

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

Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists

www.cnewoca.org.uk



Newsletter – February 2021

From the chairman

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2021. I hope that you and your loved ones are keeping safe and well during this time of Covid 19.

Our aim this year is to arrange a series of meetings when it is safe to do so. The details of which will be communicated via the newsletter and the association website.

You will also be please to know that your current subscription to the association would continue until next renewal date in September 2021.

As we develop our ongoing events programme we would like to hear what type of events and locations you would to see during the coming season, so do please contact myself or a member of the committee and let us know.

Tony Warren

Future events and keeping in touch

The committee has met on three occasions since September, the last two meetings have used Zoom. As well as deciding that membership will continue until September 2021 *without* payment of a fee, the committee agreed to continue our affiliation to the Incorporated Association of Organists. The IAO has reduced its affiliation fee for 2021. Our affiliation with the IAO provides insurance for our events and enables CNEWOCA members to subscribe to the IAO Magazine (Organists' Review) a reduced rate; subscribers can also obtain a 10% discount on the purchase of music from Church Organ World.

The committee has discussed running some events in 2021, when the state of the pandemic allows. We hope that we can run some of the events delayed from 2020 and some new events. We'll be using the website to give early information about these events. If you are able please periodically look at www.cnewoca.org.uk You can also sign up for our email circulation list via the home page of the website.

Contributions are invited for the next newsletter. Please send them to newsletter@cnewoca.org.uk

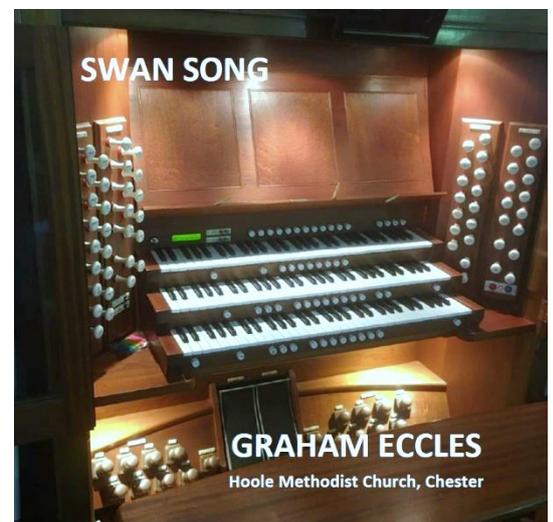
Is Covid-19 Good or Bad?

Is Covid-19 Good or Bad? I'm sure we will all agree that it's a bad thing, or will we?

Have some positive things happened as a result of the way we've had to live since Covid-19 took a hold on our lives?

I can look back on three things with a sense of achievement since the first lockdown that began in March 2020:

- Without lockdown, I wouldn't have had the 250 hours available for my '3,000-Miles in 3 Months Cycling Challenge'. A big thank you to those who supported me, it is much appreciated, and over £5,000 was raised for The Hospice of the Good Shepherd.
- Ever since we had our new organ installed at Hamilton Street, it has been my hope to have a recording made of it being played by a top organist. I am incredibly grateful to Graham Eccles for making this possible. The wide variety of music contained within the program truly displays both the talent of the performer and the versatility of the organ. If you would like a copy of the CD, do get in touch.
- The time that has been created has enabled me to explore the internet for music, and as a result, I have learnt more music in the last year than I have probably managed in the previous twenty. If you'd like to know more about the music I discovered, do get in touch. If you've stumbled across some new music, particularly if it's not too difficult, perhaps you'd let me know, as it seems it will be a few months yet before we'll be set free again.



Our government's reaction to Covid-19 has created more time and space for us to do other things. Diaries that were full of clubs, choirs, theatres, and sports now have empty pages.

At times life can seem more uncertain than others, perhaps we have family and friends who need our help or perhaps it's ourselves who need that caring and kind word of encouragement or reassurance. One of the nice things I have found about CNEWOCA is that we encourage each other. After all, the Association is there for the benefit of its members, which is YOU!

So, is Covid-19 all bad? Well, that's for you to weigh up for yourselves. It has certainly given us the chance to rethink the way we live. Your CNEWOCA Committee have met several times via ZOOM. We are considering how and when we can get face-to-face events underway again, because there is nothing like live music and meeting face-to-face.

I hope we will get to meet up before the end of summer, I have missed seeing you. In the meantime, if you fancy a chat don't hesitate to give me a call on 07939 645688 or email: angiejohnevans@uwclub.net.

John Evans

Anniversaries 2021

Jim Treloar writes:

As organists or lovers of organ music will know it was very difficult to avoid the fact that 2020 was the 150th anniversary of the birth of Louis Vierne. There were many events held in celebration including four recitals here at Chester Cathedral, fortunately held between lockdowns, and enjoyed by those of us who attended. It was also the 150th anniversary of the birth of another famous Paris organist Charles Tournemire, organist at St Clotilde and teacher of Jean Langlais.



This prompted me to see what 2021 holds for similar anniversaries. The first name which cropped up was yet another French organist, the legendary Jeanne Demessieux born on 13th February 1921 and who died tragically young in 1967. It is the 110th anniversary of the birth of Jehan Alain, also born in February but who sadly died at only 29 whilst on active service during the war.

2021 marks the 50th anniversary of the passing of Marcel Dupre, some older members may even have seen him play. As a boy I heard him play at Truro Cathedral although I cannot recall anything of the event now! The English

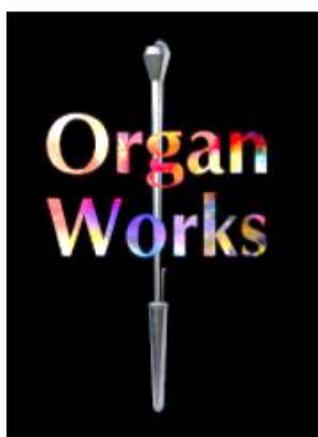
organist Jeremy Filsell, now the master of music at St Thomas, Fifth Avenue, New York, who is a well know interpreter of Dupre's music is arranging a complete performance of his works there played by Stephen Tharp and himself, he will also include Demessieux's works which are notoriously difficult.

Some other anniversaries I have picked up this year are that Sweelinck died 400 years ago, Josquin des Pres 500 years ago and Saint-Saens 100 years ago. From a list of other composers, Stravinsky died 50 years ago and Mahler 110 years ago. I'm sure that there are many more



On a more cheerful note our own Dame Gillian Weir is 80, John Bertalot who entertained us so well at our AGM a few years ago is 90 and the Canadian composer, Rachel Laurin, who I have written about in these pages previously, is 60. Her output continues at a rapid pace, mostly commissions, and she has just finished a Fantasia for Harp and String Quartet, opus 101.

New book: Organ Works - John Norman



What is an organ and how does it work?

John Norman explores the organ, its history, its musical structure, its appearance and its mechanism.

Lavishly illustrated, this hardback book features over 200 photographs and line drawings.

Order from the BIOS website, bios.org.uk, (£45+£4.50 p&p) or from john@jnorman.me.uk.

Music clear-out

I am having another clear-out of organ music which I no longer play (or perhaps never could). Some of the material dates back to the 1950's when I first got the bug 🐛 and some of it is quite stressed in condition.

There is far too much for me to prepare a detailed list, but if there are any specific works that any member needs, if they let me know, and I have it, I will put it on one side pending the lifting of the virus regulations, and then pass them on at the next meeting. (Whenever that might be).

Best wishes to all members in the meantime.

Alex McMillan

[\(AlexMcMillanOrganist@hotmail.com\)](mailto:AlexMcMillanOrganist@hotmail.com)

What did/do you do during lockdown?

Lockdown started with space to catch up with all those little matters which get put off “until I get a moment”. The garden soon looked tidier than it has in years, but this was not to last: by mid-summer the veg patch was waist deep in self-seeded borage.

I wasn't being idle (well, not very) but I have a home organ (an Eminent Omegan 8050) given to me by a friend. It may not have the sound quality of a modern instrument, but it is a great deal better than nothing. It seemed appropriate to record a CD for my friend by way of a thank you so, while the bees enjoyed all those pretty blue flowers, I put in the hours of practice needed to get back up to an acceptable standard. It was good to learn what the instrument would do rather than just using it to note bash.

The Eminent featured in our parish Zoom service while we were locked out of church. It is now proving useful as piano pupils come back to “real” lessons: I demonstrate/accompany on the organ, leaving the sanitised piano to the pupil. At church, I play before and after the service and cover the setting out and tidying away of the communion things. It is heartening that the music needed after communion is getting longer as the number of communicants slowly rises. These last few months have allowed me to rethink my priorities and I have decided to drop being a school governor and spend that time on music.

I am enjoyed the series of organ recitals at the cathedral, featuring the work of Louis Vierne. I especially appreciated the way recitalist, Richard Lea, talked us through the 1st Symphonie before playing it – it made it so much easier to follow.

Katriona Moulton

Our lockdown journey

We returned from holiday in Cornwall just before the first lockdown began in March 2020. The last service before the lockdown at All Saints Thornton Hough (our church) was on the third Sunday of Lent (and I was away). Churches were closed during the first lockdown so we used our website to publish written meditations and reflections produced by our vicar. We used the Mailchimp mail list service to tell those of our congregation who used email about them. We provided a link to the RSCM “hymn of the week” but added hymns which I recorded (at home) to better match the themes of the meditations/reflections. We produced the words for the hymns (under a streaming licence) and an organ accompaniment for people to sing at home. We were not able to have our Passiontide music and readings service, though we produced a web-based version using performances we found on YouTube.

[We posted printed copies of the reflections to those in our congregation who did not use the Internet.]

When the lockdown eased and we again could return to church – our congregation had to sit “socially distanced” in their “bubbles”. Initially there could be no singing. We printed the words of the hymns we would have sung so that the congregation could contemplate them whilst listening to the tunes being played on the organ.

When choirs were again permitted (September 2020), we had to arrange the seating to meet the social distancing requirements and prepare a risk assessment. (The template on the RSCM website was really useful in this regard.) We are fortunate that there are some family groups in the choir which made the social distancing in our chancel possible. Not all our choristers have chosen to return (yet). We had to deal with the distribution of music and books in a COVID-19 secure way and the choir did not robe (to avoid congestion in the vestry). Stopping “social mingling” at practices and services has been difficult. The choir has enjoyed “doing” the singing; we have reduced the length of the services and the amount of sung content for the time being. We had our Harvest Festival and All Saints’ day services with some special music as well as the popular hymns, all sung by the choir.

When lockdown 2 was announced, before it began, we quickly got the choir together to record some music to use in services we were going to record for use during the lockdown. The vicar and I put together these recorded services (including our Remembrance Sunday service) using the music the choir had recorded.

Lockdown 2 end just in time to miss Advent Sunday. However, we had our Advent Carol service (shortened) on the Second Sunday of Advent. We had our Christmas carol service (shortened to six lessons) on Advent 4; attendees were required to book a place and we repeated the service to allow those who wanted to come to attend. We found that there was quite an appetite for Christmas music and will look at the revised times of these services for future years. Numbers were quite down for the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services. We had no service on the Sunday after Christmas and started the year with a good Epiphany service with all the singing (again, still) by the choir.

Locally the infection rate, was getting very high and so we decided to pause public worship once more. Since then we have recorded services for each Sunday since then (and for Ash Wednesday); these have included singing either from the choir (or from the vicar and me). Initially the choir items were things we recorded before pausing public worship. When we ran out, we tried to get the choir to use the Virtual Choir Recorder app (<https://www.planetchoir.com/>) to record their parts but this was not very successful as not enough members had smart phones. We got some members of the choir to come along and individually record their parts (really using the app under supervision) but this was quite labour intensive and only partially successful though have used some of these “virtual choir” recordings in recent services.

We are reviewing our decision to pause public worship at the beginning of March and I hope we can once again have services (with music) in church. I keep thinking about what we can sing we get back together again.

If you want to hear any of our efforts, please go to <https://www.allsaintsth.org.uk/spiritual> - very soon we shall have a whole year's worth of material on the website.

Iain Stinson

Rediscovering an instrument



As we came out of lockdown 1, we wanted to have some gentler music from the organ at our services. Our 1912 Norman & Beard organ is quite forthright and so it was a challenge to find interesting, soft(ish) registrations which helped “illustrate” the words of the hymns. The disposition of the organ is Great: 8,8,8,8,4,4,2,8, Sw Oct to Grt; Swell: 16, 8, 8, 8, 8, 4 III, 8, 8, Oct; Pedal

16,16,8; Couplers Sw to Grt, Grt to Ped, Sw to Ped; Tremulant.

<https://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=A00207>

Here are a few of the gentler combinations I have used.

- Swell 16+8 (Flute), Swell Octave to Great, Swell to Pedal. Playing on the Great gave a gentle sound with an appropriately soft pedal. Adding the Great Dulciana strengthened the sound a little whilst still being quite restrained.
- Swell 16 + 4 played an octave higher gives a nice “8+2” sound and toping it off with the Mixture added brightness.
- The Great 4 flute, played an octave lower was a slightly softer solo stop than the Clarabella.
- The Gamba and Celeste (with or without the octave coupler) produced a good ethereal sound and allowed the Great Dulciana to be used as a solo stop.
- The Great Small Open (uncoupled) made a good solo sound (especially in the tenor) when used with the Swell 8+4 (box closed) + Pedal soft 16 coupled to the Swell.
- The Swell Oboe, used as a solo in the tenor and alto ranges works, well with the Great Dulciana providing the accompaniment, coupled to the pedals (no pedal stops and playing the pedal part an octave down) with or without the Tremulant.
- Using some of the software stops on their own can be very effective: Swell Flute 8, Swell Diapason 8, Swell Giegen Principal 4 (an octave down) for quiet choral melodies. The Swell Oboe, with the 8 Flute and the box closed could be quite plaintive
- For a more robust sound, using the Swell Cornopean as a tenor solo stop against the Great Small Open coupled to the pedals (with the soft 16)
- I also found that playing without a 16 pedal line was also quite helpful in keeping the sound rather more gentle. Our Pedal 16 Bourdon is quite loud and the 16 Open Wood very loud. I sometimes add the 16 Open Wood for a final note of a piece where you might use a soft 32 flue to provide that final rumble.

You might like to try out some of the different combinations of sounds when you next play. Try out some of the stops on their own. Don't always couple the Swell to the Great. Can you play an octave higher or an octave lower to get a different sound from the stop. Put your feet up!

Iain Stinson

The Rieger Organ of Regensburg Cathedral

Some years ago I was on a river cruise on the River Rhine in Germany and one of the stops was at Regensburg. Since the cathedral was quite close I decided to spend my time there by visiting this vast Gothic building.

On entering a very pleasant surprise was that someone, I assume the organist, was practicing. It was a superb sound in a wonderful acoustic, the organ being



suspended on the north side of the nave seemingly quite high up. I quickly learnt that this was an almost new organ at the time by the well-known builder Rieger from 2007. A new CD of the instrument brought further information that it was of 4-manuals and pedal and of 80 stops. It is the largest suspended organ in the world, being held in place by four steel ropes, an amazing technical achievement, quite a sight to behold. Another unique feature is that hidden from view is a lift to take the organist up to the console within the organ. The organist was, and still is, Franz Josef Stoiber, a fine improviser. The CD included works by Bach, Messiaen and Dupre indicating how versatile the instrument is but also what a fine organist he is, he concludes with a 22 minute improvisation.

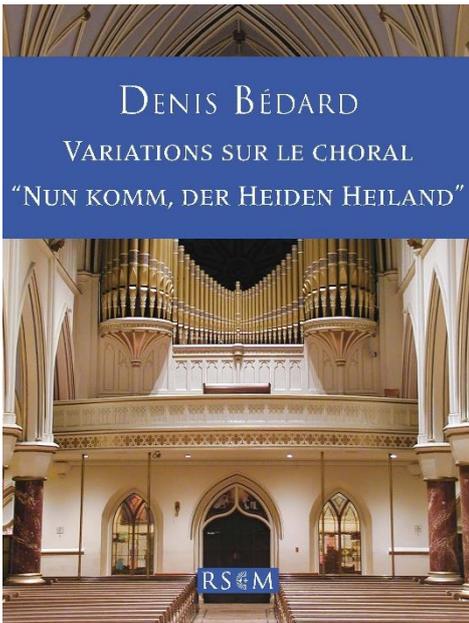
With little to do recently, a search of both organ and organist on the internet I discovered that our own Priory record label has recently issued a double CD set of both organ and organist, titled Masterworks of East Bavaria, which I hastily ordered. The first CD has some Reger and a Sonata by Josef Renner (1868-1934), a native of

Regensburg and a pupil of Rheinberger, one could easily think that the piece was in fact by Rheinberger. The second CD is a collection of improvisations of various styles by Stoiber and illustrates what a fine organist he is. The record captures the marvellous sound of the organ and the superb acoustic in the building, it is thoroughly recommended and being on the Priory label, very easy to obtain.

Jim Treloar

Organ Music

You may be interested in these new(ish) publications.



Variations sur le choral 'Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland'

by Denis Bédard

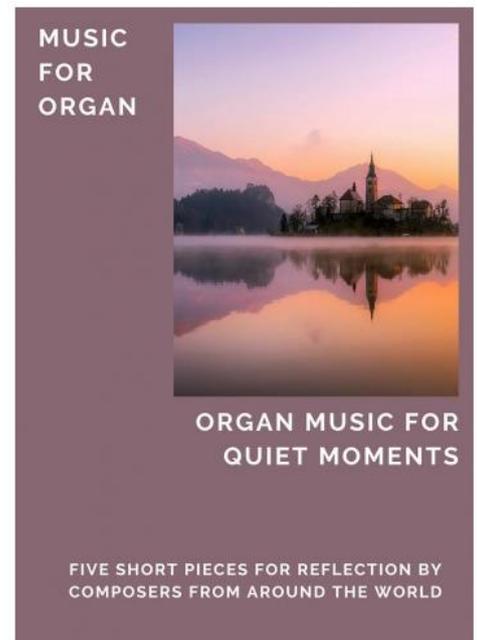
The latest composition from pen of Denis Bédard is now available. A spectacular set of variations on 'Nun Komm, der Heiden Heiland' that is not for the faint-hearted, but is hugely rewarding, both to play and to hear.

Price: £6.50 from <https://www.rscmshop.com/>

'Organ Music for Quiet Moments'. This has become a best-seller and received some very favourable reviews from Organists, Journalists and listeners and is available from Church Organ World's sheet music department priced at £11.95.

It contains:

- A Solemn Sarabande for these Distracted Times (Peter J. Smith)
- Idyll (Graham Twist)
- Addison's Song (Annette Butters)
- Meditation (Stu Beaudoin)
- Nearer My God to Thee (David Stamos)



Weekly newsletter

Dr Keith Harrington (MD of Church Organ World) has been producing a really good newsletter since the pandemic began. Even if you are not looking to buy a new organ it has lots of information about organ music which they supply. You can subscribe to this free of charge by sending email to <keith@makinorgans.co.uk>

Used organ music

Many will know that usedorganmusic.co.uk purchases and distributes second hand books and sheet music. It deals with printed sheet music for the organ together with books on organs and Church music; some choral music is also

available. They have a catalogue which is revised every couple of months or so and you can download this from their website. The business is run from Liverpool by Roger Molyneux (who is an organist). Their prices are keen, and they have a large selection of items.

A five manual home organ

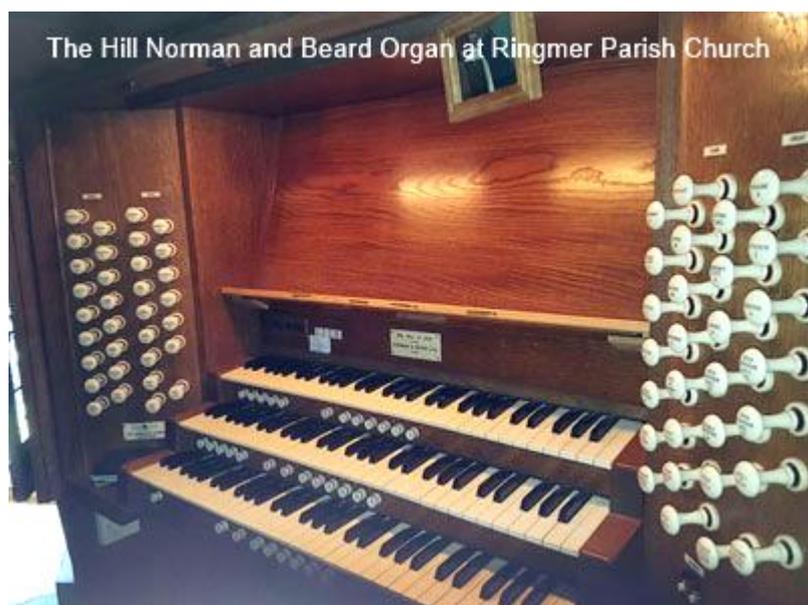
Mrs. Gerald Friedlander, the wife of an eminent Jewish author and historian, was organist of a synagogue in the West End of London, the Western Reform Synagogue in Alfred Place. The organ was a small two manual of eight speaking stops.

The Luftwaffe paid particular attention to the building in 1941, and the congregation then joined another synagogue near Marble Arch.

Mrs Friedlander must have decided at some time that a home organ, would be helpful, and had at her disposal a five manual organ which had one hundred and seven speaking stops, which seems to have been installed by the London firm of Hunter (later taken over by Henry Willis and Sons), at the order of a man called Boustead, in Wimbledon.

In due course this organ seems to have been broken up, and a number of ranks were incorporated in an organ for the Guard's Chapel in Birdcage Walk in London.

Other ranks became part of the organ in St.Mary's in Ringmer, which was the gift of John Christie, of Glyndebourne, the Opera House being within the parish.



The installation was by Norman and Beard in 1922, and included in the scheme were ranks of the Boustead organ from the Friedlander house in Wimbledon, including pipework by Walkers, Father Willis, Cavaille-Coll, and of course Hunter and Son.

Ringmer Parish Church is not particularly large, and would probably accommodate about

two hundred worshippers (at a push), but the organ with ten on the Great, thirteen on the Swell, nine on the Choir, and twelve on the Pedal, would probably be well suited for one of our Cathedrals, or an important town church.

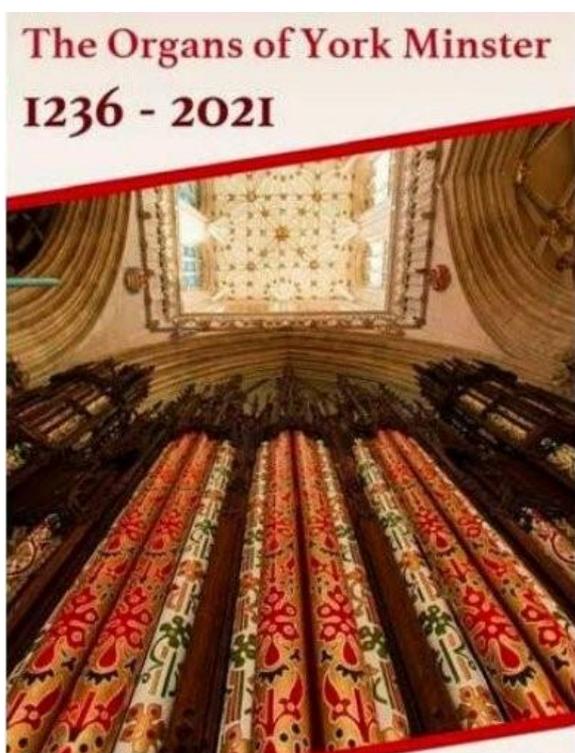
Of particular interest is a *Ballad Horn* on the Swell in place of the customary Contra Fagotto; there are three Open Diapasons at eight foot on the Great. The organ has two unusual couplers making the Great Posaune and Open Diapason 1 available on the Choir at unison or octave pitch (for a solo trumpet).

The latest restoration in 1989 incorporates a sixty channel memory system and just about every refinement available on organ built these days.

[See <https://www.npor.org.uk/NPORView.html?RI=D07447>]

Of particular interest to the writer was the fact that one of the former organists of this church was the late Roland Middleton, who encouraged a number of enthusiasts during his tenure at Chester Cathedral.

Alex Mcmillan



A new book by Nicholas Thistlethwaite marks the restoration of the Minster's organ. The book documents the earliest reference to "a pair of organs" in 1236 and describes other instruments right through to the present day. It will be published in Spring 2021 at a retail price of £30. To order a copy email HLFGlass@yorkminster.org. There may still be a £5 discount for pre ordering. Early subscribers can also have their name inscribed in the book.

Design for an organ, February 1858

Architect: Richard Norman Shaw RA (1831 - 1912)

Drawn by Robert M. Bryson (fl. 1858 - 1876)

February 1858

Royal Academy of Arts

