

MARCH 2025 NEWSLETTER

Greetings from the LDOA. Already – unbelievably – at the end of the first quarter of 2025, with lighter mornings and floods of snowdrops and daffodils in our churchyards.

In the last issue we reported consideration of some relevant issues which some of our members have offered as interesting thoughts which we are trying to address, which included a balance of events in our programme – visits, talks, playing opportunities

- events for those who might be shy about playing in front of others
- educational events
- more local events

I did ask for your thoughts and some ideas at morrisp@blueyonder.co.uk but nothing seems to have been forthcoming. Nevertheless our January and February visits did bring a number of members out – so we did learn from them that churches can be quite inhospitably cold and that perhaps December, January and February might be better offering events which could avoid the longest of journeys and the greater demand for church gas consumption.

FORTHCOMING LDOA VISITS/EVENTS

But, looking ahead we do have an exciting session in the guaranteed warm environment of St Michael's, Boldmere. Close to Lichfield and Sutton Coldfield (B73 5RX), it boasts a 1967 (not THAT long ago??) Harrison and Harrison and a console we can clearly see and gather round. We had a happy visit there for our 2023 AGM. There is plenty of on-street car parking around the church, and Wyld Green station is just ten minutes' walk away.

This event, on **Saturday 29th March at 2.00 pm** is an Improvisation Seminar given by our member **Nigel de Gaunt-Allcoat**. It is open to all and is free of charge to both Members and non-Members.



We probably all have to improvise if we're church organists so this is a highly valued and necessary skill. Nigel has an international reputation as a performer, especially of Baroque Keyboard music and Improvisation, and many of his students have been winners of international competitions.

Nigel was born in Leicester and educated in England, Italy and The Netherlands. In his teens he won an international reputation as a master of the art of improvisation, an art which he has demonstrated for the past 50-odd years throughout Europe, in Canada and the USA, in Russia and Australia, indeed he has been a frequent visitor to perform repertoire concerts throughout the world, with 160 such events in Scandinavia alone.

Much in demand as a teacher, he has taught young organists at Oxford and Cambridge Universities for over 40 years, has been a visiting Tutor at the Royal Northern College of Music, Professor at The Royal Academy in London, and a visiting Professor in Dresden and St Petersburg. In 1986 he founded the International Summer Organ Conservatoire (ISOC), where some of Europe's leading organists would gather - initially in England and later in France - to give masterclasses and concerts. His debut at The Royal Festival Hall was in the same year. He has also been a jury member at many organ competitions all over the world. It promises to be a hugely inspirational event. Do come and join us.

Our other events for the rest of the 'season' are:
Saturday April 26th



A playing opportunity at St Chad's RC Cathedral in Birmingham (B4 6EU) at 11.00. The innovative Walker organ of 1993 (3/40) is a model of clarity and in a very dominant position in the west end balcony of this impressive Pugin church. Cathedral organist Nigel Morris tells us to limber up our fingers for the mechanical action. Many of us will have visited the Cathedral for recitals by Paul Carr or David Saint and now it's our turn.

We then visit the Carrs Lane Centre, Birmingham where the neo-Baroque Hill, Norman & Beard instrument made such a splash when it was first installed in 1970. It was designed as a worthy successor to the famous Norman & Beard instrument in the old church, parts of which dated back to 1826. It had been hoped to transfer this organ to the new church, but in the reduced space available this proved not to be possible. So a new organ was built, matched to the new church, and including the best of the old pipes. The detached three-manual console is in the gallery, having a low layout to enable the player to see. The church is likely to be rebuilt in the very near future and it will be interesting to see what may happen to such a fine instrument.



Carrs Lane Church, Birmingham

Saturday May 17th

Play the Organ day in 2025 'Play the Organ year'. Again we wish to welcome players, (both young and old this time) to St John's Hospice in Lichfield and also to St Peter's Wolverhampton in the year designated by the Royal College of Organists as Play the Organ Year. Liam Condon and Louis Stockton (the new Director of Music at St Peter's) are our leaders for the day.

Liam suggests very sensibly that another big stumbling block with learning the organ is obviously the opportunity to practise. He suggests that it is worth getting in touch with local churches in and around Lichfield to see if we can get an in-principle type of agreement that could let children come and practice on local instruments. This is easier said than done, but if we knew, for example, that a church would allow practice from 9-10am on a Saturday morning e.g. when the cleaners are in, it might help us to encourage youngsters to start. Ultimately if we were able to give out a contact for the local church so that arrangements could be made between the prospective organ pupils and their parents, that does give a good start. We might have a few contacts within the LDOA who could advise too.

In Wolverhampton the city's Music School will be installing the Makin organ that was used while Tettenhall's organ was being rebuilt. It is hoped that lessons will be made available as a result.

**ANY HELP PLEASE
in discovering suitable practice venues!!!!?**

On Saturday June 7th our second seminar of the year will be given at St John's Hospital, Lichfield, by our very active member Stephen Carleston.

The intriguing title is:

How to breathe new life into traditional hymns

St John's Hospital, Lichfield WS13 6PB HNB 2/18

Saturday July 5th at 4.00

Members' Recital

St Modwen's Burton-on-Trent DE14 1HA

Hill, Noman & Beard 3/27 1972

is again the venue for the Members' Recital. Please do come along and support this event either by playing or listening (and applauding heartily). It's a beautiful church and a very impressive instrument. And there will be cake!

The church will be open for performers from 1.30 for practice. Would anyone willing to participate in this recital, which will be open to the public, please contact Paul Hodgetts on paul@hodgetts.eu

RECENT EVENTS

Saturday January 25th

Coventry Cathedral

The playing event on the iconic Harrison and Harrison was a popular event and much enjoyed. The organ needs an overhaul and is booked in the H&H queue for 2027. Some of the flue ranks were blocked off but the experience was in no way diminished. Cathedral organist Rachel Mahon was on maternity leave and we were greeted by her Deputy Luke Fitzgerald.



The Cathedral was pleasantly busy, with groups of children's activities in the nave, so we were asked to play quietly for the first hour. This actually was helpful to us as we could explore some of the many beautiful quiet sounds without the temptation of going straight to the excitement of the huge resources of which the organ is certainly capable. (A bit like driving a Ferrari at 20 mph and enjoying its luxury rather than its speed). At 12.00, following the daily prayers of reconciliation which always happen there, the restraints came off and the joy of playing a large organ in a huge acoustic was fully evident.

Saturday February 22nd

Visit to Wolverhampton

St Michael's, Tettenhall and

St Johns-in-the-Square, Wolverhampton

This was a joint visit with Birmingham OA and focussed on the new and the old. There is a further description of St Michael's new work later in this newsletter and members were interested in the resurrection of this weather-battered organ, which was almost complete at the time.

The afternoon visit to St John's and its obvious antiquity was also enjoyed. The story of the Renatus Harris 1682 organ from London's Temple Church built for the Battle of the Organs involved such figures as Father Smith, Henry Purcell and Judge Jeffreys, the hanging judge of the bloody Assizes.

Harris lost the battle and the organ began its journey to Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin in 1688. In 1761 it was bought by the organ builder John Byfield and transported back across the Irish Sea to Holyhead and down the usual route towards London (which became Telford's A5 and A41 a century later). However Byfield died on the journey near Wolverhampton and his widow was left with a large amount of luggage! As it happened, St John's was almost complete and the church bought the organ from her.

Repairs were made at various times but many of the original pipes and the magnificent case in the west gallery still exist. The acoustic is very helpful

and the tracker action is prompt and relatively light. It is easy to believe that the 17th century voice is still present.



Obituaries Mike Thompson

We were all saddened to hear that our member Mike Thompson had died and we send our condolences to Karen. He will be greatly missed.

Tony Westerman writes:

Mike's interest in the mechanics of the organ and his delight in playing have been constant throughout a busy life. Working with Harold Cantrill during his teenage years, he acquired sufficient knowledge to rebuild the college organ at his Teacher Training College with the help of a fellow student and later built an organ in the school in which he taught music and maths.

Teaching, however, was not what Mike enjoyed; he wanted to work as an organ builder and so reduced his teaching commitment to work with Harold Cantrill. When he was ready to start on his own, Harold passed two jobs to Mike to help him establish his own business, a business that was also his passion. He built a III+P extension organ of seven ranks in his garage at home

and when he and Karen went on holiday he usually took work with him; idleness did not sit well with Mike.

Waste was an anathema to Mike. His partner, Simon Tipping, told me of an incident shortly after he had started working as Mike's apprentice that has a touch of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* about it. Mike had left Simon working in a church, painting pipes. All had been well prepared with a tarpaulin over pew backs and Simon was left to continue painting whilst Mike went to deal with another matter. A large tin of paint was knocked over, leaving Simon frantically scrambling to clean up the mess. Whilst surveying the situation upon his return, Mike's first question was, 'How much of the paint did you manage to save?'

This careful approach to materials has been valued by many churches where finances are stretched. There was never any question of skimping on a job, but if an organ part could be repaired rather than replaced, it would be, reducing cost to the church.

Members who have visited Kirk Langley or Newton Solney will know of the excellent work done by Mike and Simon. Voicing was always well-judged, as was the overall tonal scheme, resulting in instruments that will sing for decades. Actions were always left in splendid order, whether electric or mechanical, and tuning had to be perfect, no matter how long it took.

The number of instruments into which Mike and Simon have breathed new life is considerable, ranging from village organs to larger instruments such as the 37 stop III+P in All Souls, Coventry (NPOR M00102).

As a player, Mike was a competent musician, whether playing the established repertoire or performing on the Wurlitzer in Burton Town Hall. In my experience, not many church musicians can adapt to the requirements of the cinema organ, though Mike did not find this a problem having a very convincing style with all of the necessary flourishes and embellishments.

Mike will be sadly missed, though Simon, who has worked with Mike for over thirty years, will continue the business which has the care of around one hundred and sixty instruments throughout the wider Midlands area.



Mike and Karen at our visit to Pershore Abbey in January 2024

Timothy Storey



Tim Storey will be known to many for his elegant and erudite reviews in all the church music and organ periodicals of music and recordings. He was a mine of information and experience and a close friend of many leading organists, especially of Francis Jackson, whose travel arrangements he organised.

He came to this area after a Classics degree at Durham where he was also organ scholar of University College in the castle. As well as teaching classics at Wolverhampton Grammar School he was also a fine choir trainer at St Bart's church in Penn and then at St Peter's Collegiate Church in Wolverhampton. He oversaw the installation of the Walker organ in St Bart's and was interested in the work presently being carried out there by Nicholson's. Peter knew him at Durham and then in Wolverhampton and remembers well the occasion when Tim invited Peter and Francis Jackson to a meal before the opening recital at St Barts'. There was perhaps more wine drunk than might be the case these days and there was some confusion about the start time of the recital. A quick scramble got us there just in time and FJ was a little unsteady on the chancel step. Nevertheless, of course, his playing was sublime and the registration of Sweelinck took us straight to Dutch barrel organs.

Tim sustained a high standard of music (before the days of girls in the choir) and most of the boys were pupils at WGS. He was also a fine singer in his own right. He moved to Essex and suffered a debilitating stroke some 10 years ago. Nevertheless he continued his writing and was always keenly interested in what was going on in this area.

Simon Lindley



Keith Harrington of Church Music World has given permission for us to use his personal obituary of Simon.

Keith Harrington commented: *"I had heard Simon play on several occasions including at the formal opening of the Makin Organs new showroom and headquarters in Shaw in 2001. Having taken over the post of MD at Makin in 2004, I met Simon professionally in 2005. Thanks to his skills as a musician and a manager by then he was a fully adopted son of Yorkshire."*

Later that year, celebrating 35 years in business, we introduced the Makin Jubilee 2-35 organ which was designed in close collaboration with him. Shortly afterwards we started what was to be a ten-year collaboration with a series of organ battles at Leeds Parish Church with organists from the Parish church always including Simon and David Houlder, with visitors from Liverpool which always included Professor Ian Tracey and Dan Bishop. It was Simon who introduced me to my now good friend and colleague Ian Tracey. These friendly battles raised over £45,000 for the music department at the parish church and introduced so many customers to the Makin sound."

Keith continued *"Both my son John and I have so many very fond memories of these splendid evenings which always involved full choral evensong, a simply wonderful high tea from the infamous ladies of the vestry and then the concert. All good things come to an end, and after ten years we held the last battle."*

It is perhaps a year or so ago that I last saw Simon when he was on form with his wit, humour and repartee but it was clear that he was not a well man."

Ian Tracey commented to Keith, *"Simon will leave an immense hole in the management of so many facets of our profession and of church music in general. A truly great man and close friend has passed."*

Lucy Smith

Clive and Lucy Smith's daughter, Wendy, wrote to tell us the sad news that Lucy died on Thursday 6 March after a long illness. Clive and Lucy have been great supporters of LDOA for many years and we send Wendy and Clive our condolences.

Any members who would like to join the family for Lucy's funeral would be very welcome. It will take place at Lichfield Cathedral on Tuesday 1st April at 2pm. There will then be a private family committal, but all are invited to join them at Darnford Moors Golf Club, Darnford Lane, Lichfield, WS14 9JG from 3:15pm. RSVPs please send to Wendy Bloom on wendybloom5040@gmail.com ..

No flowers please, but if you'd like to make a donation to St Giles Hospice in memory of Lucy you can do so at <https://www.stgileshospice.com/support-us/donate/>

RIP

An ongoing plea!

Our relief organists list still only has two members. Could others sign up, please?

So far we have

Stephen Carleston at carleston108@gmail.com

Ian Boddington: 01543 268504.

Please would you let us know about church organ bench vacancies in your area.

It has also been suggested that we find out where there are churches where visitors would be able to try out the organ. Some members would really welcome a chance to have some time to play the organ and might even pay a small amount for doing so. Please pass this request on to others and/or let us know where this might be possible.

Thanks to David Perry for some more reviews

RECENT ORGAN RECITAL REVIEWS

Monday 4 November Town Hall, Birmingham

Thomas Trotter 855th

A powerful fugue based on the carillon of the bells at Soissons Cathedral and an ethereal and reflective Meditation, both by Maurice Duruflé, open today's concert. There was a fugal finale in the fourth of Bach's six sonatas for organ, probably written in 1730 though, as with so much of his music, it didn't then see the light of day until long after his death. Four of the *Twelve Short Pieces* by Rachel Laurin gave a flavour of her composing talent - she had a dual career as a concert organist. A cantilène (cantilena), which features in this work and in the Pierné that followed, comes from the Italian for lullaby and is a lyrical song or instrumental passage. Pierné dedicated his *Three Pièces* to three influential figures in French organ music and teaching, Samuel Alexandre Rousseau, Theodore Dubois and Alexandre Guilmant.

Die Meistersinger was Wagner's only mature comic opera and a huge success at its premiere in 1868. Its full-blooded overture lends itself perfectly to the organ, especially when arranged by a master transcriber like Edwin Lemare.

Monday 18 November Town Hall, Birmingham

Thomas Trotter 856th

A pupil of Stanford, John Ireland later taught composition at the Royal College of Music and, although most noted for his piano and orchestral compositions, his works for organ include a Miniature Suite and this delightful *Capriccio*.

Mendelssohn's performances at Birmingham Town Hall - as conductor, pianist and organist - are well documented, but he was reticent about agreeing to play his organ sonatas in 1846 unless the instrument had "materially improved" since he'd last played it. On that occasion he had found the touch to be "so heavy that I could not perform upon it in public". The organ was moved into its current position on Mendelssohn's advice.

Also in today's concert are Distler's *Trio Sonata*, a work that combines his interests in Baroque revival with his own distinctive voice; and Marcel Dupré's ten variations on an old French Christmas melody which he composed on train journeys while fulfilling a 94-date US concert tour.

Ponchielli's single most popular work was his opera *La Gioconda* from which comes the famous ballet, *Dance of the Hours*, that closes Act III.

Wednesday 20 November St Alphege, Solihull

Liam Condon

In a bitterly cold church (the heating was being repaired during his practice session, but not in time for the recital), LDOA member, Liam, played a very varied, impressive and joyful recital to an appreciative audience, as part of the church's regular Wednesday lunchtime recital series.

He bravely played the whole recital from an iPad, relying on mouth twitches to turn his pages using the remarkable ForScore software. It and he performed admirably, despite frozen fingers. St Alphege has CCTV showing the performer's hands and, occasionally, feet.

He included Cocker's *Tuba Tune*, Parry's *Eventide Chorale Prelude*, Walford Davies' *Solemn Melody*, Elgar's *Imperial March* and *Salut d'Amour*, Alain's *Litanies*, Vaughan Williams' *Rhosymedre*, and finished with Vierne's *Allegro from Symphonie No 2*.

Monday 6 January 2025 Lichfield Cathedral

Our President: Martyn Rawles

The nine movements of Olivier Messiaen's *La Nativité du Seigneur* are not often heard in the context of Cathedral services, so it is a rare treat to be offered a 70-minute, pay-to-get-out, evening recital containing them all!

On an evening of very poor and cold weather, it was remarkable that about 60 people turned out to sit in the candle-lit Quire to experience the nine meditations, each prefaced by Messiaen's description, first in French (read by Eric Lunt, who wrote the comprehensive programme notes) and then, in English, by Canon Gregory Platten, who is a huge Messiaen fan.

Olivier Messiaen's own travels and research into the music of more distant cultures also allowed for the development of a style which took many of his works beyond the established traditions of western music. The influence of birdsong also features strongly in his compositions. But, in the end, it is by their impact upon the listener which Messiaen wanted his works to be judged. He wrote that they must be interesting, beautiful to listen to and have an emotional impact.

Born in Avignon in 1908, Messiaen and family moved to live with his uncle in Grenoble at the start of World War 1. It was there, in the Alps of the Dauphiné region, that Olivier felt most at home, where he adopted the Roman Catholic faith, began to learn piano, and composed most of his music.

By the age of eleven Messiaen had entered the Paris Conservatoire where he made outstanding progress under the tuition of, among others, Paul Dukas, Charles-Marie Widor and Marcel Dupré. In the autumn of 1927 Messiaen joined Dupré's organ course. Dupré later wrote that, at that time, Messiaen had never seen an organ console before and sat watching while Dupré explained and demonstrated the instrument. A week later he returned and played for Dupré Bach's Fantasia in C Minor (BWV 537) to a very impressive standard! In 1931 the post of organist at L'Église de la Sainte-Trinité became vacant and, with the support of Dupré, Tournemire and Widor, Messiaen was appointed to the post which he held for the remaining 61 years of his life.

La Nativité du Seigneur was composed by a 27-year-old Messiaen in the summer of 1935 in Grenoble in the French Alps during an extended stay there, and was premièred at La Trinité on 27th February 1936, not by Messiaen himself, but with the movements shared between three of his organist friends. The work consists of nine movements (Messiaen refers to them as Meditations) inspired by the birth of Christ.

1. La Vierge et l'Enfant (The Virgin and the Child)
2. Les Bergers (The Shepherds)
3. Desseins éternels (Eternal Designs)
4. Le Verbe (The Word)
5. Les Enfants de Dieu (The Children of God)
6. Les Anges (The Angels)
7. Jésus accepte la Souffrance (Jesus accepts his suffering)
8. Les Mages (The Magi)
9. Dieu parmi nous (God among us)

Messiaen himself wrote a lengthy preface to the published score in which he refers to five main theological ideas: predestination (Desseins Eternels), God's life and suffering among us (Dieu parminous and Jésus accepte la souffrance), three births (La Vierge et l'Enfant, Le Verbe and Les Enfants de Dieu) and characters which help to define the Christmas story (Les Bergers, Les Anges and Les Mages). Messiaen chose not to trace the narrative event by event, but moves between the major episodes of the story and opportunities for reflection and contemplation of its deeper spiritual significance

(with grateful acknowledgement to Eric Lunt for extracts from his programme notes)

As expected, from someone who knows the versatile Lichfield Hill organ so well, Martyn Rawles produced some amazing sounds, especially in the slow, contemplative movements, which require so much concentration (and a wide hand-span!) from the player. The audience was clearly spellbound by the inspiring performance as from the organ loft, we heard no evidence of their presence. A monumentally difficult work, requiring massive amounts of stamina, Martyn commented that he did not know why he inflicted such a challenge on himself, voluntarily. Also as expected, he rose to it admirably... A magical experience for those of us who automatically and unjustifiably recoil from the mere mention of works by Messiaen; those who stayed away missed a treat.

Monday 13 January 2025 Town Hall, Birmingham
Thomas Trotter 859th

Clearly the intimidating start to Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in D major*, BWV 532, holds no terrors for the City Organist, who took his opening bow, sat on the bench, pushed a general piston and launched straight into an impeccable set of pedal scales and arpeggios, to start the New Year.

Thomas said that he had learned three new pieces for today's concert, beginning with *Fantaisie on 'Une Jeune Fillette'* by the Dutch minimalist composer, Bert Matter (b1937), based on an old Renaissance French folk tune (unlike most of his other works that are liturgical). It is symmetrical, in three sections: the first and third beautifully harmonised, with the tune on the top, but the second is minimalist – made up of short motifs and lots of repeated notes and repeated chords creating an oscillating or pulsating effect, becoming louder and more declamatory, followed by a diminuendo into the third verse. The tune was also used in the Lutheran chorale *Von Gott will ich nicht lassen*, giving the rare chance in a lunchtime recital to play a complementary Bach chorale prelude, BWV 658. In Bach's version the tune is played slowly on the pedals with an intricate accompaniment – one of the quietest pieces ever included in a TH recital!

Always a crowd-pleaser, the previous City Organist, Thalben Ball's *Variations for pedals on a theme of Paganini* followed, "now that my feet are thoroughly warmed up after the opening Bach Prelude and Fugue"! Precise as ever, Thomas rarely looked at the music, until the final variation when the hands join in to produce a flashy toccata.

Philip Glass (b1937) has written at least 20 *Études* for piano, and having heard *number 20* on the radio, Thomas liked it so much he made his own arrangement for organ, preserving much of the composer's style, especially the rocking motif, creating another oscillating effect.

Eric Coates' (1886-1957) *Westminster, from the London Suite* – the central movement sub-titled "Meditation" – followed, featuring the chimes of Big Ben, whose clock tower could be seen from Coates' top floor flat in Baker Street. Inevitably the organ's delightful Whitechapel bells got an outing!

A fun-filled piece was next, by Iain Farrington (b1977), one-time organ scholar at St John's College, Cambridge, a talented composer and performer, and with a passion for jazz. *Voices of the World*, was commissioned for the pre-service music at King Charles' Coronation, featuring traditional song melodies from around the Commonwealth. I managed to identify only a morsel of 'Waltzing Matilda'!

Angela Sones 10 March Newcastle Cathedral

Peter Locke writes: Angela gave a fine recital at St Nicolas' Cathedral. From the tenebrous opening of the Prelude to Duruflé's Suite right through to the sonic avalanche of Thomas Hewitt-Jones's 'Defeating Lucifer' today's recital was a performance that didn't lose its grip. It was great to hear the Toccata and Fugue in D minor (BWV 538) again. The Concertante and Ripieno of the Toccata were deftly handled, while the Fugue was presented in a sprightly manner. The Praeludium 'Integras' and the highly effective 'Cloches' by Marcel Fournier completed this box of delights. Bravo!

FORTHCOMING ORGAN RECITALS

Emmanuel Church, Wylde Green Fridays 1.00

4 April	Ashley Wagner (Birmingham Cathedral)
2 May	John Hosking (Blackburn Cathedral)
6 June	Angela Sones (LDOA)

St Chad's Shrewsbury Fridays 12.30

28 March	Peter King (formerly Bath Abbey)
2 May	Tony Pinel (St Chad's)
30 May	Richard Walker (St Chad's)

St Chad's Cathedral Birmingham Thursdays 1.15

3 April	David Saint (St Chad's)
1 May	Nigel Morris (St Chad's)
5 June	Paolo Oreni (Italy)

Birmingham Town Hall Mondays 1.00

24 March Symphony Hall	Thomas Trotter
7 April (Town Hall)	Organ and Harp Thomas Trotter
28 April (TH)	James McVinnie (South Bank)
12 May (TH)	Thomas Trotter
2 June (TH)	Thomas Trotter
3 June (SH)	Thomas Trotter + CBSO Saint-Saens 3 6.00
16 June (TH)	Thomas Trotter

Holy Trinity Wordsley Sundays 3.00

6 April	Paul Carr
4 May	Paul Carr
1 June	Paul Carr

Shrewsbury Abbey Saturday 12.00

19 April	Nigel Pursey
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Lichfield Cathedral Tuesdays 7.30

29 April	Cathy Lamb (Lichfield Cathedral School)
13 May	Martyn Rawles (LDOA President)
17 June	Andrew Lumsden (former Lichfield)

Birmingham Cathedral Friday 1.10

20 June	James Lancelot
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St Michael's Tettenhall Sunday 4.00

22 June	Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral)
Opening Recital on the Michael Farley rebuild	

FURTHER NOTICES

The sharp-eyed winner of the console competition was yet again Gary Cole, who has recorded many of these instruments for Regent Records. The answers were Manchester and Norwich Cathedrals. Just one to guess today.....



Please forgive me banging on about new schemes I'm involved in but the Michael Farley restoration of the 1957 Compton in St Michael's Church Tettenhall, a western suburb of Wolverhampton, is now complete. I began to play here after the COVID pandemic of which very sadly the organist, John Taylor FRCO, was a victim. The instrument had been temperamental for some time and only half of it was working. We discovered that the theft of lead from the roof (which was said to have been repaired) had brought down wet plaster, mud, rotting wood and even new plant growth into the chamber – seemingly unbeknownst to the regular tuner, whose advice was always to 'keep the buckets full of water'. An insurance claim was made and a bequest was also used. We turned again to Michael Farley, whose work at St Peter's Collegiate Church three years earlier had been so successful. It was necessary to take down the wooden façade screen to the Great, Swell and Pedal to access the space. Everything was dismantled and repairs and replastering of the chamber was carried out. A small dose of asbestos also had to be dealt with.

A year later everything is back, sympathetically re-voiced, and now all operated by modern control systems. As originally built, each manual contains one unit available at different pitches and several distinct full ranks of pipes. The Swell has a viol alongside its chorus of 8,8,8,4,2 and reeds; the Great has a small Open Diapason at 16,8,4,2 pitch as well as independent Diapason/Principal ranks at 8, 4, 2½ (and 8 & 4 Flutes) while the Choir has a Dulciana/Salicional rank along with flutes including an independent Tierce. The Pedals have a 32' Compton Polyphone Cube, a hefty Diaphone rank, a Bourdon rank with 4 different notes per pipe, and a very effective Trombone which is extended up to the Manuals as a Tromba.

The original console has been refurbished and modernized and is now moveable on nylon runners, rather than stuck in a dark and distant corner as before. As our LDOA Secretary Paul said 'played from the next postcode!'

Do come and hear and see Ian Tracey play on 22 June.



LICHFIELD & DISTRICT ORGANISTS' ASSOCIATION
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Publicity Officer and Young Organists Officer.

Isabel Corkley

The next newsletter is planned for June, with a deadline for submission of items for inclusion of 23/5/25, to Peter Morris by e-mail as above, or by mail to 8a Newbridge Crescent, Wolverhampton WV6 0LN.

Any news items, or reviews and news of recitals would be gratefully received.