

Welcome

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the Third International Festival of the International Guild of Town Pipers, following the very successful festivals of 2004 and 2006. I hope that everyone, whether performer or bystander, will enjoy the proceedings of this weekend.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, British towns increasingly employed bands of minstrels - town pipers, or waits - to provide civic ceremonial music and entertainment for dignitaries and townspeople. Civic musicians on the continent have quite as long a history, particularly in Italy and the German-speaking lands.

Waits in the United Kingdom were disbanded in 1835, but their history continued to be studied. Interest in the music itself gained momentum from the Early Music Movement of the 1960s, since when there has been serious practical study of the waits' instruments, repertory and performance styles. Many bands of town waits have been reconstituted, reviving the sound of the music of past centuries so that it can be enjoyed by all of us.

Interest in town waits is still gathering momentum. In this Third International Festival are bands from all over England, and we welcome also our good friends the Stadspijpers van 's-Hertogenbosch, who hosted the 2004 festival in the Netherlands. The International Guild of Town Pipers started as an informal collaboration of waits performing together and exchanging ideas: now it is a limited company and a registered charity, a status that will help it in its educational and research work.

I am delighted that the International Guild of Town Pipers has taken these steps forward, and congratulate those responsible on their foresight and initiative; and I wish the Guild well in this third Festival, which promises to be the best yet.

Richard Rastall
Patron of the Guild