

JUNE 2020 NEWSLETTER

FORTHCOMING LDOA VISITS/EVENTS

Remaining 2020 visit/events

The announcement made by Boris Johnson on Sunday 10th May of some relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions and the subsequent clarification of the continued closure of churches until 'no earlier than 4th July', and restrictions on gatherings of people, meant that regrettably we had no choice but to cancel our planned visits to the end of July.

The following remaining 2020 visits/events are currently arranged, but are of course also subject to postponement or cancellation depending upon COVID-19 restrictions at the time. We aim to be in contact with you by August as to whether we are able to go ahead with these visits.

Saturday 12th September 2020 visit to Rugby

What promises to be a terrific day in Rugby, visiting two venues with no less than five organs between them!

First, at the invitation of Director of Music Dr Richard Dunster-Sigtermans, a visit commencing at 11am to St Andrew's Church in the centre of Rugby, where there's a 3 manual 48 stop organ, completely rebuilt by Hill, Norman & Beard in 1963, and more recently overhauled by Peter Spencer in 2005-7.

Then, with plenty of eateries in the centre of Rugby to choose from for lunch, a five-minute walk takes us to the prestigious Rugby School, the home of rugby, but also home to no less than four organs. Visit commencing at 1pm at the invitation of Director of Music Richard Tanner.

In the breathtakingly beautiful School Chapel, there is a magnificent 4 manual 55 speaking stop Kenneth Jones & Associates organ, on which the opening recital was given by Nicholas Kynaston in 2001. Nicholson has just carried out a refurbishment, and the re-opening recital by the international concert organist David Briggs took place on Friday 7th February 2020.

There is also a 3 manual 32 stop Bryceson organ in the Temple Speech Room, a 2 manual 6 stop Harrison & Harrison organ in the Memorial Chapel, and a 2 manual 5 stop Škrabl of Slovenia organ in the Music School.

Saturday 3rd October 2020 – President's Evening at Lichfield Cathedral

Visit to Lichfield Cathedral hosted by our President, Martyn Rawles, to attend the RSCM Lichfield Area Annual

Massed Choirs Festival, commencing at 5.30pm with Evensong, followed by our annual treat of the opportunity to play the magnificent Hill organ. Drinks and nibbles provided if COVID-19 restrictions at the time permit.

Other 2020 visits/events in the pipeline

A November visit, possibly one cancelled from earlier in the year, and our Annual Dinner at a local hostelry.

HAUPTWERK SYSTEMS CONSTRUCTED BY LDOA MEMBERS

I'm always grateful to LDOA members for submitting articles for inclusion in the newsletter, but with no visits or recitals to report this time, I'm particularly indebted to two technically talented LDOA members, Greg Lewin and Paul Hodgetts, for sending me articles on their different approaches to the construction of Hauptwerk organs. With limited access to play real pipe organs, those members fortunate enough to have organs at home will no doubt be making full use of them to occupy some of the time provided by the lockdown. Greg and Paul have shown that if you have the technical savvy (and the time!), substantial Hauptwerk organs can be constructed for a surprisingly modest cost.

Remaking a Nicholson Console for use with Hauptwerk, by Greg Lewin

For a couple of years, I have been experimenting with Hauptwerk, the computer-based organ sampler software. As I have always had an interest in electronics, I have particularly enjoyed building circuits to interface Hauptwerk with reclaimed organ parts.

I began by converting an old pedalboard to play with my digital piano. I then found a way to 'MIDIfy' old organ keyboards so that they could be used with Hauptwerk, and this was followed by a number of projects which gave a new lease of life to bits of old organs, and which would probably otherwise have ended up on an organ builder's bonfire.

Before long, I had built up my own practice organ, which, though it worked well, lacked something in the cosmetic department. Fortunately, I was able to acquire the console from an organ built in 1954 by Nicholson's for Oldbury Grammar School, Worcestershire. This is made of good quality components, and is a close match to the 1956 Walker I play at church – just right for a home practice instrument.



The Nicholson had been dismantled and in storage for several years – latterly in less than ideal conditions¹. When I went to collect the dismantled parts, the seller was busy burning the rest of the structure of the organ, and I suspect that if I hadn't purchased the console (for 99p!) it would have suffered the same fate.



Having got the parts home, I had the task of trying to piece them all together – rather like a large three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. To make matters more complicated, the console was not free standing but had been built into the structure of the organ. Basically, I had a lot of good quality components (plus quite a lot of the oak panelling which had formed the organ case), and I had to devise a way of turning it all into a free-standing console.

The refurbishment involved three stages: restoration, MIDification and remodelling.



The first step was to clean and repair the various components. The pedalboard had broken where the tension of the pedal springs had found a weakness in one of the joints. The pedals were also very dirty – I suspect years of spilled school dinners! After dismantling the pedalboard and cleaning and repairing it, everything was reassembled and, apart from a small water stain on one of the keys, now looks as good as new. The toe pistons were cleaned and, as I had several matching spares, I brought the number up to eight for each division. A second expression pedal was made to match the original and both were converted into what are, in effect, giant volume knobs.



The keyboards (by Clarke) required careful cleaning. Several of the coverings required re-gluing and a few keys needed to be re-bushed. The thumb pistons were cleaned and rewired. One is missing its push button end – I am still trying to source material to make a replacement.

The stop action motors were dismantled and cleaned. They showed signs of old repairs, which were themselves starting to fail. The double touch action had clearly proved an annoyance in the past, and had been physically deactivated! While the unit was in pieces it was possible to make proper repairs. The original wire loom was removed as it is not required by the new control system.

The heart of the new console is the electronics, which reads the state of the keys, pedals and stops and communicates with Hauptwerk. For this conversion, I have used an Arduino – a programmable microprocessor board very popular with electronics hobbyists. The Arduino sees each key, pedal, tab or piston as a switch. Its software scans all these switches many thousands of times a second detecting presses and releases.

The console still had its original wire switches, but after sixty-five years, they were dirty, corroded and coming to the end of their life. I replaced them with a 5-volt optical system, which I had used in earlier projects, and for which I had already designed printed circuit boards. The pedalboard also had wire switches, which were replaced with reed switches and magnets.

The final casing of the console was developed around the pedal section, which already formed a fairly solid unit. Two of the surplus oak panels from the organ casework were chosen as end panels, and horizontal members were fixed between them to carry the keyboards. The sides of the upper section had to be completed where they had previously become a part of the main organ. All was then sanded down and given a new finish with French polish.

The picture below shows the almost finished console, which now plays and is currently being used for the virtual services being streamed from St Chad's, Pattingham. The computer speakers, shown here during initial testing, have been replaced with a pair of active monitor speakers.

The coronavirus outbreak has prevented the final part of the conversion from being completed, as the printed circuit



boards for operating the tab stops are quarantined somewhere between China and Bridgnorth! Hopefully I will be able to add them soon.

A more detailed account of this and other Hauptwerk projects can be seen on my website:
<http://www.greglewin.co.uk/organ2/index.htm>

¹ Ed. Gregg advises me that he is still experimenting with different sample sets, but uses the Haverford Binns set, and also uses Piotr Grabowski's Strasbourg set for Bach. Interestingly, LDOA member Paul Geoghegan has been able to provide the following further insight into the fate of the rest of organ of Oldbury Grammar School:

The instrument from the former Oldbury Grammar School was stored for a time (about 15 months) in the C of E church building at Rugeley. Not only had the building space for us to store almost all of the instrument in one place, but there was a hope that eventually the organ could be installed in the church on the rear gallery, (the original position for the current organ, now in a chamber above the south choir) where it would have sung out into the nave unimpeded.

However, when a new incumbent was appointed, the Archdeacon used the opportunity to instruct that the stored instrument be removed from the premises within seven

days. We managed to get a further stay of execution of 21 days, and the pipe work, console and chests were then transported to Birmingham, and stored across various locations. Despite some extensive advertising and some enquiries from abroad, we were not successful in achieving a new home for the instrument. With some help from Paul Hale, we finally managed to dispose of the vast majority of the pipework to an organ builder for stock, but sadly the chests, swell box and other parts had to be scrapped. At least most of the pipe work was saved for re-use, even if the instrument itself was sadly lost.

A Hauptwerk System home built console, by Paul Hodgetts

Introduction

I would imagine that most readers of this newsletter will have heard of Hauptwerk, even if not fully aware of what it is and how it works, and while I know that at least some have their own Hauptwerk instruments, for others this may be something completely new. Hauptwerk is computer software that takes incoming MIDI signals, looks up the required sounds in a digital sample library and sends those digital samples to your computer's Audio Interface (Sound Card).

In theory, the main selling point of Hauptwerk is that by loading different sample sets, you can play repertoire on the type of instrument that the composer would have known. In practice a lot of users have taken the opportunity to create something far more elaborate than we could possibly have afforded to buy.



Project

My goal was to build:

- A 3-manual console, with
- 61 note manual and 32 note pedal compasses

- standard console dimensions, but occupying the smallest possible amount of floor space
- simulated tracker touch
- plenty of console aids
- Choir and Swell under expression.

The internet in general and ebay in particular are great sources for components, and the total cost was under £3k excluding a computer (I use my work laptop).

MIDI

The very first decision to be taken was how to convert key presses into MIDI signals. Out of several options, I decided to "MIDIfy" some second-hand keyboards, using off the shelf electronics boards - there are companies who make exactly what you need here, so I bought a kit, capable of controlling 384 different circuits.

This was where the project became a four manual! For about €100 more than the 258-circuit version, this one had enough circuits for four 61 note manuals and a 32 note pedalboard, with 108 left over for stop controls or pistons.

Console Dimensions

Romsey Organ Works website has a page (<http://www.organworks.co.uk/news/console-dimensions/>) showing three separate sources of data about 'standard console sizes', which saved me the effort of touring our local churches with a tape measure. I used all of them, but mostly the Wicks Organ Company one.

Building Frame

Many Hauptwerk consoles omit stop knobs and jambs, since relabelling them for each organ would be tedious. Hauptwerk displays the organ's stop jambs on the computer screen and you click on a stop (or tap it on a touchscreen) to hand register.

The frame construction is 3mm angle iron, and the manuals are cantilevered as shown here.

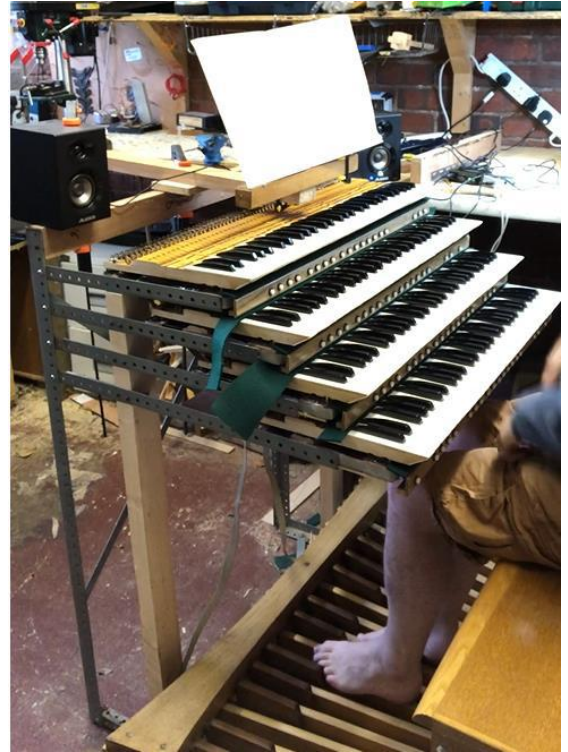


This approach was very convenient during the build: each manual can easily be removed, which meant I could keep

checking that the entire assembly would fit together. I didn't do drawn designs – I don't have the skills – and, lacking any prior experience, I just kept trying different arrangements and components until I got something that worked.

Manuals

The keyboards are two pairs of (I think) ex-Compton manuals. They are wood cored, had been well cleaned and were in excellent condition. I dismantled them completely, then mounted the front and rear pin rails to the thin plywood bases that I was using.



The small black objects at the very front of the keys in picture below are reed (magnetic) switches, which actuate the sound. Although commonly used for pedalboards in digital and pipe organs, these have a bad reputation for manual action – they're known for ciphering. However, they are very cheap (a few pence each). Other available options would have been more like £1-£2 per key which adds up quickly over 244 keys. My solution was to get a very small (5mm x 2mm x 0.5mm), weak, magnet very close to the reed switch, and so far, it has been very successful – once the exact correct adjustment is made to the position of the magnet, I've had no ciphers at all.



Tracker Touch

The other thing I wanted to add to the keyboards was simulated tracker touch. Tracker "feel" is unique to the organ and gives a very different, and much more rewarding experience than simply pushing against the constant force of a spring. My solution involved – again – small magnets, but this time very strong ones.

The picture shows the key tail, the far end from the player. Above the key is the brass spring that brings the key back up, and at the left-hand side of the picture is the adjustment screw (resting on green felt) that sets the exact height that the key sits at when not pressed.



My addition is the black bolt and the magnet positioned directly below it. The magnetic pull is very strong at short range but falls off within a couple of mm as the bolt moves upwards. The effect, as with a tracker action, is that a hard press is required initially, but then only a smaller one once the key starts moving. The bolt does not actually touch the magnet at any point: the magnet was chosen to be strong enough for this task without needing to touch the bolt, and the air gap can be adjusted to give exactly the right resistance.

Pedalboard

This came from a donor organ, and the main tasks were to clean it and add wiring, reed switches and magnets. Due to the greater travel distance of a pedal, the magnet adjustments did not need to be so precise and the arrangement adopted is shown here. This is the end on view of the five highest pedals looking from the organ towards the player.



Superglue, Gorilla Glue and staples were important to this construction effort!

Cleaning was a matter of carefully dismantling, washing, sanding, varnishing and reassembling. Reassembly was the hardest part, because the curves all fit together perfectly when in place, but getting them there is a different matter. Also, while pushing one pedal down against its spring is easy, doing 32 simultaneously to get the front top panel back is a lot of work!

Pictured below, a white key before sanding – note the surface wear - and the final reassembled pedalboard



Thumb and Toe Pistons



The thumb pistons are simple switches, again sourced from ebay. The piston rails are thin oak strip, sold by B&Q as edging strip.

One puzzle was how to label the pistons. I considered various options but, in the end, decided not to attempt it at all. The arrangement is pretty conventional, so there isn't really any need. I got the toe pistons off ebay from an organ builder who was having a clear-out.

Expression Pedals

These were all sourced from donor organs, and they all started off looking like the left-hand example in the upper picture. I removed the perished rubber coverings and glue, sanded and varnished the wood underneath, for a remarkable transformation, as in the lower picture.



Casework

This was the very final task. I initially bought oak veneered chipboard to attach to the building frame, but didn't like the look of that, so upgraded it to solid oak – which was, to my surprise, not much different in price, but looks so much better. The top panel is still veneered chipboard, which I intend to upgrade, as is the lower chassis – but I plan to leave that as it is.

Sound System

There isn't one (yet!). Part of me never quite believed that this was all going to work, and so I deferred the cost of amp and speakers until Phase II. At present I play through headphones only, as the little speakers built into the frame, while useful for testing, make a very poor sound. The other reason for deferring the cost of a speaker system is that I doubt I'll get much chance to use it, in consideration of other family members!

Configuring and Using Hauptwerk and the Console

When you first load a new organ, Hauptwerk lists all the manuals, pistons, swell pedals etc on screen. You click on a manual on screen and then play the lowest and highest notes on the keyboard that you want to use for that manual. (and do the same for the pedalboard). For expression pedals, you select a pedal on screen and move the one you want to use for that up and down a couple of times. For pistons you click the one you want and then push it on the console, and the same feature is available for stop knobs, although I don't have any. From this, Hauptwerk knows which MIDI signal corresponds to which

key or control. For a console of this size, that was a little time consuming, but it was very simple to do.

Reflections

This project was a long time in the working and there were times when it looked as though it would never finish. The time was busy with other things of course - two house moves, one Open University degree in a completely unrelated field, a day job, and a family – and I've only really had a proper workshop area for the second half of that time.

Obviously, I could just have bought a two manual organ and spent the time practising. But the sense of achievement I got when I finished it, and the motivation to practise since then, has been enormous. If I had to start over, knowing what I do now, I think it would take me less than a year to build Version 2.

You're welcome to arrange a time to come and have a go – drop me a line at paul@hodgetts.eu

About the author

I'm a business software engineer with degrees in Physics, in IT, and Business Administration. My next organ goal is ARCO, and before COVID-19 intervened I intended to sit the practical this summer. I left my most recent church post, (Our Lady & St Kenelm RC Church Halesowen) at Easter 2017 to make my weekends a bit more flexible around the children's needs, but will likely find another church post at some point.

Ed. The above article is an abridged version of a very comprehensive 21-page report by Paul on his Hauptwerk project. As this would be of great interest and assistance to any members who may be contemplating embarking on a similar project, a copy of the full project report will accompany this newsletter. I can recommend it as a very informative and interesting read with copious photos!

MEMBERS' NEWS

Cathy Lamb receives a nice accolade

In the June issue of the IAO magazine *Organists' Review*, LDOA honorary member Cathy Lamb received a nice mention by William Whitehead, curator of the Orgelbüchlein project, in his article *Isolation Notes* on Page 94, for her video of *Contrapunctus 16 from The Art of Fugue BWV 1080* posted on YouTube. See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tvr4ZnQxsNM&feature=youtu.be>

It's played on the Lamb's home Hauptwerk organ, and Cathy advises that it also hit the slipped disc blog, and the RCO mentioned it in a newsletter. It's come to something when you have to resort to playing a duet with yourself, to overcome the problem of social distancing! Very skilful though, as you might expect, and clever use of technology to produce the video.

Liam Condon

After the frustration of the last two months lockdown precluded access to the Hill organ, and the loss of his Musicshare work, Lichfield Cathedral Organ Scholar and

LDOA student member Liam Condon will be staying on as Organ Scholar for a second year, hopefully giving Liam the opportunity to make up for lost time. Our best wishes also to Liam when taking his delayed ARCO exam.

Callum Alger

LDOA student member Callum Ager has been Organ Scholar at Westminster Cathedral since September 2019, and as well as the unexpected resignation of Director of Music Martin Baker at the end of December, like Liam, Callum has had the frustration of not only been locked out from access to the superb Willis organ for the last two months, but also having to manage with just a piano on which to practice. After a disrupted time for what should have been a great opportunity, we extend our good wishes to Callum in finding a suitable post from September to further develop his promising career.

NEWS FROM THE LDOA COMMITTEE

Volunteer to join the Committee

No volunteers received so far to join the Committee, or indeed take over the chairmanship, so if anyone is interested, please contact Trevor Smedley or Richard Syner for an informal discussion.

Next Committee Meeting

Due in June, but postponed until restrictions on gatherings are eased.

NEWS & SNIPPETS FROM THE ORGAN WORLD

Acclaimed organist Jennifer Bate dies

Just too late for inclusion in the last newsletter, the death on 25th March 2020 from cancer at the age of 75 was announced of the concert organist Jennifer Bate.



Jennifer Bate 1944-2020

At St James' Muswell Hill, where her father had been organist for 54 years, she met and played for Messiaen in 1975. It was the beginning of a productive friendship as she became one of the foremost proponents of his work, including her landmark recording of the complete works of Messiaen. She also recorded the complete works of Mendelssohn, César Franck, and a whole series of British works. She loved Northern Italy, giving some 150 recitals there, and her tours outside Europe took her to Hong

Kong, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Caribbean and South America.

She was a patron of the Society of Women Organists, and was appointed OBE in 2008, as well as appointed to the rank of Chevalier in the Ordre de la Legion d'Honneur, in recognition of her skill as an organist and her contribution in making Messiaen's organ works more widely known worldwide.

In 1968 she married Sir George Thalben-Ball, some 48 years her senior, and looked after him during a serious illness, but the marriage was annulled in 1972. She is survived by her partner Andrew Roberts

New Appointments

- Rachel Mahon, Assistant Director of Music at Coventry Cathedral will take over in September as Director of Music when Kerry Beaumont retires. Rachel also released in February 2020 her debut CD playing the organ of Coventry Cathedral
- Josh Stephens has been appointed Master of Music at Sheffield Cathedral
- Alex Patterson will become Director of Music at Salford Cathedral from July 2020
- Alexander Woodrow has been appointed as Director of Music at Leeds Minster

Harrison & Harrison – major organ projects

Harrison & Harrison Head Tuner Stephen Alliss is currently covering the entire country in case of emergencies, recordings or requested visits, and indeed has just spent three days at Westminster Abbey. So, I'm once again greatly indebted to him for taking time out to provide this update on their major projects:

Salisbury Cathedral

Now completed, Salisbury remains in the Willis style with the Great, Swell, Choir and Pedal all coned tuned. The reeds are speaking in their original style – the felt that had been placed in the resonators in pre-Harrison times having been removed. The opening recital here has been delayed by the current restrictions, but a recording is in the planning, with the release still scheduled for October.

Canterbury Cathedral

Now also completed, the organ has three 32' pedal ranks, including a 32' Double Open Wood, the first to be made by H & H since the Colston Hall organ in 1956. Canterbury is set to become a benchmark instrument. It is truly stunning, and has already brought many plaudits from organists the world over. The opening recital here has also been delayed.

York Minster Organ

The York Minster organ was removed in October 2018 by Harrison & Harrison, and taken to their works for a £2m repair and refurbishment. The complete reconstruction based on the Harrison & Harrison musical concept of 1917/1931 is expected to take two years,

Their workshop at Durham remains fully active, working six days per week to enable full social distancing to be maintained. The organ of York Minster is currently in their workshop being dismantled for packing and they expect to be delivering to site in early June, with full site work commencing at the end of June. Voicing is due to be completed by the end of February 2021.

St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Edinburgh

Harrison & Harrison are cleaning and overhauling the Henry Willis/Harrison & Harrison organ, but site work is delayed by the current Scottish lockdown restrictions.

Christ Church, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA

Harrison & Harrison have announced that they have been commissioned to build a new 4 manual 86-stop landmark instrument for Christ Church, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA. The organ is to be entirely new, retaining only the bottom octave of the Sub Bourdon, the Chimes and Harp from the present instrument. It will be housed in two chambers on either side of the chancel, each with two new organ cases facing the chancel and the nave. Installation is planned for 2022.

Nicholson – major organ projects

Manchester Town Hall Organ

Nicholson have been commissioned to undertake the historical reconstruction of the organ in Manchester Town Hall. The organ was built by the Parisian organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll in 1877, enlarged by him in 1893, and then rebuilt by the English firms Lewis & Co. in 1912 and Jardine & Co. in 1970.

They will be undertaking the work in an equal collaboration with the Dutch firm of Flentrop Orgelbouw. The organ will be returned in almost every way to its 1893 condition, including the re-establishment of the original pitch, the manufacture of new actions (with three new Barker Lever machines), new console, chests, and aspects of the wind system, all in a strict replica of the Cavallé-Coll style.



The original appearance of the organ, which will be reconstructed

The casework will be returned to its original 1877 appearance, as shown in the photo, with the recreation of the wooden staircases built into either side of the facade.

The reconstruction of the organ, the most significant surviving instrument of the few built in the UK by arguably the world's finest organ builder of the nineteenth century, forms part of a much wider project to safeguard and repair the whole of the Grade 1-listed building. The organ will be wholly dismantled in the late spring of 2020, with completion to coincide with the re-opening of Waterhouse's much-loved building. The consultant for the work will be Dr William McVicker.

Bute Hall, University of Glasgow

The Bute Hall is the graduation hall of the University of Glasgow and was designed by George Gilbert Scott. In 1901, a four-manual organ by Lewis & Co. of London was built in a fine case in the west gallery of the hall.



The organ of Bute Hall, University of Glasgow

The organ was dramatically rebuilt in 1962 by Hill, Norman & Beard, with many tonal changes reflecting the fashions of the day towards a neo-classical style. A new detached console was provided in a side gallery.

As phase two of a planned three-phase project to restore the organ, Nicholson will be undertaking major work on the instrument in 2020. The console will be removed for complete restoration and upgrading, including a new piston capture system and modern playing aids. A new solid-state electrical transmission will also be installed.

Radley College, Oxfordshire

Nicholson's have been commissioned to build a new organ for the chapel. This will, once again, be sited in the centre of the west gallery, within a new oak case. The organ will have three manuals and 53 stops, with mechanical action to the manuals and electro-pneumatic action to the Pedal Organ. The largest pedal pipework will be located in the chamber where the present organ is situated, behind a new tracery screen to match the adjacent windows.

The instrument will be entirely new, save for the pipework of two stops that are being retained, and will be Nicholson's third new school organ in recent years,

alongside those of Uppingham School and Dean Close School, Cheltenham.

Construction commenced in 2020, with installation planned for autumn 2021.

YouTube broadcasts in lieu of cancelled recitals

A number of organists, faced with cancelled recitals, have streamed live organ recitals and uploaded them to YouTube, some inviting donations, including the following:

- Gert van Hoef, the young Dutch organist, is continuing to give weekly recitals on Thursdays, which commenced 19th March, as mentioned in the last newsletter
- Jonathan Scott, is giving monthly recitals commenced 30th March then 29th April
- Richard McVeigh is giving numerous recitals which commenced 28th March via 'Beauty in Sound' (see also below)

Organ Loving Cat!

In the live 30th April 2020 recital by Richard McVeigh on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emDxS405bg0> watch out for the appearance of his organ loving cat about 16 min 45 seconds into the programme!

LOAN OF ORGAN DVDS

For those in lockdown, a reminder about the offer in April's newsletter that the Chairman is happy to offer LDOA members the loan from his collection of organ DVDs. See the list in April's newsletter.

The DVDs generally comprise a recital by the organist at the cathedral/church whose instrument is featured, plus bonus tracks on the featured organ. So, if you would like to take up the offer of the loan of one or more DVDs to help relieve the boredom of being stuck at home, do contact Trevor Smedley at trevorsmedley@ntlworld.com

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL NEWS/EVENTS

Owing to the COVID-19 restrictions, all services and events at Lichfield Cathedral have been cancelled or postponed until further notice. The following events notified to us by Martyn Rawles, but not yet listed on the Cathedral's website, may therefore be subject to change:

Music for Reflection

The 2020 'Music for Reflection' lunchtime concerts are due to take place on Wednesdays from 1.15 to 1.50pm. Dates and performers are listed below, but no information is available currently as to whether the recitals will go ahead.

- 22nd July 2020 – Nicholas Freestone (organ), Assistant Director of Music, Worcester Cathedral
- 29th July 2020 – John Robinson (organ), Director of Music Blackburn Cathedral

- 5th August 2020 – Henry Metcalfe, LDOA Student Member and Organ Scholar, St Mary's, Bourne Street, London
- 12th August 2020 - Alex Binns (organ), Director of Music, Derby Cathedral
- 19th August 2020 – Lichfield Cathedral Music School Department Ensemble. A complete performance of Mendelssohn's exuberant *Octet*
- 26th August 2020 – Ailsa Cochrane (mezzo-soprano) and Paul Whitehall (piano). A programme of song, including Finzi's Shakespeare settings, *Let us garlands bring*
- 2nd September 2020 – Jonathan Allsopp (organ), Assistant Director of Music, Southwell Minster

It is understood that there are to be no evening organ recitals planned for autumn 2020.

IAO/RCO MATTERS

IAO Music Festival 2020

The 2020 IAO Music Festival was to have taken place in Edinburgh, where IAO President Dr John Kitchen is based, from Friday 24th to Tuesday 28th July 2020, but regrettably because of the COVID-19 restrictions, this has had to be postponed until 2021. This year's IAO/RCO Organ Playing Competition semi-finalists, Merle Hillmer, Joshua Hughes, James Short, Ashley Wagner and Wenying Wu, have all been invited to participate in Edinburgh next year. Accordingly, the IAO has agreed to extend John Kitchen's presidency by one year.

Postponement of the IAO Music Festival to 2021, will mean that the next OrganFest will now be moved to 2022.

IAO Midlands Organ Day 2020

The 2020 Midlands Organ Day is planned for Saturday 26th September 2020 in Northampton. A decision about whether it is advisable to go ahead will be made in the summer.

The event will be based at St Matthew's Church and All Saints' Church, and have a theme of 'Liturgical Playing', based on masterclasses lead by Simon Johnson and Richard Pinel.

This timetable below and the recital programme are provisional and may be subject to change.

Event 1: IAO Midlands Organ Day

- 10.00 Registration and welcome. Tea and coffee available at £1 per cup.
- 10.30 The St. Matthew's Walker Organ: an introduction by Justin Miller, and Andrew Reid, and short recital by LDOA student member Callum Alger.
- 11.00 Masterclass 1: hymns, psalms (plainsong and/or Anglican chant) and liturgical improvisation.
- 12.30 Lunch break – lunch or picnic bags available at St Matthew's Parish Rooms – pre-booking required. Open Consoles will be available throughout the lunch break at St Matthew's, St Gregory's, All Saints' and New Testament Church of God, Northampton.

- 2.30 Masterclass 2, with the choristers of St. Matthew's church: accompanying choral repertoire.
- 4.00 Refreshment break. Tea and coffee available at £1 per cup.
- 4.30 Finale: performance of music worked on in the Masterclasses
- 5.00 Supper available at St. Matthew's – booking required. Open Console at St Michael and All Angels.

There will be opportunities during the breaks throughout the day to try state-of-the-art digital organs, and to browse and buy organ music, DVDs and CDs from Church Organ World.

Event 2: Evening recital celebrating 125 years of the iconic Walker organ at St. Matthews

Simon Johnson, Richard Pinel, Andrew Reid and Callum Alger showcase the Walker organ in a spectacular joint recital, featuring Duruflé's *Trois Danses*, and *Neptune from Holst's The Planets*.

For full details and booking arrangements, see: <http://www.northamptonorganists.org.uk/midlands-organ-day/>

Launch of the IAO Newsletter

The first quarterly e-NewsSheet from the IAO was circulated in April to IAO members, i.e. members of one of their UK affiliated association or societies for whom the IAO has been given an email address.

Organ Music Discount Scheme

In the above mentioned IAO April e-NewsSheet, a special organ music discount scheme was announced for IAO members. The mail-order music business previously run by Allegro Music has been taken over by ChurchOrganWorld, and they are offering a 10% discount on any orders over £10 (excluding p & p). To qualify you must be a paid-up member of an IAO affiliated association or society. The applicable discount code required to claim the discount is given in the April e-NewsSheet.

IAO Benevolent Fund

In these times when some members' personal finances might be suffering, a timely reminder about the IAO Benevolent Fund may be in order.

This charity, separate from the IAO with its own board of trustees, was set up in 1930 to support members and their dependants when in financial need, and in the current crisis is able to receive applications. The fund also provides one-off grants to assist student members.

For details, including how to apply, please visit www.iaobf.com or contact the fund secretary Richard Allen via email: richard.m.allen@btinternet.com

ACCESS TO ORGANS DURING LOCKDOWN

As well as the impact on our well-being during lockdown, members will be well-aware of the impact on pipe organs through lack of use, and the maintenance problems that

could arise after lockdown. The following is an extract from the official guidance on the Church of England website entitled: *Access to church buildings during lockdown: general advice for incumbents, churchwardens and PCC members, dated 22nd May 2020 Version 1 – The House of Bishops Covid-19 Recovery Group*, setting out what is permitted to try and mitigate such maintenance problems.

Can I access the church for organ practice?

At present regular access for organ practice is not advised. This advice will be reviewed when there is a prospect of services happening in the church when music will be required. At present access, even for services, is limited to a member of the clergy or worship leader.

Can I perform weekly maintenance of the organ when the church is closed?

Yes. For a cathedral or church with a larger or mechanically complex organ prolonged lack of use will result in long-term problems with its performance. If an organist is available in the neighbourhood to keep all the action parts moving it is appropriate for them to do so. The purpose of this is to run through all the stops on all keyboards, and the pedalboard to keep leatherwork from sticking and keep electrical contacts clean.

Similar advice is also on the Methodist Church website.

See also the **Appendix** to this newsletter which covers detailed advice from organ builders Harrison & Harrison on how to look after organs that aren't being played during the lockdown.

VACANCIES

Holy Trinity Parish Church, Sutton Coldfield

Revd John Routh has confirmed that Margaret Simpson has been appointed Director of Music/Organist, with effect from May 2020, although in practice she will have to await the re-opening of the church before taking up her new role.

Organist & choir-leader required at All Saints' Church, Sudbury.

The vacancy remains unfilled. See our website www.iao.org.uk/lichfield for details, or contact Alan Smith: alansmith54@tiscali.co.uk /01889 567437

FORTHCOMING LOCAL ORGAN RECITALS

Recitals to the end of June have assumed to be cancelled or postponed, but recitals from July onwards are also likely to be subject to change, so please check directly with the venue before making any wasted journeys.

LDOA Members' Recitals/Events

Events listed are as currently advised, but are of course subject to cancellation/postponement, so please check before attending.

Cathy Lamb

In addition to her Lichfield Cathedral School/Lichfield Cathedral duties, Cathy is scheduled to give the following recitals:

- Wednesday 9th September 2020 from 12.30 to 1.15pm at St Modwen's, Burton-on-Trent
- Thursday 14th January 2021 at 1.10pm at Chester Cathedral

Callum Alger

LDOA student member Callum Alger, currently Organ Scholar at Westminster Cathedral, is scheduled to perform the following recitals:

- Saturday 26th September 2020 – playing as part of the IAO Midlands Organ Day from 10am to 9pm at St Matthew's Church, Northampton
- Monday 12th October 2020 from 1.10 to 2pm at Southwark Cathedral
- Saturday 21st November 2020 from 5.00 to 6.00pm at The Swiss Church, London

Pat Neville - Trinity Methodist Church, Shenstone

The Tuesday 16th June 2020, free 'Come & Go' Organ Recital from 12.45 to 1.30pm. has regrettably been cancelled.

Liam Condon

See listing below for St Modwen's, Burton-on-Trent

Henry Metcalfe

LDOA student member and Organ Scholar at St Mary's Bourne Street, London, is due to make a return visit to give a recital at Lichfield Cathedral as part of the 'Music for Reflection' lunchtime organ recitals series on Wednesday 5th August 2020 from 1.15 to 1.50pm.

St Modwen's, Burton-on-Trent

Whilst the June/July recitals have had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions, LDOA member Tony Westerman has advised that for now the following 2020 Wednesday lunchtime recitals, from 12.30 to 1.15pm, at St Modwen's are still planned, but this could change depending upon restrictions in force at the time:

Summer Recitals – 'Melody, Rhythm & Whimsy'

- 2nd September 2020 – Tom Corfield (Derby)
- 9th September 2020 – Cathy Lamb (Lichfield Cathedral School)
- 16th September 2020 – Ben Mills (Keble College, Oxford)
- 23rd September 2020 – Liam Condon (Lichfield Cathedral)

Angela Sones

See All Saints' Four Oaks listing below.

Richard Hartshorn

See All Saints' Four Oaks listing below

All Saints' Four Oaks

Following the success of the 2019 concert series, Angela Sones announced their exciting 2020 Lunchtime Organ Concert Series at All Saints' Parish Church, Four Oaks, held on the 3rd Saturday of the month at 1.00-1.45pm. This series was due to commence on Saturday 20th June, but as churches are closed until at least 4th July, the June recital will clearly not take place, and indeed the situation remains unclear as to which of the remaining recitals, listed below, will take place:

- 18th July 2020 - Angela Sones (All Saints, Four Oaks)
- August - No Concert
- 19th September 2020 - Charlotte Howdle & Olivia Howdle play Bach *Double Violin Concerto* with Organ and Harpsichord Continuo
- 17th October 2020 - Angela Sones & Richard Hartshorn - *Four Hands, Four Feet, Four Manuals*
- 21st November 2020 - Angela Sones & Richard Hartshorn - *Christmas Sparkle*

All concerts are free admission with a retiring collection. All welcome! We will aim to contact members with an update when available.

Broadway URC, Walsall

LDOA member and Walsall URC Organist & Choir-director Alan Taylor has regrettably been obliged to cancel this year's 'Coffee & Cake' organ recitals.

St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton

Following the successful completion in December 2019 of the £250,000 refurbishment of the 'Father' Willis organ of St Peter's Wolverhampton, LDOA honorary member and St Peter's Organist Emeritus, Peter Morris, had originally secured the services of Professor Ian Tracey to perform the inaugural recital, on Saturday 6th June 2020 at 7.30pm, but regrettably this event has been cancelled due to the COVID-19 restrictions. An invitation has been extended to Ian Tracey to perform the recital when it is possible to do so.

Recitals In Local Area (to end of July 2020)

Given the current coronavirus restrictions, no local recitals have been listed for June/July, and indeed the main website for listing recitals nationally www.organrecitals.com 'has been shut down for the time being' by Steve Smith, and still remains so.

LICHFIELD & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

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APPENDIX

The following advice is provided by organ builders Harrison & Harrison on their website, about how to mitigate potential maintenance problems caused through lack of use of pipe organs during the COVID-19 lockdown, which members may find useful:

1. Organ mechanisms remain more reliable when they are used regularly. As a general rule we recommend that an organ is played for at least 15 minutes a week, preferably more frequently, and that all parts of the instrument are used. This applies particularly to organs with complex pneumatic, electric or electro-pneumatic actions.

2. In buildings where relative humidity levels regularly exceed 70%, the organ is likely to suffer the effects of disuse. Organs with mechanical action are those most likely to be affected, though pneumatic mechanisms are also vulnerable. Problems may range from action mechanisms seizing and leather becoming stiff up to the development of surface mould. The use of low-level heating to reduce humidity, as propounded by the National Trust and other such bodies, is recommended in these cases. Regular use of an organ in such an environment will help to maintain its long-term reliability. Switching off all power to a building will put out of use low-level electrical heaters, which are sometimes installed in organs to reduce the effects of high humidity; this may prove detrimental.

3. Use of an organ may help to identify problems that are developing in the fabric of the building. Storm damage or lead theft is often first identified by an organ builder who is called out to remedy a defect on the organ. Finding a problem with the organ through its use may lead to other issues being discovered.

4. Regular use of an organ may help to discourage the activities of vermin.

5. Some older electronic piston systems which rely on battery back-up to retain the settings may lose their settings or have them scrambled. Deeply discharged batteries may not re-charge. Again, regular use will help to prevent this problem.

6. It would be wise to make use of cloth key covers if available, though tightly-fitting console doors should be left ajar to allow air to circulate.

7. It would be sensible to switch off and unplug CCTV and suchlike equipment in the vicinity of an organ.

8. Where an organ humidifier is fitted, there is a risk of excessive build-up of moisture in the wind system if the instrument is not used. This may affect leather and glue bonds, and serious damage has been caused to organs due to this. Playing the organ as in 1. above would lessen the possibility of this, due to the flow of air that would then be encouraged. Outside the heating season, the humidifier will normally switch itself off automatically in accordance with the atmospheric conditions; as an additional precaution it could be switched off manually while the organ is out of use. Humidifiers should be cleaned and sterilised at least once a year to avoid the build-up of bacteria in stagnant water. The effect of a bacteria-laden humidifier in combination with an organ that has been out of use has not, to our knowledge, been studied, but there is the potential for distribution through a wind system and into a building when a long-silent organ is brought back into operation.

9. Modern organ blowers should not suffer any detriment when out of use. Older, pre-1960, blower motors in damp conditions, such as a cellar or out-house, may develop insulation problems. If such a motor is not used for a prolonged period then it should be checked by an electrician before use. This requires a high-voltage insulation test at 1000V, which should not result in a reading below 50 megaohms; if a reading below this is obtained then repairs will be required. Using a blower regularly will avoid this issue, as the motor will become warm in use and dispel moisture.

Harrison & Harrison 23 April 2020