made us very welcome, and ensured the gas heaters were blazing away, providing warmth. Robert McLintock opened the evening with a history of the several congregations that have worshipped in the church and the role of the pipe organ to those congregations over the decades. Robert’s research was subsequently published as an article in New Zealand Organ News (Vol. 52, No.3 November 2016).

Our end of year function was held on Sunday 6 November in Dunedin, with a dozen of our members meeting up at the Gardens Corner, North Dunedin, Filadelfio’s Pizza & Bar where we all enjoyed real value for money, with excellent lunches and enjoyable conversation. We allowed ourselves plenty of time, and set off up North Road just after 2.00pm, and on over the hills to Mt Cargill Road, our destination being the Burchell residence. The weather had been pleasant earlier in the day, but deteriorated in the afternoon, so we enjoyed the magnificent views on the way up the hill, whereas it was a misty outlook later on in the day when we descended back down the hill to Dunedin.

David Burchell made us very welcome in his equivalent of his “bloke’s shed” – but a very civilised and spacious room, accommodating not only a dozen of us, but two pipe organs, a scale model railway, book shelves, and a mezzanine study to boot! David gave us a very informative talk on the history of the two respective pipe organ, and how they have ended up today in his care, the work he has carried out on them, and his future plans for them too. We learned too that he and Ron Newton had recently been assessing the remains of the Hanover St. Baptist Church organ. Some of the pipe work from that organ will end up in the smaller of the two pipe organs that David owns – the former Broad Bay Methodist Church positive organ. This small ‘portable’ organ, is seen and heard at concerts in various Dunedin venues, such as All Saints Church, Cumberland St., and the stage of the Dunedin Town Hall.

Following David’s talk and demonstration of several pieces of music on the two pipe organs, members enjoyed the opportunity to play the pipe organs. David did advise us not to try to play them together, as the tuning of the two is not compatible! Once again several members kindly provided baking for the afternoon tea, and Jenny Burchell made us most welcome through in the large family kitchen / dining / living room. The Burchell family made us very welcome in their home, and we thoroughly enjoyed their hospitality.

In Invercargill, Dr Raymond White, Basilica Organist, continues his excellent project to now raise sufficient funds for the strengthening of the Choir/Organ Gallery for the ultimate installation of the recently restored ‘Blitz’ Organ. The President of the OSOA was present in what was a quite full church on a very blustery, cool Sunday afternoon, on 18 December 2016. The occasion was a Celebrity Concert, culminating in an audience with Dame Malvina Major, who was most impressed with the high quality of music making enjoyed by the audience that afternoon. She asked if there was something special in the Southland water!

In the new year, on the afternoon of Sunday 29 January, Dr. White gave an illustrated talk on the trends in wedding and funeral music over the last fifty years, with solos by Christine McLeod, soprano. Dr, White noted that weddings in churches have become the exception, and that ironically, that very afternoon a wedding was taking place in the Basilica, so the fundraising event had to be switched to St. John’s Anglican Church! An appreciative audience of approximately 70 people were treated to some fine playing on the quality pipe organ that Dr. White had played on extensively as a student of the organ five decades ago. Stanley Fox welcomed the audience and moved a vote of thanks to Dr. Raymond White at the conclusion of the afternoon’s proceedings. Needless to say some very amusing anecdotes were shared between the various pieces that were performed.

I wish to thank our committee who met on average, once a quarter, on Sunday afternoons, beginning at 3.30pm, and usually completing our business in an hour and a quarter. Thank you to Jean Kirk for hosting the meetings. It is informative talking with Peter Stockwell, our region’s representative to the NZOA, about various national issues. Peter did stand down post Congress, so Mark Hughes has represented our Association at several conference calls. Peter also updates the committee on the Dunedin Town Hall Organ Trust and their ongoing work to ensure our beloved “Norma” is appreciated. We really have appreciated the ongoing contribution of time and energy Peter provides to both the national scene, and the Dunedin Town Hall Organ Trust.

Thank you to Jean Kirk, for the commitment and energy she cheerfully gives, to not only her secretarial & treasurer duties, but also for producing 5 issues of “STOP PRESS” during the year. Thank you too, to the committee members for their contribution: Robert McLintock, Peter Stockwell, Stephen Chalcroft, and Sherry Shelton as our Southland representative.

Our committee happily supports the initiatives of the Dunedin Town Hall Organ Trust, the Directors of Music at Knox Presbyterian Church, Dunedin, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Dunedin, St. Joseph’s Cathedral, Dunedin, First Church, Invercargill, and Dr Raymond White, Basilica Organist, Invercargill. We also support and encourage our Southland members who work with their communities to provide the public with the opportunity to enjoy organ music. We are delighted that with Sherry’s presence, there is an active link to the Southland movement. We are also aware that Oamaru is another centre where the organ is promoted, particularly by Dr Ron Newton, and we encourage these initiatives and provide support as we can.

Mark Hughes