

Chester & North-East Wales Organists' & Choirmasters' Association

Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists



CNEWOCA

Newsletter – April 2019

On line at www.cnewoca.org.uk

Facebook - www.facebook.com/groups/CNEWOCA

Our Next Event

Our meeting on Monday 29th April is at Neston Parish Church (St Mary & St Helen), in the centre of Neston, starting at 7.30pm.



The church is located on High Street and there is good (free) public parking in the multi-storey car park in Brook Street (also used by Sainsbury's and Argos). The organ is a fine 3- manual and pedal Foster & Andrews instrument, built in 1900 (Gr 8,8,8,8,4,4,12th,2,8 Sw 16,8,8,8,8,4,2,III,8,8, Ch 8,8,8,4,8 Ped 16,16,10,8,8). Some minor work was carried out by Rushworth and Dreaper in the 1930s (electric blower and changes to the choir organ?). Around 1995 Keith Edwards (Chester) cleaned and overhauled the organ and replaced the tracker key actions. The key actions for the Choir and Great were converted to electric action (using magnets to operate the pallet pull-downs directly). The swell action key had a pneumatic final stage - this has been retained and is now operated by electro magnets. The pedal pneumatics were replaced by direct electric action. The stop action remains mechanical. Details about the organ may be found on the NPOR at <http://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=A00056>. After a short introduction to the organ, the instrument will be available for members to play.

Next month

On the evening of Monday 27th May we visit the home of John Latham in Malpas to hear and play the house organ.

The Chairman Writes

As I write this article, I am looking forward to being part of some wonderful music on Easter Sunday, both in our morning worship and then in an afternoon concert to be given by Hamilton Street's Choir Fellowship. Our Choir Fellowship is open to anyone who

enjoys singing - you don't have to worship at Hamilton Street or any other Church, or even be a regular attendee at rehearsals. You may think that this 'all-inclusive and welcoming' approach shouldn't work, perhaps because of the uncertainty surrounding who will attend; however, there seems to be some reason why it does work, and it has also resulted in several new members for the Church.

Yesterday (7th April), I attended morning worship at St Magnus' Cathedral in Kirkwall, Orkney Islands. It was a very enjoyable service and the Willis Organ, installed around the same time as Liverpool's, sounded magnificent. The Cathedral is a relatively large building, and I began to wonder how they manage to exist, attracting a similar size congregation to Hamilton Street (approximately sixty), and yet Hamilton Street, since my last article, has decided to close its building (no date yet) and merge with the URC about ½ a mile away. The closing of a church building will always be an emotional event, as even with a merger, not all the church family will choose to move to the other church. I suppose the plus factor of so many churches closing is that it should also reduce the 'shortage' of organists, and in so doing, raise the quality.

It was a lovely sunny afternoon for our visit to Llandudno. We were greeted at Holy Trinity by our member Charles Jones, who gave us a brief history of the church and organ before providing an excellent demonstration of its capabilities. Members had plenty of time to enjoy playing the organ, and I certainly appreciated the opportunity. We then moved across the road to St John's Methodist Church, where we were guided to their new Viscount organ by our member Jenny Anderson. The building and the organ were both significantly different to Holy Trinity; however, the Viscount provides a great deal of flexibility to play a wide range of music, and it is clearly fulfilling the job it is being asked to do. "Thank You" to Jenny and Charles for making the arrangements so that we could enjoy a very pleasant afternoon in Llandudno.

Our Association has seen a significant reduction in the number of members attending events, to the point that we are now

asking if having monthly events is worthwhile. An item about this will be included on the AGM Agenda; however, I suggest you speak up about this in the next couple of months if you have any thoughts to share. Some members have previously suggested that we need to choose venues with an interesting organ that is well demonstrated and reasonably accessible. Llandudno fitted all those points - we even had two organs for you to hear and play on the same day, and yet the turnout was poor, with more members from the Chester area attending than from North Wales! In addition to poor turnouts for events, our membership numbers have also declined.

Our AGM and Annual Dinner will be taking place in a couple of months' time. This is likely to be a significant AGM, bearing in mind the comments made above, and I would encourage you to give these matters serious thought. I would like to thank the Officers and Committee Members who have worked very hard in recent years to provide you with some really interesting opportunities, including cathedral visits, lectures, masterclass, and all the events associated with our 20th birthday in 2018.

My term is coming to its conclusion and, having been the Chairman for the past five years, and seven times during the last nine years, it is time for someone else, hopefully with fresh ideas, to take the Association forward. At this point, I would like to say a particular "Thank You" to Angie for her amazing support and professionalism as Secretary during the last four years. Please consider what you can offer our Association as the AGM approaches. There will be vacancies for both Officers and Committee Members, so opportunities to 'have your say' and to 'put your thoughts into action' are there waiting for you.

Well, that's the serious stuff over - now a bit of light-hearted stuff to round things off!

Musical Might-Have-Been's: *Bach to the Future - Haydn Seek - Verdi Interesting*

The evenings are getting lighter and the weather is improving, so I hope we will meet up in the next couple of months at the events that have been organised. In the meantime, if you'd like to discuss anything to do with CNEWOCA, don't hesitate to contact me by e-mail (angiejohnevans@uwclub.net) or on 07939-645688.

What's On?

Chester Cathedral

Thursdays at 1.10pm

- 25 Apr** Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
2 May Andrew J Wyatt (Chester Cathedral)
9 May Jane Watts (Concert Organist)
16 May Colin Walsh (Lincoln Cathedral)
23 May Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)

Admission £5.45 Concessions £4.50

Music at Wesley

Tuesdays, 12.45pm to 1.30pm

- 30 Apr** Chethams School of Music Brass Ensembles
7 May Justine Gormley (Piano)
14 May Jonathan Guy (Clarinet),
Leanne Cody (Piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals

12.45pm to 1.35pm

- 18 May** John Evans (Hoole Methodist, Chester)

Admission Free - retiring collection

St Asaph Cathedral

Wednesdays at 7.30pm

- 1 May** Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
Admission £6

St George's Hall, Liverpool

Ian Tracey

- Mon 6 May** 5.30pm to 7.00pm
Tues 14 May 12.45pm to 1.30pm

Admission £5.50

Liverpool Cathedral

- Mon 6 May** Daniel Bishop (Liverpool Cathedral)
at 11.15am Admission £5

- Fri 10 May** Lee Ward (Liverpool Cathedral)
at 12.45pm - in the Lady Chapel -
Admission free - retiring collection

- Mon 27 May** Richard Lea (Liverpool Met Cathedral)
at 11.15am Admission £5

St Giles', Wrexham

Mondays at 12.30pm

- 6 May** Christopher Pilsbury (St Giles)
13 May Fay Adamson
20 May Charles Junes (Holy Trinity,
Llandudno)
27 May Colin Porter with Robert Bird (Organ
and Piano Duets)

Admission free - retiring collection

Bangor Cathedral

Tuesdays 1.10pm

- 14 May** John Hosking

Admission Free - retiring collection

Hoole Methodist Church, Chester

Third Sunday at 3pm – Charity Concerts

- 19 May** The Queen's School, Chester
16 Jun Waverton Singers

Admission Free - suggested donation £5
Further details : John Evans 07939 645688

St Chad's, Shrewsbury

at 12.40pm

- Tues 7 May** Martyn Rawles (Lichfield
Cathedral)

- Fri 17 May** Peter King (Bath Abbey)

Admission Free - retiring collection

Shrewsbury Abbey

at 12.40pm

- Wed 8 May** Peter Morris (Walsall Town Hall)

Admission Free - retiring collection

Organ Recitals Nationwide

details on www.organrecitals.com

Notre Dame, Paris

An organist at Notre Dame Cathedral had just finished playing a psalm, and the priest had started leading the gospel for the evening services, when the fire alarm first sounded, startling those inside the historic church.



Courtesy Phillip Truckenbrod Concert Artists

Johann Vexo, one of five organists who play at Notre Dame in Paris, had no idea what was in store when he showed up for the Monday evening service.

In an interview with NBC News, conducted over FaceTime from his home in Nancy, about 175 miles east of Paris, the musician recalled the heartbreak he felt when he saw the beloved Parisian landmark engulfed in flames. "It's like seeing your own house burning," he said, "it's just unbearable."

The evening Mass began at 6.15 pm local time (12.15 pm ET), and it wasn't long into the service when the fire alarm went off, causing confusion among church workers and visitors. "Everybody was really surprised because it was the first time we had heard this alarm, so we didn't really know what to do," Vexo, 40, said.

It was then that people at the back of the cathedral - where the roof would later collapse - started to evacuate through the front entrance, and the Mass had disbanded, he said.

Vexo, who plays at the Cathedral weekly on Mondays or Tuesdays, first headed to the sacristy, where he glanced at the alarm system, still in disbelief that the Cathedral may actually be on fire. "I was just thinking it was a mistake or a test," he said. "I never thought that it was a true fire."

In fact, he didn't learn that Notre Dame was in flames until he was back at his Paris home, a short distance from the church, and a colleague telephoned him. Images of the burning building were already reverberating around the world when Vexo descended into the streets to take in the horrifying spectacle. Playing at Notre Dame was a "dream come true," he said.

"I think for every organist all around the world, it's the best place, the most famous place in the world, just the top of the top," Vexo said.

As for the state of the organs, he said it's not clear if the choir organ was damaged. But he said it had been filled with water as firefighters attempted to save the 18th century stalls where the canons sit on either side of the choir.

Vexo also said he received good information early on Tuesday that the great organ - built in the 1730s by François Thierry - appeared to have been saved. But while it may look perfect from the outside, it will need a thorough check before the full state of the damage can be assessed.

The great organ has 8,000 pipes and, according to Vexo, it can be identified by its sound.

"The acoustic is absolutely stunning," he added. "I think the great organ of Notre Dame is one of the only instruments that you can really recognize as soon as you hear it."

Ray's Records

Brenda Harper has been in touch regarding Ray's collection of organ records. There are 12 LPs and 3 EPs – e-mail me (see below) if you are interested and I will pass your details on to Brenda.

Newsletter Contributions

Contributions for the May newsletter are required by the end of April. Please write to Bob Jones at 3 Appletton Road, Chester CH2 1JH or (preferred) e-mail at bob.jones25@btinternet.com or telephone 01244 315089 or 07701 052304.