

## OCTOBER 2020 NEWSLETTER

### FORTHCOMING LDOA VISITS/EVENTS

#### Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2020 – President's Evening at Lichfield Cathedral - CANCELLED

The Covid-19 restrictions currently in force at Lichfield Cathedral mean that both the RSCM Lichfield Area Annual Massed Choirs Festival and President's Evening have regrettably had to be cancelled. President's Evening would normally include drinks/nibbles, a large group of members socialising and having access to play the magnificent Hill organ, making it one of the highlights of our year, but sadly none of these activities are currently possible. Martyn Rawles has advised us that not even page turners are permitted in the organ loft, and the required cleaning after the event would also be a prohibitive factor, so whilst the Cathedral has reopened for worship, they are not hosting any private events.

#### Covid-19 and our remaining 2020 visits.

Having been obliged to cancel all our visits from March due to Covid-19 restrictions, at the time of the last newsletter, the restrictions were being gradually eased, and we were optimistic that we would be able to restart our events before the end of the year. In the event, with the maximum group of six restrictions announced on 9<sup>th</sup> September, and further restrictions announced on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, Covid-19 restrictions have instead been tightened.

Whilst some churches have cautiously recommenced limited church services, we are seeing an understandable reluctance from church authorities to permit visits by groups such as ours, particularly in the context of the cleaning required, and the problem of safely accommodating multiple organists all wishing to play their organ. Whilst the latest tighter restrictions seem destined to be in force for some time, we will keep the situation under review and the Committee will liaise at the end of October to see if there is any relaxation in the Covid-19 restrictions that may permit us to fit in a visit in some form before the end of 2020, whilst still ensuring the safety and well-being of our members.

#### Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020 - Annual Dinner

Our Annual Dinner is an opportunity to relax and socialise as well as enjoy good food and drink. Whilst we have pencilled in a date for this event, the latest restriction on meeting socially with people from other households in groups of more than 6, which came into effect on 14<sup>th</sup> September, means that restaurants are not permitted to accept our group booking. Regrettably, we will not be able

to proceed with this event unless/until these restrictions are relaxed. Again, we will keep the situation under review.

### MEMBERS' NEWS

#### Callum Alger

LDOA student member Callum Alger was Organ Scholar at Westminster Cathedral, London, for a rather disrupted 2019/20. From September 2020, he will be studying on the Advanced Post Graduate Diploma course at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, and will also be returning to St Peter's Wolverhampton as Interim Director of Music, to where choral worship returned on 6<sup>th</sup> September. Having returned to the Midlands, Callum is also now available for organ tuition at St Peter's, Wolverhampton. Anyone interested can contact Callum via: [callumalger@msn.com](mailto:callumalger@msn.com)

#### Peter Morris interview on BBC One's 'The One Show'

LDOA committee member Peter Morris, Organist Emeritus of St Peter's Wolverhampton and Walsall Borough Organist, was interviewed on BBC One's 'The One Show' at 7pm Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

Edward Elgar was an avid Wolverhampton Wanderers fan, and after seeing a report on the derby match between Stoke and Wolves on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1898, won by Wolves 4-2, he was taken with a phrase in the match report '*He banged the leather for goal*', and wrote a chant to accompany the words. Elgar was known to have a connection with St Peter's, and the chant lay undiscovered for almost 100 years, tucked away in a book of memoirs by Elgar's friend Dora Penny, whose father was the rector of St Peter's. In 2010, Peter Morris came across the chant in the book at St Peter's, and used it in a fund-raising concert to raise money for the restoration of the 'Father' Willis organ of St Peter's Church, the organ we played on our Association visit last November.

Seated on the organ bench for the interview, Peter played the chant for the presenter, and was then prevailed upon to conduct the Wolverhampton Symphony Orchestra, of which he is Musical Director, performing the chant virtually, together with groups of Wolves fans singing the words, all displayed on the big screen at Molyneux. Maybe not in the same league as *Land of Hope and Glory*, so unlikely to catch on with Wolves fans!

If you're interested in viewing the four-minute clip, it's available on the BBC iPlayer, starting just over 19 minutes into the programme, via:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m000mfzq/the-one-show-11092020>

## NEWS FROM THE LDOA COMMITTEE

With the Covid-19 restrictions making it difficult to meet physically, the Committee met virtually via Zoom on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> September, where the majority of the meeting was taken up with discussions on where we stood with future activities in the light of the tightening Covid-19 restrictions. The outcome of the discussion has been covered at the beginning of this newsletter.

Options for rescheduling the postponed 2020 AGM were also discussed, but a final decision is pending.

## LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL NEWS/EVENTS

### Covid-19

Having opened its doors again on 14<sup>th</sup> July, services with socially distanced choral singing have resumed, although of course without congregational singing. The services are being live streamed, and also uploaded to YouTube. Another milestone was reached on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September when for the first time since lockdown, Choral Evensong was resumed, the service also included commissioning of choristers and awarding of RSCM medals.

### Autumn Evening Organ Recitals Series

Following the cancellation of the 'Music for Reflection' lunchtime events, no evening organ recitals have been planned so far for autumn 2020.

## NEWS & SNIPPETS FROM THE ORGAN WORLD

### Jonathan Scott at the BBC Proms 2020 – The Symphonic Organ

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2020, concert organist Jonathan Scott performed a programme of his own virtuosic organ transcriptions of orchestral works on the organ of the Royal Albert Hall, as part of the BBC Proms series.

The programme comprised:

- *The Thieving Magpie* – Overture, by Rossini
- *Cavalleria Rusticana* – *Intermezzo*, by Mascagni
- *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* by Dukas
- *Symphony No 3 in C Minor 'Organ'* by Saint-Saens
- *Encore – Nimrod* by Elgar

It was broadcast live on BBC R3, but was also filmed in an empty but floodlit Royal Albert Hall, and all 1 hour 23 mins can still be viewed on the BBC i-Player via:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/p08n8ns0/bbc-proms-2020-the-symphonic-organ>

A stunning tour de force - well worth a watch!

### Concert Organist Jane Parker-Smith obituary

For almost half a century, Jane Parker-Smith enjoyed an outstanding career as a top-flight church and concert organist, performing at churches and cathedrals all around

the world. Blessed with glamorous good looks and the ability to add a splash of colour to the soberest of concert series, she died unexpectedly when her heart stopped during a routine operation on 24<sup>th</sup> June, a month after her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday.



Jane Parker-Smith

One of my first purchases of an organ recording, around 1972, was a 33<sup>1/3</sup> rpm LP entitled *Favourite Organ Masterpieces* by Jane Parker-Smith, played on the organ of Westminster Cathedral, when she would have been 22.

Born in Northampton in 1950, and adopted at an early age by Reginald Smith and Janet Parker, she won a place at the Royal College of Music, where she initially studied piano. She subsequently switched to the organ, and David Latham then became her tutor. She won a raft of prizes, which resulted in her highly acclaimed London debut recital at Westminster Cathedral in 1970, and her first solo appearance at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall two years later.

In 1975, she made the first of numerous solo appearances at the Royal Festival Hall, stepping in at short notice for an indisposed Fernando Germani. Then 39 years later, in 2014 following the refurbishment of the instrument, she helped to reopen the organ in the company of John Scott, Isabelle Demers, and David Goode.

For the first time in almost 40 years, courtesy of the 164-stop Allen Computer Organ, in 1977 she joined with Carlo Curley, George Thalben-Ball, and Arthur Wills to bring organ recitals back to the impressive Grand Hall of Alexandra Palace, north London. She would again combine with Carlo on any number of occasions, most notably at the Royal Albert Hall in September 1985. In the interim had come numerous world tours that took in Europe and North and South America, as well as the Far East.

Her extensive concerto repertoire brought her performances with many leading orchestras, including the CBSO under Sir Simon Rattle. TS

### Harrison & Harrison – major organ projects

I'm indebted to Harrison & Harrison Head Tuner Stephen Alliss for providing the following update on their major projects:

#### 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. Work is currently taking place in both their Durham workshop and with pipes going in on site in September. Voicing is due to commence shortly and 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, with voicing expected to be completed in September.

#### Christ Church, Alexandria, Virginia, USA

A new tracker action organ of 2 manuals and 22 stops. The organ is standing in the building room at their workshop at Durham, and shipping is due by the end of September. Planned completion date Christmas 2020.

#### Christ Church, Greenwich, Connecticut, USA

Harrison & Harrison 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, and work is now under way in the workshop, with installation 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 was planned to be wholly dismantled in the late spring of 2020, with completion by the end of 2023 to coincide in 2024 with the re-opening of Waterhouse's much-loved building.

##### 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 was dramatically rebuilt in 1962 by Hill, Norman & Beard, with many tonal changes. As phase two of a planned three-phase project to restore the organ, Nicholson will be undertaking work on new electrical systems and restoration of the console in 2020.

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

#### Mander Organs Ltd update

Having reported in the last newsletter that Mander Organs Ltd had ceased trading, F H Browne & Sons Ltd of Canterbury has acquired the trading name and intellectual property rights of Mander Organs Ltd. Three current employees of F H Browne, including their MD Stephen Bayley, are former Mander employees, and from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, F H Browne Ltd will revert to trading under the name of Mander Organs for all current and future contracts.

#### Josh Roebuck appointment

A number of members who have attended either the Emmanuel Wylde Green lunchtime recitals, or Thomas Trotter's Birmingham lunchtime recitals, will know Josh Roebuck. He was Assistant Organist at Emmanuel, with responsibility for organising the monthly Friday lunchtime recitals series, and whilst attending the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire, he was also Thomas Trotter's page turner. Josh graduated from the RBC, and after Organ Scholar appointments at Worcester Cathedral and at St David's Cathedral in Wales, he will take up appointments from September as Organ Scholar at Tewkesbury Abbey and also at Dean Close School Cheltenham.

#### [AN INVITATION TO SHARE YOUR FAVOURITE YOUTUBE CLIPS](#)

In the absence of live organ concerts to attend, on pages 3/4 the on-line broadcasts are your Newsletter Editor's suggestions as to what members might enjoy watching.

An invitation to members in the last newsletter to let me have any links to their favourite YouTube clips etc, to share with other members, has resulted in the following suggestions from Peter Edwards:

- Lefébure-Wély *Sortie in E<sup>b</sup>*, with Arturo Barba clearly enjoying himself: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M0KvHqfdoE>
- Rheinberger *Cantilena from Organ Sonata No. 1* played by Geoff Olson, at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHYz6pz8\\_5U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHYz6pz8_5U)

Recommended for viewing by John Allen, Leeds Minster will be publishing a 20-minute weekly organ recital throughout the autumn term, beginning at 1pm on Friday 4 September 2020, and featuring their fabulous Harrison and Harrison organ. Regular recitalists Christopher Newton, David Houlder and Alexander Woodrow will be playing a wide range of organ music for viewers to enjoy. You will find the recordings uploaded to the YouTube channel, 'Music from Leeds Minster' each Friday at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDD2P0hqLQ8>, and also to the 'Choir of Leeds Minster' Facebook page.

#### [YOUTUBE BROADCASTS IN LIEU OF CANCELLED LIVE RECITALS](#)

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

- Gert van Hoef, the young Dutch organist, is continuing to give weekly one-hour recitals on Thursday evenings, which are live streamed on YouTube. He uses both his home Hauptwerk organ, and is now also playing various pipe organs in Dutch churches.
- Jonathan Scott, in addition to his 29<sup>th</sup> August BBC Proms broadcast, is also continuing to live stream approximately monthly recitals via YouTube, with the most recent ones being on 1<sup>st</sup> August at the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Then, having been in Germany to give two recitals, albeit with the audience limited to a socially distanced 70 people, at Propsteikirche (St. Mariae Geburt) Kempen, and so uploaded to YouTube a recital on 12<sup>th</sup> September from the same church. Finally, to Évreux Cathedral, France, for a recital given on 26<sup>th</sup> September.
- Richard McVeigh continues to give on-line broadcasts via *Beauty in Sound* on YouTube, mainly on his home Hauptwerk organ.
- *Sunday Afternoon Organ Music* at Holy Trinity Wordsley, performed by Paul Carr, was suspended after the March event. So, from Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2020 at 3pm, Paul Carr will perform a short programme on the first Sunday of the month online. The video will be hosted on *Sunday Afternoon Organ Music's* Facebook page, which can be found at: [www.facebook.com/SundayAfternoonOrganMusic](http://www.facebook.com/SundayAfternoonOrganMusic)
- Paul Carr's 'Thursday Live' series of recitals on the first Thursday of the month at St Chad's Cathedral was from Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> September broadcast live, this recital featuring both Paul Carr and David Saint, is also available at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCTs1vC2hgXBVGK7H-7McwQw>
- Thomas Trotter has uploaded to YouTube a virtual lunchtime recital on 3<sup>rd</sup> August at Birmingham Symphony Hall, which can be viewed at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XnMPigEjAI&ab\\_channel=TownHallSymphonyHall](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XnMPigEjAI&ab_channel=TownHallSymphonyHall)

### IAO/RCO MATTERS

#### IAO e-NewsSheet

The second quarterly IAO e-NewsSheet was sent out by e-mail on 15<sup>th</sup> July. LDOA members who have an e-mail address should have received a copy, but we are aware of a problem with distribution of this to some members. This has now been corrected, and members should receive the next publication in October.

#### IAO Music Festival 2021

The 2021 IAO Music Festival will now take place in Edinburgh from Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> July 2021, Covid-19 restrictions permitting.

The next OrganFest will now be moved to 2022.

#### IAO Midlands Organ Day 2021

The 2020 Midlands Organ Day planned for Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2020 at St Matthew's Church Northampton was regrettably also postponed, and will now take place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

### Yorkshire Organ Day

Plans are being made for a Yorkshire Organ Day in Hull on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

### Derby & District Organists' Association Legacy

As we have a good working relationship with our sister association Derby & District Organists' Association, members may be interested to learn of a substantial legacy they have received.

Edmund Stow was a member of DDOA for many years, and as an organ builder, he was responsible for many organ refurbishments in the Derby area. Ed was also the builder of the splendid model organ we borrowed to assist us with our 'Young Persons' Cathedral Organ Day' events.

Ed retired in 2014 and moved to Stroud, but regrettably was subsequently diagnosed with cancer, and sadly died on 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2019, aged 70, leaving a most generous legacy to DDOA.

The legacy will provide for:

- Four stop box organ - to be built by Robin Jennings, and kept in Derby Cathedral, whilst remaining the property of DDOA
- Pianist-to-Organist scheme
- Bursary for a second-year organ student
- Organ recital fund
- Lectures by international organ builders
- Restoration of organs in Derbyshire

The legacy will clearly enable DDOA to do much valuable work in the Derby area over coming years.

### TOWN HALL ORGANS OF THE WEST MIDLANDS

LDOA Committee Member Peter Morris is Borough Organist and organ curator at Walsall and Darlaston Town Halls. He is Organist Emeritus at St Matthew's Walsall and St Peter's Collegiate Church, Wolverhampton. He recently produced an article for the Feb/Apr 2020 edition of the magazine *The Organ*, and Peter has kindly agreed for this most interesting article to be included in this newsletter for the enjoyment of LDOA members:

#### Town Hall Organs of the West Midlands

It was an increasing sense of civic pride and of 'keeping up with the Borough next door' that led to many of the new town halls of the Victorian and Edwardian era being treated to a substantial organ. The National Pipe Organ Register, however, shows that few of the many council organs installed from Aberdeen to Penzance are now in working order, or even in situ.

In what is now the conurbation of the West Midlands, several local councils followed the example of Birmingham where the town hall contained a large Grecian-style assembly room furnished with a grand pipe organ. In the days before recording, town hall orchestral concerts or organ transcriptions of orchestral music represented one

of the few ways that audiences could access the vast range of music which we take for granted these days.

Birmingham Town Hall organ is, of course, the most well-known of those in the West Midlands. It was built in 1834 by William Hill and was probably the largest instrument in the country. It was the first to possess a 32ft pipe front, which still stands, and was the first in the world to have a high-pressure reed (the Hill Tuba Mirabilis or Grand Ophicleide of 1840). Mendelssohn played it and in 1843 Hill enlarged it. The first performance of *Elijah* took place in the hall in 1846. Weekly recitals were also given and the audience regularly numbered 1500.

Further substantial rebuilds took place in 1889-90 (Thomas Hill), 1932-33 (Henry Willis III) and in 1984 (Mander) when a fifth manual was added. This was removed again in 2007. In 1984 Anna Plowden also restored the striking decoration of the front pipes.

Birmingham City organists of the last 130 years are among the most notable organists of their day: C W Perkins from 1888, G D Cunningham 1924, Sir George Thalben Ball 1949, and Thomas Trotter since 1983.



Birmingham Town Hall console and organ

The original specification of 1834 was:  
 Great 8,8,8,8,8,4,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,IV,III,8, 8,4,2  
 Swell 16,8,8,4,4,2,8,8,8,4  
 Choir 8,8,8,8,4,4,2,8  
 Solo-Choir 8,8,8,8,4,4,8  
 Pedal 32,32,16,16

By 1876 this had expanded to:  
 Great 16,8,8,8,8,8,5 $\frac{1}{3}$ ,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,V,III,V,II,16, 8, 8,4  
 Swell 16,8,8,4,2,III,8,8,8,4,8

Choir 8,8,8,4,4,4,4,2,8  
 Solo 8,8,8,8,8,4,4,4,4,2,8,8,8,8,4  
 Pedal 32,32,16,16,16,16,8,5 $\frac{1}{3}$ ,4,III,V,32,16,8,4

In 2007:  
 Great 16,16,8,8,8,8,5 $\frac{1}{3}$ ,4,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,IV,III,III,16,8,4  
 Swell 16,8,8,8,8,4,4,4,2,II,IV,III,16,8,8,8,4  
 Choir 8,8,8,8,4,4,2,2,II,16,8,8  
 Solo 8,8,8,8,8,4,2,1,16,8,8,8 + Bells & Cymbelstern  
 Bombarde 8,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,1 $\frac{3}{5}$ ,1 $\frac{1}{3}$ , V-VI,16,8,4,8  
 Pedal 32,16,16,16,16,8,8,8,5 $\frac{1}{3}$ ,4,III,III,32,32,16,16,16,8,4

Kidderminster was the next Town Hall organ to be built and this was also by William Hill. It has hardly been altered since it was installed in 1855. It is an impressive instrument, and remarkably effective in full choral and orchestral performances such as November 2019's *Dream of Gerontius*. Like all similar Town Hall organs, it was 'cooked' in the 1970s by the introduction of central heating, but it received a sympathetic restoration in 1980. The handsome pedimented Regency case dominates the hall. Recitals are given regularly and Tim Morris has been Town Hall Organist since 1980.

The specification stands as:  
 Great 16,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2 III 8,4  
 Swell 16,8,8,8,8,8, 4,2,II,8,8  
 Choir 8,8,4,4,2,8  
 Pedal 16,16,16,8,16



Kidderminster Town Hall organ

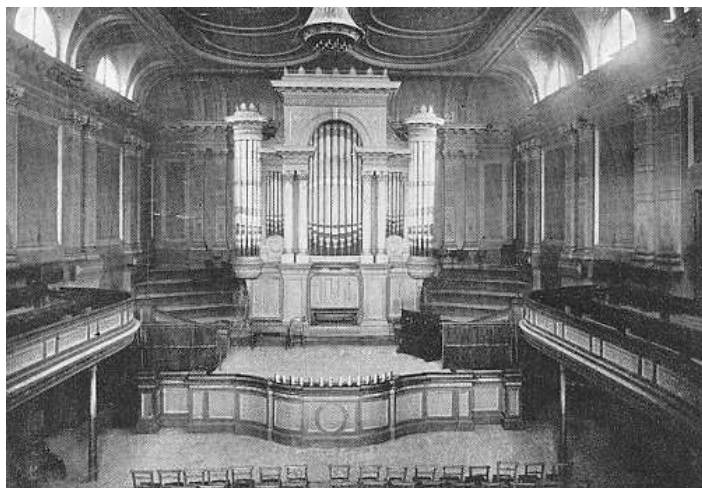
The area often known as the Black Country has other West Midlands municipal instruments. Local council offices were needed, even in the smaller boroughs, and meeting halls were provided, often on quite a grand scale. Some of these were given substantial organs.

Wednesbury was a small town sandwiched between Walsall and West Bromwich, now quite close to the junction between the M5 and M6. It became a municipal borough in 1886, but in the local government reorganisation of 1966 it was absorbed into Walsall and West Bromwich. In 1974 it was mostly incorporated into the new borough of Sandwell. The Victorian Town Hall still exists. Alexander Brogden, the first MP for Wednesbury, provided an organ at a cost of around £3000. It was built by Forster and Andrews of Hull. Again, there was a handsome and stylish case, surrounded, as was customary, by tiered seating.

The specification was standard:  
 Great 16,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2 IV 8,4  
 Swell 16,8,8,8,4,2,III,8,4  
 Choir 8,8,4,4,2,8  
 Pedal 16,16,8,16

The case was designed by the architects of the hall, Loxton, and was 'enriched in colour and gold' according to Hopkins & Rimbault. In their published specification the 4ft reed on the Swell was an oboe but this could be a misprint as the pitches of the Great reeds in the same source are obviously transposed.

In 1955 this organ was sold to St Augustine's Church, Queensgate, in Kensington, where it still exists in a somewhat altered form.



Wednesbury Town Hall organ

Alexander Brogden also donated a second Town Hall organ, this time to the neighbouring borough of West Bromwich. At the hall's opening banquet in 1875 the MP offered to donate another Forster and Andrews organ. The Mayor of West Bromwich, Rueben Farley, accepted and the instrument was completed in May 1878.



West Bromwich Town Hall organ

Both James Forster and Joseph Andrews met Edmund Schulze and acknowledged his influence on their work, especially in his large instrument in Doncaster Parish Church. The voicing at West Bromwich was in the hands of Herr Vogel, who had worked with Schulze. The specification was significantly different from the Wednesbury organ, and the casework looked very different.

A conservative restoration was undertaken by Nicholson's in 1984. A variety of actions (tracker for the Choir, Barker lever for the Great and pneumatic for the Swell and Pedals) were used, and the differences in speed of response and touch lead to some interesting moments in faster music. This instrument is still played at events such as Remembrance Sunday parades, but the very popular monthly organ recital series was dropped in 2014.

The specification is:  
 Great 16,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,IV,8  
 Swell 16,8,8,8,8,4,2,III,8,8,8,4  
 Solo/Echo 8,8,4,2/8,8,8,8  
 Pedal 16,16,16,10 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,8,16

James Slater, a solicitor, was a prominent citizen and council leader of Darlaston, not far from Wednesbury. He laid the foundation stone of Darlaston's Town Hall in 1888. In 1903, two years after his death, his widow decided to donate an organ to the Town Hall in her husband's memory. (Their son became Mayor of Walsall. His wife was killed in 1916 when a bomb dropped by a Zeppelin hit the tram car in which she was travelling.)

J J Binns of Leeds was the chosen builder. At the same time his firm was also building the Rochdale Town Hall organ. They were renowned for the solidity of their workmanship and their forthright sound. The Darlaston organ had a comprehensive specification and a robust tubular pneumatic action. It survived without alteration until the 1970s, when some patching and cleaning was undertaken. By that time the hall had been given a proscenium arch and stage curtains, which rather hid the organ and affected its ability to speak out clearly. Nevertheless, the organ has clearly survived in its original state and is working well. The 1966 local government reorganisation meant that Darlaston became part of Walsall and responsibility for the organ passed to Walsall council and its Borough Organist.



Darlaston Town Hall console

In the 1970s the Walsall Assistant Borough Organist, Peter Charles Carder, gave regular recitals and in later years a local organist, Mervyn Jones, took a great interest in it and instituted some very popular events such as tea dances.

In 2018, the Darlaston Town Hall organ was awarded a Historic Organ status (1st class) certificate. The citation said it was “An unaltered example of a town hall organ of 1903 by J J Binns and from the firm’s finest period.”

The specification is:

Great 16,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,III,8

Swell 16,8,8,8,8,4,2,III,8,8,8

Choir 8,8,8,4,2,8,8

Pedal 32,16,16,8,8,16

In 1908 Walsall Town Hall was completed. This was much larger than the other Black Country halls and the organ was on a larger scale. I have described this instrument and its origins in previous issues of *The Organ* (Nos 327 and 343). Briefly, it was conceived as a memorial to Queen Victoria (‘a Town’s tribute to a Beloved Queen’) at a cost of £2300. A public subscription was taken and the Mayor, Samuel Drew, paid the shortfall. After a blind tendering process the contract was given to local builder Nicholson and Lord, and was their biggest opus. It had 4 manuals and 48 speaking stops.



Walsall Town Hall organ and console

Further attention was given to the organ by Hill, Norman and Beard (1926) and there was a major rebuild by Compton’s (though with no extension work) in 1937. Mander (and Hawkins) added a 32ft reed and choir Tibias in 1988. The opulent acoustics of this resonant hall have

recently been changed to enable the spoken word to be more intelligible to audiences. An interesting by-product of this process was that the player can now hear the swell organ with greater clarity. There are around 3300 pipes and 72 speaking stops.

There have been 3 Borough Organists in 111 years (TW North, Harold Britton and the writer). Regular monthly concerts have been taking place, though these are under further review as from January 2020.

The existing specification is:

Great 16,8,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,IV,16,8,8,4

Swell 16,8,8,8,8,4,2,III,16,8,8,8,8,4

Choir 8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,1 $\frac{3}{5}$ ,16,8,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,8,8,8,8

Solo 8,8,4,8,8,16,8,4,8

Pedal 32,16,16,16,16,16,8,8,8,4,4,III,V,32,16,16,8,4

The last of the town hall organs in the region was at the Civic Hall in Wolverhampton. The large hall of the complex was opened in 1938 and a large extension organ was installed by John Compton in a chamber above the roof. There were 81 speaking stops, though only 3219 pipes. The stop list was featured in both the Grove and the New Grove Dictionaries of Music as representative of their time and place. As at Walsall Town Hall a 5-rank mixture of flue stops provided the Harmonics of 32ft in the pedal department. Large scale diapasons and high wind pressures pushed the sound from the high chamber. The solo imitative reeds were on 8ins pressure and the Tuba on 20ins. There was also a Compton ‘melotone’ unit, though this was removed in 1939. In 2001 Hawkins of Walsall added a Tibia, Glockenspiel, Xylophone, Krummet, Kinura and English Horn and the console was refurbished.

The first civic organist was Arnold Richardson and the last was Steve Tovey. Both of these players were enthusiastic in their support of what the organ could do. Sadly, the end of the organ was controversial. The demand for the organ had waned. Local councils are starved of money and the many urgent social priorities which have to be dealt with tend to sideline repairs to an organ. The hall, however, is being ambitiously refurbished at a large cost as a venue for more popular events such as rock concerts and conferences. The presence of a large instrument, totally out of sight, with elderly wiring and subject to new health and safety regulations had become a problem. These things are not easy to square with the passionate interests of a decreasing number of organ devotees.

The publicity surrounding the council’s decision to remove the organ satisfied nobody. Many sources, including local newspapers, greatly exaggerated the size of the organ, with 6220 pipes being the figure quoted – almost double its real size. The council were accused of flinging the pipes into a skip. I have correspondence from the Council leader at the time which points out that during its construction in 1938 the organ chamber was liberally sprayed with asbestos. Whatever happened to the organ, under the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012 the Wolverhampton City Council could not pass on these pipes to anyone else, and in 2019 they were said to have been put into a special landfill facility which had specific permission to deal with asbestos contaminated material.

The 1937 specification:

Great 16,8,8,8,8,4,4,2 $\frac{2}{3}$ ,2,IV,IV,16,8,8,4

Swell 16,8,8,8,8,4,4,2,IV,16,8,8,4  
 Choir 16,16,8,8,8,8,8,8,4,4,4,2½,2½,2,2,1¾,II,8,8,8,8  
 Solo 8,8,8,4,8,8,8,8,4  
 Pedal 32,16,16,16,16,16,10¾,8,8,8,5¾,4,4,32,16,16,  
 16,16,8,8,4



Wolverhampton Civic Hall pipework and console

Within Wolverhampton is also the town hall of the former borough of Bilston. Since 2010 this has been the home of a 5-rank 1936 Compton Cinema Organ, saved and installed by Cannock Chase Organ Club. Peter Morris

### RECENT LOCAL ORGAN RECITALS REVIEWS

I'm indebted to an ex-LDOA member train and organ enthusiast Peter Bowes for contributing reviews of two summer 2020 events - live organ recitals! Whilst they hardly qualify as local recitals, what must be two of the first live organ recitals since lockdown, are surely worthy of mention:

#### Recital by Dr Marc B Barker-Naylor on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020, at St Katherine's Cathedral, Lincoln

An organ recital at St Katherine's Cathedral Church in Lincoln provided my first live music since before lockdown. Organist and Precentor, Dr Marc Barker-Naylor, played an all English programme on the church's Jardine organ.

There has been a priory in this site since 1148, although the current St Katherine's was constructed by 1879 as a Methodist church to serve the growing city of Lincoln. Not to be confused with the famous Lincoln Minster on the hill, St Katherine's has its own Bishop and traditional Anglican ministry.

The organ was constructed between 1856 and 1872 as a 4-manual instrument by Jardine and Kirtland of Manchester, and has served at both St Peter's Manchester and, from 1907, at St Bride's Old Trafford. Relocated to Lincoln, the Great and Swell together with part of the Pedal organ were restored and recommissioned by 2014. It is understood Heritage Lottery funding exists to complete the instrument as a 3 manual with choir division and more pedal/solo stops. It's hoped this will be carried out by Jardine's by Summer 2021.



The Jardine & Kirtland organ of St Katherine's Cathedral, Lincoln

Heavily influenced by Cavallé-Coll, the organ includes some really powerful reeds, and certainly speaks well from its west end balcony into the church's excellent acoustics.

Dr Naylor's varied programme included music by English composers from Victorian and more recent times;

- William Hill's *March in G Major*
- *Sursum Corda* by John Ireland
- *Waltz* from Noel Rawsthorne's *Dance Suite*
- *Offertoire in C Major* by Caleb Simper
- Alec Rowley *Benedictus*
- *Solemn Procession* by William Lloyd Weber

Each piece was introduced by the performer to ensure the audience could feel involved.

It was lovely to hear an organ after so many months in lockdown, and well worth my trip. Sadly, I constituted 33% of the audience! Small steps I suppose.....

Peter Bowes

#### Recital by Andrew Millington on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020, at Exeter Cathedral

This 'Prom' concert formed part of Exeter Cathedral's 'Month of Music' programme following lock down. I took the opportunity for a day out by train in Devon and (briefly) Cornwall, as I travelled over my last unvisited south west railway line - a stunningly scenic run along the Tamar Valley branch between Plymouth and Gunnislake.

Arriving earlier at Exeter Cathedral, I was able to explore at leisure whilst complying with the well signed social



distancing one-way system. Somehow it seemed spacious and very peaceful, as all chairs had been removed or cordoned off. Andrew Millington's half hour concert was included in the £5 cathedral admission fee, and there was no big event or announcement. He just played and almost everyone stopped to listen. In practice the audience probably numbered pretty high by UK attendance standards, even if many tourists wouldn't have known it was happening.

Today's recitalist, Andrew Millington, was Director of Music at Exeter Cathedral from 1999 to 2015, having previously served in the same role at Guildford. He certainly demonstrated how well he knows the organ with a varied programme of mostly popular pieces.

Except there was no formal programme. From those played, I recognised pieces by William Walton (*Crown Imperial*), Derek Bourgeois, William Byrd (I think), and Henri Mulet's *Carillon Sortie*. The whole event was so relaxed it didn't really matter though as it was just great to hear well played live organ music once again.



The nave case of Exeter Cathedral organ

The organ is essentially a Willis instrument of 1891, rebuilt and added to subsequently by Harrison and Harrison. Located in a 17th century case on the choir screen, the organ looks most impressive. In 2003 a new Minstrel department was installed in a gallery on the north side of the nave. Today's pieces amply demonstrated the complementary effects of two organs speaking to each other in a really lovely way.

And for those interested, amongst others, my trains ranged from the sumptuous luxury of a 1980's High Speed Train from Tamworth to Exeter to a nearly life expired 4-wheel rail bus Pacer thrash along the Dawlish sea wall! All in all, a most enjoyable day out.

Peter Bowes

### Tom Corfield recital at St Modwen's Burton-on-Trent, Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2020

LDOA member and Organist at St Modwen's, Tony Westerman, and the church deserve great credit for re-starting organ recitals here, when many other venues have shown rather less resolve in overcoming the Covid-19 restrictions. In the event, there was commendably good support for their efforts, which included well planned and executed arrangements for social distancing to keep everyone safe.

For the first of the September recitals, Tom Corfield was making a return visit, with his wife Rosemary acting as page turner. Tom was educated at the Royal Academy of Music and the University of East Anglia, when he was also Organ Scholar of Norwich Cathedral. There followed four years as assistant to Simon Lindley at Leeds Parish Church, and a period of post graduate study before his move to Derby, and 31 years as Organist at Derby Cathedral. He teaches for the Open University, and is one of the accompanists of the Derby Bach Choir.

Tom opened his programme with J S Bach's *Fantasia & Fugue in G Minor BWV 542*, chosen to reflect the sadness for loss of lives over these last few months, with the dramatic *Fantasia* followed by the lively *Fugue*.

Next to *Five Short Pieces* by Percy Whitlock, and Tom observing that 'soft organ music has a great deal to commend it', which certainly applies to the first four pieces, before the final piece, *Paeon*, which in contrast builds and culminates with full organ chords.

The composer of the next piece, Peter Gould, was Master of the Music at Derby Cathedral for 32 years until his retirement in 2014, and a colleague of Tom's for much of that time. The manuscript of his *Chorale on Easter Hymn* says it was composed at a hotel in Christchurch New Zealand, whilst he was stuck there in lockdown. The syncopated toccata-like passagework crowns the final appearance of the theme.



Tom Corfield taking his bow at St Modwen's

Next to *Prelude on 'Slane'* by the blind organist David Apprahman Liddle, a piece described by Tom as 'a delightful little piece', the shortness of which rather caught us all by surprise, and resulted in a somewhat delayed applause!

Finally, to a favourite work for closing a recital, *Carillon de Westminster* by Vierne, learnt by Tom during lockdown, and chosen to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year of the composer's birth, providing a stunning climax to the recital.

A well-constructed programme, impeccably played, and with Tom Corfield's customary beautiful phrasing and choice of registrations. TS

### **Cathy Lamb recital at St Modwen's Burton-on-Trent, Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

LDOA honourable member Cathy Lamb, Director of Music Outreach at Lichfield Cathedral School, was today making a very welcome return visit to St Modwen's.

With husband Ben on page turning duties, Cathy opened with J S Bach's '*Dorian*' *Toccat & Fugue BWV 538*, the bright rhythmic *Toccat* being followed by the more measured *Fugue*, which builds to a majestic conclusion.

This recital series is entitled *Melody, Rhythm & Whimsy*, and the latter was provided here by *Pieces for Musical Clocks*, with eight vignettes by Hayden intermingled with four by Joanna Marsh. Like Cathy, Joanna Marsh is a graduate of Sydney Sussex College Cambridge, albeit many years prior to Cathy. She is principally known for her work as a composer of choral music, but *Four Musical Clocks* was written for performance on a one manual chamber organ, with each piece descriptive of famous clocks in children's stories.

*Festival Toccat* by Derby-born composer Percy Eastman Fletcher provided a thrilling close to the recital, with the opening flourish followed by a more melodic middle section with flights of fancy, before a reprise of the opening provided a terrific climax to the recital.



Cathy Lamb taking her bow at St Modwen's

Another well-constructed and varied programme, beautifully played, and with Cathy's bubbly personality shining through as ever in her performance. TS

### **Ben Mills recital at St Modwen's Burton-on-Trent, Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

Ben Mills is Organ Scholar at Keble College, Oxford, and is about to return to Oxford for his third and final year, reading Music. Organist at St Modwen's, LDOA member Tony Westerman, in his introduction of Ben, remarked that Ben made his first visit to St Modwen's before going to Oxford, and Tony was so impressed by his mature playing, that he invited him back last year, and now again this year.

Ben began his musical career as a Chorister at St Mary Magdalene, Newark, started to learn organ, and became Organ Scholar there in his final year at school. Since then he has completed his ARSM and ARCO Diplomas. His time at Keble include two BBC Radio 3 Choral Evensong broadcasts and a recently-released CD.

J S Bach's *Piece d'Orgue BWV 572* provided a sparkling opening to the recital, leading to the majestic pedal entry, and concluding with an unusually delicate choice of registration for the final passage. Next to Frank Bridge's *Adagio in E*, with beautifully structured harmonic progressions, closing with a nicely managed diminuendo to a quiet close.

Then in contrast, to two movements of Vierne's *Symphony No 2 in E Minor*, a tour de force providing a stunning contrast to the Bridge, with Tony Westerman in his excellent comprehensive programme notes suggesting for the *Allegro* that we should 'prepare to have our hair ruffled!' The *Chorale* opens in a much more restrained fashion, but grows to a powerful climax. Next to two chorales by J S Bach, with first the *Passiontide chorale* from the *Orgelbüchlein*, *O Mench, bewein dein Sünde groß BWV 622*, followed by the *Advent chorale BWV 659 Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland*, from *The Eighteen Chorale Preludes*. Finally a rousing close to the recital was ensured with Stanford's *Postlude in D Minor*.



Ben Mills taking his bow at St Modwen's

A most talented young organist, whose flawless clarity of playing was a delight. We look forward to his return to St Modwen's for a fourth time in 2021! TS

### **Liam Condon recital at St Modwen's Burton-on-Trent, Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020**

For the final recital in the 2020 lunchtime recitals series, Tony Westerman introduced LDOA student member Liam Condon, making his first visit to St Modwen's.

Liam is in his second year as Organ Scholar of Lichfield Cathedral, where he works with the Cathedral Music Department helping with the training of new choristers and accompanying the girl voices of the Cathedral Choir. Prior to lockdown, Liam had been regularly accompanying the Lichfield Cathedral Chamber Choir, and was accompanist for the Lichfield Cathedral Chorus. He was also animateur for the Cathedral outreach programme, Musicshare. Alongside his accompaniment duties in Lichfield, Liam is a piano teacher at Lichfield Cathedral School.

Prior to coming to Lichfield, Liam graduated from Royal Holloway University of London with a Degree in Music. As Organ Scholar under the tuition of Robert Gough, he worked closely with the Chapel Choir of Royal Holloway, playing live on BBC Radios 3 and 4, as well as touring with the choir to various destinations in Europe and North America. This role has given him the opportunity to play in prestigious venues, including St Paul's Cathedral London, and has accompanied works on two CDs recorded by Royal Holloway. Alongside his degree, Liam was Director of Music at St Michael & St Mary Magdalene Church in Bracknell.



Liam Condon introducing his programme at St Modwen's

Introducing his own programme, Liam opened with Buxtehude's *Tocatta in F Major BuxWV 157*, the opening flourish giving way to more delicate animated sections. Next to J S Bach and *Trio Sonata No 1 in E Flat Major BWV 525*, the three movements played with commendable style and precision. After the lively final movement of the *Trio Sonata*, next to Stanford's gentle *Allegretto*, followed by a work by a pupil of Stanford, John Ireland, with his elegant *Intrada*.

In last week's recital, Ben Mills performed for us the 1st and 2nd movements of Vierne's *Symphonie No 2*, and today Liam chose to play the 3rd movement, *Scherzo*,

showing Vierne at his most whimsical. Then to *Carillon* by David Bedford, who saw the works as a homage to the French organ composers of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, using an idea based on a theme from the final movement of Vierne's 1<sup>st</sup> *Symphonie*, but with somewhat distorted harmonies.

With the title of this organ series '*Melody, Rhythm and Whimsy*', the latter was provided by Liam's lively final piece, Noel Rawsthorne's *Hornpipe Humoresque*, a tongue-in-cheek but very clever set of variations influenced by Bach, Vivaldi, Arne and Widor.

A confident and stylish performance by a most talented young organist, who having regard for the need for social distancing, coped admirably well without a page turner.

Having enjoyed performances by four terrific organists in this series, Rev'd Dr Robin Trotter rightly called for a round of applause for St Modwen's Organist, Tony Westerman, who deserves great credit for successfully pulling off the well-supported series here at St Modwen's. TS

### **VACANCIES**

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

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

### **FORTHCOMING LOCAL ORGAN RECITALS**

#### **LDOA Members' Recitals/Events**

Events listed are as currently advised, but are of course subject to cancellation/postponement due to Covid-19 restrictions.

##### Cathy Lamb

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

- Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2021 at 1.10pm at Chester Cathedral

##### Callum Alger

LDOA student member Callum Alger, and Interim DoM at St Peter's Church, Wolverhampton, is scheduled to perform the following recitals:

- Monday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020 from 1.10 to 2pm at Southwark Cathedral
- Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2020 from 5.00 to 6.00pm at The Swiss Church, London

#### **Recitals In Local Area (To end of November 2020)**

The main website for listing recitals nationally [www.organrecitals.com](http://www.organrecitals.com) has opened up again, although the number of recitals listed for the remainder of 2020 is far below normal. Apart from the on-line recitals by Paul Carr at St Chad's Cathedral, Birmingham, and at Holy Trinity, Wordsley, as detailed on Page 4, the only live local recitals currently notified to us for October/November are at

Worcester Cathedral, and at Derby Cathedral, for which prior booking is essential via Derby Cathedral's Eventbrite page ( <https://bit.ly/33XFAP1>).

### **October 2020**

Thurs 1 October 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Samuel Hudson (Worcester Cathedral)

Frid 2 October 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Alexander Binns (Derby Cathedral)

Thurs 8 October 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Nicholas Freestone (Worcester Cathedral)

Frid 9 October 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Thomas Hawkes (Norwich)

Thurs 15 October 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Ed Jones (Worcester Cathedral)

Frid 16 October 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Simon Russell (St Mary's, Nantwich)

Thurs 22 October 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Luke Mitchell (Worcester Cathedral)

Frid 23 October 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Laurence Caldecote (All Saints' Northampton)

Frid 30 October 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Peter Siepmann (St Peter's, Nottingham)

### **November 2020**

Thurs 5 November 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Richard Cook (St Edmundsbury Cathedral)

Frid 6 November 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Christopher Ouvry-Johns (Leicester Cathedral)

Thurs 12 November 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Christopher Allsop (The King's School, Worcester)

Frid 13 November 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Jeremiah Stephenson (All Saints', Margaret Street, London)

Frid 20 November 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Hugh Morris (Salisbury)

Thurs 26 November 2020 • 1.15 to 1.55 • Worcester Cathedral  
Ashley Wagner (Birmingham Cathedral)

Frid 27 November 2020 • 1.00 to 1.45 • Derby Cathedral  
Edward Turner (Derby Cathedral)

### **Emmanuel Church, Wylde Green**

It is understood from Director of Music Richard Mason that the monthly Friday lunchtime organ recitals at Emmanuel Church, Wylde Green, may be starting again on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2020. As a number of LDOA members are 'regulars' at Wylde Green, we will e-mail you when we have any further update on these recitals.

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**Ed. – the next newsletter is planned for December 2020, with a deadline for submission of items for inclusion of 24/11/20, to Trevor Smedley by e-mail as above, or by mail to 8 The Parchments, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 7NA**