

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

Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists



Newsletter – August 2018

On line at www.cnewoca.org.uk

Facebook - www.facebook.com/groups/CNEWOCA

Next Month and beyond

There is no meeting this month, but at 7.30pm on Monday 24th September we visit St Werburgh's in Chester for an evening on improvisation with James Andrews. At 1.30pm on Saturday 13th October we visit the Marble Church, Bodelwyddan, which has recently taken delivery of an Allen Digital Organ. Although the instrument has two manuals and 33 stops, there is a range of over 200 additional voices to choose from, which makes the instrument extremely versatile indeed.

On Saturday 17th November we are planning to visit Christ Church in Llanfairfechan - last year's planned visit had to be cancelled due to building work.

The Chairman Writes

I'm sure many of you have been enjoying the hot and dry period of weather during June and July, however, it's not been enjoyable for everyone!

We had one of those very hot days for our July event when we visited Tabley House, Knutsford. A big "Thank You" to Mike and Ethan for making the arrangements for what turned out to be a very enjoyable afternoon. The Association was very fortunate to have the opportunity to have access to the organ in Tabley Chapel, as it only tends to be used once a year for a Christmas Carol Service these days. The organ dates back to 1876 and was provided by Elizabeth Smith-Barry, the second wife of George, 2nd Lord de Tabley. It was made by Bryceson of London, a firm well known at the time for producing both barrel and pipe organs. It is probably the only instrument made by the firm that remains in its original condition. The afternoon teas served in what used to be the Lady Chapel were also excellent!

While looking through my latest copy of Organists Review, I noticed our Association has a lot in common with many others - we are an Organists' Association, however we are also a Choirmasters' Association. I hope that we are an Association that focuses on its members, and we are always keen to receive suggestions of where you'd like us to visit or what sort of things you'd like arranging. It would be easy just to arrange visits to the best pipe organs we can get access to without

considering a more balanced programme of events and a variety of locations.

We frequently hear that the organ's popularity is diminishing, however I was looking at the number of local recital series (St Giles, Wrexham; St Asaph Cathedral; Holy Trinity, Llandudno; and some of the concerts at St John's, Chester on Wednesdays; Chester Cathedral on Thursdays; and no doubt other occasional concerts I've omitted to mention) and I wondered if there is any other instrument that can boast the same level of exposure and availability to the public, often at no cost. Congratulations and thanks to those who continue to promote organ concerts - I appreciate how much effort is involved. There are indeed many organ concerts available, but those organising them need to ensure that anyone who attends is encouraged to come again by receiving a warm welcome and that the performer provides a programme which is also appealing to the non-organ enthusiast.

Events for the remainder of 2018 have been arranged. Members of the Committee are actively approaching venues and firms we thought would offer us an interesting visit for 2019, and it is hoped these events and dates will be confirmed for inclusion in the next Newsletter.

I deal with a friend who is a treasurer with the surname of Wallett. This got me thinking if there were any hymns that could be attributed to particular trades

I'll start you off with a few:

The Dentist's Hymn:

Crown Him with Many Crowns

The Builder's Hymn:

The Church's One Foundation

The Tailor's Hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy

The Politician's Hymn:

Standing on the Promises

The Golfer's Hymn:

There is a Green Hill Far Away

I look forward to seeing you at some of the events that have been organised for the months ahead. If you'd like to discuss anything to do with CNEWOCA in the meantime, don't hesitate to contact me by email at angiejohnevans@uwclub.net or on 07939 645688.

Richard Bass RIP

It is with great sadness that I have to report the passing of Richard Bass on 18th July. Richard was a founder member of CNEWOCA and served on the committee for many years. Richard had an encyclopaedic knowledge of organ specifications and was a true connoisseur of organ music. He was a choir member, Crucifer and Altar Server at St Helen's Tarporley. He was a regular at the Thursday lunchtime recitals at the Cathedral and, in common with many organ enthusiasts, was an avid fan of steam. He was a volunteer Guard on the Severn Valley Railway and even named his abode 'Stanier House' after Sir William A Stanier, who was Chief Mechanical Engineer of the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. The funeral service will be held at St Helen's Tarporley on Monday 13th August at 2.30pm.

St Giles, Wrexham

Details of the forthcoming recitals are in What's On - Chris Pilsbury has written to tell me that John Hosking, who is appearing on 3rd September, will be playing two pieces from the Association's 20 Year Celebration Book, being John Evans' Toccata and Nigel Ogden's Reflection.

Recitals at St Peter's, Ruthin

Just a reminder that the recitals at St Peter's have had to be re-scheduled due to work being carried out on the roof. The recitals will take place at 1.00pm instead of in the evening. Details are in "What's On".

Shortage of Organists

Back in April it was reported in the Press that church organists are a dying breed, with congregations singing along to taped music instead - this was from a study carried out by Richard Hubbard, who is music development director for the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich in Suffolk. He is quoted as saying that "Most churches have an organ and most of them are in working order, so it really is just down to a lack of players.

"A lot of it is to do with the fact that the organ is particularly difficult to learn and requires a lot of commitment - you normally need to have about Grade 5 piano to start organ lessons. (cont'd overleaf)

What's On?

Chester Cathedral

Thursdays at 1.10pm

- 9 Aug** Roger Fisher (Organist Emeritus)
16 Aug Rachel Mahon (Chester Cathedral)
23 Aug Graham Eccles (St Asaph)
30 Aug Robert Marsh (Christ Church, Skipton)

Liverpool Cathedral

12.30pm to 1.00pm

- Sat 11 Aug** Charles Wooler (Newcastle-o-Tyne)
Sat 18 Aug Timothy Easter (Harpenden)
Sat 25 Aug Paul Delaney (St Pauls West Derby)
Sat 1 Sep Jeremy Cole (Wells Cathedral)
Sat 8 Sep David Lammler (St John's Margate)
Admission Free
Bank Holiday Monday, 27 Aug at 11.15am
Daniel Bishop (Liverpool Cathedral)
Admission £5

Liverpool Metropolitan Cath.

Saturdays, 2.00pm to 3.00pm

- 11 Aug** Peter Kwater and Carol Wareing
18 Aug Melanie Barney (Quebec, Canada)
25 Aug Daniel Mansfield (Liverpool Met.)
1 Sep Dylan McCaig (St Chads, Birmingham)
Admission Free

St George's Hall, Liverpool

12.45pm to 1.30pm

- Tue 11 Sep** Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral)
Admission £2.50

St Chad's, Shrewsbury

12.40pm to 1.20pm

- Fri 17 Aug** Paul Carr (Birmingham)
Tues 4 Sep Richard Pinel (Jesus College)
Fri 21 Sep David Saint (St Chad's Birmingham)
Admission Free - Retiring Collection

Holy Trinity, Llandudno

Tuesdays, 1.00pm to 1.45pm

- 14 Aug** Charles Jones (Holy Trinity)
21 Aug Alessandro Bianchi (Italy)
28 Aug Graham Eccles (St Asaph)
Admission Free - Retiring Collection

St James, New Brighton

7.30pm

- Fri 14 Sept** Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral)
Admission £12
16-18 years £6 (under 15's free)

St Peter's, Ruthin

Wednesdays at 1.00pm

- 3 Oct** Andrew J Wyatt (Chester Cathedral)
10 Oct Colin Walsh (Lincoln Cathedral)
17 Oct Dr John Pemberton (Curator of the organ at Hull City Hall)
24 Oct Roger Fisher (Organist Emeritus, Chester Cathedral)

Christ Church URC,

Port Sunlight

7.30pm

- Sat 8 Sep** Ian Tracey (Liverpool Cathedral)
Admission £5

St Asaph Cathedral

7.30pm

- Wed 5 Sep** Christopher Herrick
Admission £6

St Giles', Wrexham

Mondays at 12.30pm

- 27 Aug** Tim Jones (York)
3 Sep John Hosking (St Asaph Cathedral)
10 Sep Andrew Wyatt (Chester Cathedral)
17 Sep Keith Morgan (Market Rasen)
24 Sep Martin Brown (Bangor Cathedral)
Admission Free - Retiring Collection

Ellesmere College

Carol Williams' concert on 13 September

This concert has been cancelled

Music at Wesley

Tuesdays 12.45pm to 1.30pm

- 11 Sep** William Green (Piano)
18 Sep Greta Mutlu (Violin), Jessica Zhu (Piano)
25 Sep Rachel Johnson (Flute), Emmanuel Vass (Piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals

12.45pm to 1.35pm

- 29 Sep** Roger Fisher (Organist Emeritus, Chester Cathedral)
Admission Free - Retiring Collection

Organ Recitals Nationwide

details on www.organrecitals.com

(cont'd from previous page)

"And then you have to have access to an instrument to practice on, with fewer churches being left open these days you have to get into the church.

"In the winter, I know from my own experience, that you go to a dark cold country church and practice for as long as you can until your fingers freeze. So it requires a lot of dedication and effort for young people to take up the organ.

"There's more of a sense of togetherness and community if we're singing together with live musicians rather than just following a machine."

Despite nearly all of the churches surveyed saying they had an organ in good working order, parishioners sang along to recorded music in a third of them.

In the churches where they had an organist, half of them were older than 70, with less than 4% aged 30 or under.

One follow-up letter in the Telegraph - from a senior Organ Scholar at Oxford - includes the comment that *"most 'Church Organists' I have come across turned out to be pianists with no idea what they are doing at an organ bench. It's no surprise that many churches prefer backing tapes."*

Perhaps we are lucky in Chester, or maybe it is with being a city, that we don't have many pianists sitting at organ benches - perhaps this is not the case in the more rural areas. But what if we do have pianists sitting at organ benches - we have that because there

are so few organists. If you are a pianist living in a rural area and have family commitments, where can you find time to attend lessons and moreover put in the necessary practice to make the lessons worthwhile? Even if you have access to the Church, it is a matter of leaving home, which puts pressure on other family members, etc. The answer, if there is one, is to encourage youngsters who are learning the piano to take up the organ, but if the family doesn't go to Church or is 'anti-Church' there are other hurdles to overcome. Perhaps the problem has arisen due to the fact that Church attendances are so low and many potential organists have never set foot inside a Church. St Francis' Church in Chester City Centre was open till 10.00pm a few weeks ago, with parishioners outside encouraging passersby to go inside - some members of the public were quite abusive, so what chance have we?????

This trend can be seen all too well at the crematorium. Fewer and fewer funerals are having the organ, as the crematorium's music system seems to cater for most, even though we know that it is preferable to sing to a live musician. Maybe it is the funeral directors who are steering families away from the organ on the grounds that you don't need one anymore - and it is cheaper. I was asked to play for a funeral at the Crematorium a few weeks ago - the person who rang was new to the job and said that the family wanted a hymn that was new to her - Guide Me O Thy Great Redeemer!!! Quite a few funerals do not have any religious element, and this is fine if the deceased was an atheist/agnostic, but another disturbing factor is the increasing use of civil celebrants where there is a religious element to a funeral service. It is quite common to have a civil celebrant take a service where Christian hymns are sung and the Lord's prayer recited.

I know that we are living in a changing world and I don't know that as an Association we can do anything about that trend, but perhaps the Diocese, both Anglican and RC, should put their point of view forward to the Association of Funeral Directors. Having said that, I know of some instances where the funeral director has found it difficult to get hold of the clergy, and maybe the use of a civil celebrant is an easy way out, and if the family are not Churchgoers they will not object even though the service is essentially Christian.

If anyone has any ideas/views, please email me at bob.jones25@btinternet.com

Newsletter Contributions

Contributions for the September newsletter are required by the third week of August. Please write to Bob Jones at 3 Appleton Road, Chester CH2 1JH or (preferred) email me at bob.jones25@btinternet.com or telephone 01244 315089 or 07701 052304.