



This article is provided by FMES for your interest thanks to the kindness of the original publishers. FMES makes no representations or warranties of any kind, express or implied about the completeness, accuracy or reliability with respect to this document and any sentiments expressed are not necessarily supported by FMES. Any reliance you place on this document is therefore strictly at your own risk

Black Forest mechanical organ

This document was written by Brian Hunt and was originally published by Worthing and District SME in their newsletter in the Winter of 2015.

Many club members know that as well as being a steam enthusiast I am also a bit of an organ nut (to say the least). Some of you have seen the instruments on occasions at Field Place on special days.



One particular type of organ which I admire is those built in Germany; in particular the Black Forest region where there is a little town called Waldkirch which at one time had at least five companies building these fine instruments. These machines are very precise in their sound and build quality; all I could do was listen to them and admire them, believing owning one was out of my reach. Little did I know? On a trip to Holland with the Mechanical Organ Owners' Society I mentioned to a Dutch friend that I would love to have a German organ one day. Obviously, word got round and last November I received a phone call from Paul Kirrage who organises the Oktoberfest event at Woking every October. (a worthwhile event to visit if you're interested), who told me that a friend of his in Holland was selling his 52 keyless Alfred Bruder organ, built around 1922, and that it is in perfect condition with lots of punched cardboard music.

A trip to view the organ was arranged; I had to drive to Tilberg to an organ building works where it was built, stored, and shown for sale. I met Mr Rein Schenk who had owned it for the past 20 years, a really nice guy who had recently moved to an apartment in Amsterdam and had nowhere to keep it, so had decided to part with it. After the introductions we decided to play some music; wow what a sound! and it's only a medium sized instrument. It wasn't long before I decided that I would like it and after a little bartering a deal was reached. I explained to him that I couldn't take delivery until the next March because the funds to pay the balance would not be available until then, but I was able to pay a deposit. He was happy with that because it gave him time to get it cleaned and tuned. Also, while it was still there some remedial leather work was carried out on the internal relay system to save me the worry of getting it done in the UK.

March arrived and the balance paid. The owner said he would be happy to bring it to the UK and a date was set for the end of April, the Saturday before the bank holiday. At about 7.15 in the evening there was a knock at the door, there was Rein Schenk who said "I have a parcel for you", and I replied "I hope it's a large noisy one". Rein had brought with him Leon van Leeuwen, a very highly skilled organ builder who is the chap from Perlee organ builders in Amsterdam who carried out the re-leathering for me. Rein and Leon stayed for a couple of days and on the Bank holiday Monday we took the organ to the Winchester organ festival for an official hand over; a great weekend had by all (especially me). So, a rare Alfred Bruder organ is now in the UK; the company didn't build many organs because they didn't start until the end of the first world war and finished in 1937 when Alfred Bruder died at the age of 48, but what they did build was of very high quality.