

Snippets from England

TONY BERNARD SMITH

Of all musicians, only organists could make an occupational hazard of tending the garden! Just ask *Ernest Broadbent*, current holder of the star job of solo organist at the famed 3/14 Wurlitzer of the Tower, Blackpool.

"Take care of those big toes", he says. "You may never realize they're there until you break one."

In his case, his foot slipped off a spade and made violent contact with a submerged rock. Result — a big toe fractured in two places.

And all this in the middle of a busy summer season. He did try to give his usual performance at the Tower that day but found he could neither play nor drive his car, so it was off to the hospital for an emergency operation.

Before long, he was back on the organ bench (though the garden was not getting much attention) and carrying on the good work of entertaining the hordes of holidaymakers. At the end of his third season as *Reginald Dixon's* successor he had thoroughly consolidated his position as a public favourite and was all set for a concert and promotional tour which would keep him busy until May, 1973.

British performer *Len Rawle* made a flying visit to Holland to re-open the 4/22 Compton in the AVRO Studios, Hilversum, last summer. The organ had just had a thorough overhaul — right to the point, in fact, where the description "Compton" is more or less a courtesy title.

There was a Standaard in the radio company's studios and the British builders used some of the works of that in their pre-war rebuild. Now a local builder has retained the Compton console but repaired and replaced pipe-work on a large scale.

The result — a fine sound and one of the quietest blowers ever heard. Guest star *Rawle* could hardly believe it had been switched on when he first heard it.

Re-opening was heard on the air in a general musical programme which has enjoyed a long run in the lowlands. First native performer to be heard in this spot a few weeks later was *Jan van Weelden*, who used to play the 2/7 Standaard of the Passage Theatre,



Ernest Broadbent at the Tower, Blackpool . . . A spot of bother with a big toe.

The Hague (this organ is now owned by Dr. Henk van Ooijen, president of the Dutch Organ Federation).

Other recitalists slated for early stints on the AVRO organ were *Louis Zagwijn*, former resident at the ASTA, The Hague, and the Luxor and Commodore theatres, Rotterdam; *Gerard 't Hart*, who was at the Colosseum, Rotterdam 1929-1962 and is now retired; and *Hank Breton*, whose residencies included the Capitol, The Hague (on a Standaard 3/5 now in a church in Enschedé, Eastern Holland), and the Carre, Amsterdam (a large vaudeville house whose small Wurlitzer was transplanted to the Lebanon).

STACCATO SNIPPETS — Sunday August 20, 1972, was the date when *Geoff Stephenson* and *Terry Hepworth* staged the first theatre pipe organ duet in England for many years. Truly! At the Palace, Gorleston, the ex-Empire, Aldershot Compton 2/6 is installed with chambers in the roof and the ex-Savoy, Leicester Compton 3/6 plus Melotone has been installed behind the stage . . . Summer visitor to his homeland was *Reginald Foort*. Trip was mainly private but he did tape a radio show on the organ of the Granada, Kingston — formerly the Wurlitzer Model F which he had opened at the Picture House, Edinburgh in 1925 . . . Famous for his 25 years

residency at the Gaumont, Manchester, *Stanley Tudor* died August 4. He was 61 and had been ill for a long time . . . Compton from the ABC (formerly Regal), Canterbury, will go to another cathedral city, nearby Rochester, where it will be a residence job . . . Many organs are on the move but the news is that the unique 4/19 Compton/Noterman of Dreamland, Margate, will stay in the building despite conversion into two cinemas and a theatre-restaurant. □

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