

Derby & District Organists' *Registered Charity No. 510567* Association



An Abbott in Adversity *The Organ at St Luke's, Derby - Tony Westerman*

A day at the Public Records Office in Matlock and a search through available church records has revealed some new information about the Isaac Abbott organ in the church of St Luke, Derby, and partially resolved a long-standing mystery.

The church was built during the period 1868 – 1871 in the old parish of St Werburgh, Diocese of Lichfield, a time when Derby was expanding rapidly and the green fields to the west of the old city were developed with cheap housing for the workers in the mills and foundries that were springing up in the California area; the railway, which was undergoing considerable development at that time, also brought in many workers who required accommodation and somewhere to worship. St Werburgh's was not able to accommodate such a large influx of people and, as in many other cities at that time, new churches were built to cater for those drawn to the area by employment.

By the third quarter of the nineteenth century the elegant houses lining Uttoxeter Old Road hid back-to-back houses in their

hundreds. Blake's vision of the 'dark satanic mills' was indeed being realised in Derby. There was, however, some light in the darkness. Frances Alice Moss¹ was largely responsible for the founding and funding of the new church and the schools attached to it. It is clear from the archives that Rev. Lyall², the first incumbent, was sympathetic to the vision of Mrs Moss and was moved to establish a community based upon Christian principles and education for the poor.

The first worshippers used a wooden hut³ which came from the grounds of a local hospital in 1867. It was into this hut, able to hold a hundred people, that Abbott installed his first instrument (Op.1) in 1869. Quite how Abbott won the contract for the organ is part of the mystery that surrounds Op.1 as he had only recently left the employ of William Hill of London to set up on his own in Leeds. His work with Hill clearly had quite an influence on him as he continued to build instruments in the Hill style with bold Diapason choruses, bright mixtures and vibrant chorus reeds.

DDOA Events 2011

18th July Visit to organs in Newton Solney and Willington. See p.6

24th September Outing to Oakham churches and Peterborough Cathedral.

24th October Composers' workshop with Paul Fisher

November Chairman's Event and AGM

Concerts & Recitals

Chesterfield Parish Church
Lunchtime Recitals Thursdays in July 12.15-1.00 pm

7th Nigel Gotteri (Dronfield Woodhouse)

14th Jemima Stephenson

21st James Luxton (Organ Scholar, St Thomas, Stourbridge)

28th Shaun Turnbull (St George's, Cullercoats)

Saturday 9th July, 7.30 pm

St. Matthew's Church, Darley Abbey, Derby.

Organ Recital by Daniel Bishop, Associate Organist at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral.

Admission £6 (Under 18s free).
Glass of wine afterwards.

Friday 15th July, 7.30 pm
'Summer Allsorts' Concert

Nether Heage Methodist Church
Selection of classical and modern pieces
Gillian Chatto – organ
High Edge Harmonic Recorder Orchestra
Imperfect 5th, saxophone quartet
£4 adults, £2 children, incl.refreshments

Derby Cathedral Summer Organ Recitals 2011 -Wednesdays at 7.45

This year's theme: Music of Guilment

6th July Hans Heischler
(pre-concert talk at 6.45)

13th July Timothy Byram-Wigfield

20th July Anthony Hammond

27th July David Briggs

3rd August Andrew Dewar

10th August Peter Gould, Ben Bloor,
Christopher Johns, Sachin Gunga and Tom Corfield

17th August Michael Harris

24th August Peter Litman

Very little is known about the first instrument, though it is thought that it was probably of one manual, possibly having some ranks in a swell box, an arrangement Abbott used in several one manual instruments⁴. When the church proper was opened in 1871, the organ was transferred, though it must have been quite inadequate for the new building which seated 600 – 700.

It had long been thought that Abbott might have used some of the pipework from Op.1 in the new instrument as the Swell Lieblich Gedact is stamped 'Gt' throughout. (Ed Stow believes that the rank is original Abbott pipework, possibly intended for another instrument.) There has also been speculation that Op.1 might have been moved to another Derbyshire church as there are several small Abbott organs in the area. However, the

NPOR website⁵ shows that Op.1 went to a London church, St Michael's, Wandsworth Common, a church like St Luke's that was built to provide a spiritual home for an ever increasing population. There is no known stop list for Op.1 and we may never discover any detail of it as it was taken from St Michael's in part exchange for a larger instrument by the London builder Henry Jones. Abbott appears to have retained his connection with London as he built a large, three manual organ in the Church of the Ascension, Balham, in 1884, very similar to the one now in St Luke's, and carried out a rebuild of the organ in St Alban's Abbey in 1885.

The architect Frederick Josias Robinson⁶ designed St Luke's, utilising the sloping site on Parliament Street to create a Victorian Gothic building with a

crypt chapel under the apsidal chancel and a large nave with an unrestricted view of the altar. Robinson provided a large organ chamber on the north side of the chancel and also designed the organ case; Abbott had to design an instrument in which the Great chests were split (C/C#) around a substantial stone pillar, indeed, the sliders of the Great chests have connecting rods that run through the pillar.

The new St Luke organ, Op. 62, was installed during 1881 and dedicated on St Luke's Day, 18th October with great fanfare. On 19th October, the *Derby Mercury*⁷ printed a lengthy account of the dedication service, giving a stop list and some interesting social comment: 'The tone of the diapasons is very grand, and altogether it is an instrument such as it is not often the privilege of unsophisticated provincials to listen to.'

Great		Swell		Choir		Pedal	
Bourdon	16	Lieblich Bourdon	16	Gamba	8	Open Diapason	16
Large Open Diapason	8	Geigen Principal	8	Flauto Traverso	8	Bourdon	16
Small Open Diapason	8	Lieblich Gedact	8	Gedact	8	Violone	16
Hohl Flöte	8	Dulciana	8	Dolce	8	Violoncello	8
Principal	4	Voix Celeste	8	Lieblich Flute	4		
Harmonic Flute	4	Lieblich Flute	4	Piccolo	2		
Mixture	II	Geigen Principal	4	Clarionet	8		
Mixture	III	Mixture	III				
Trumpet	8	Contra Fagotto	16				
		Horn	8				
		Oboe	8				

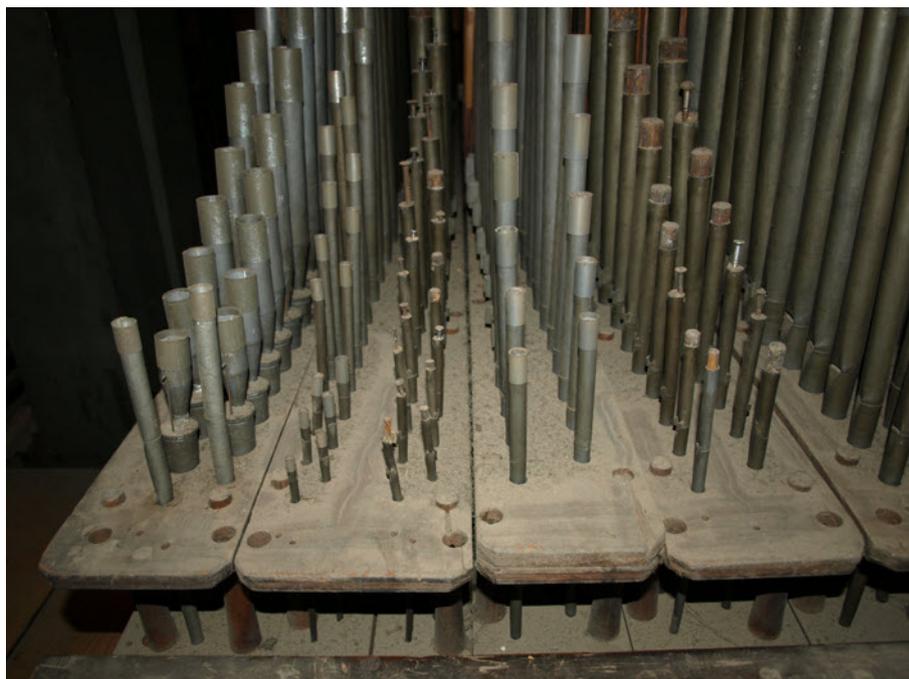
The stop list has accurate spellings of 'several foreign stops, which have not generally been heard hithertofore', and such is the detail that one is inclined to believe that the information must have come from a press release; mention is also made of the 'French feeders' used for the wind supply. (The organ, despite its size, was blown by hand until 1912 when an electric blower was installed along with a high pressure reservoir. This unit was in the coal cellar and for 60 years inevitably blew coal dust into the organ; a B.O.B. unit replaced it in 1971 when it became dangerous.)

At some point in the organ's history some of the stop discs have been changed: the Swell and Choir string stop discs have been swapped and smaller scale pipes substituted for the originals, almost certainly by Adkins in 1918⁸, and the Great Hohl Flöte is now marked Rohr Flöte though the pipes are the original Abbott Hohl Flöte.

Information for the period 1881 to 1954 is very limited though I am indebted to Mr John Poyser⁹

who has some of the early Adkins ledgers, in which the first mention of St Luke's is for tuning 1906 – 1910 (£4 4s 0d for six visits per annum!). Adkins, a prolific local organ builder who set up his business in 1898, was

commissioned to work on the organ in 1918 as a memorial to Company Sergeant Major William Towle Taylor: after 37 years the organ would certainly have been in need of cleaning and regulating. A plaque on the organ notes that



Several decades of sandstone and dust on the Choir pipe-racks. Note the veneer on the centre rack.

the organ was 'enlarged' though it now seems clear that the enlargement was only the addition of the Tremulant; John Poyser believes it was at that time that the Pedal Organ was placed on pneumatic action. The wording on the plaque, in conjunction with an article in *The Organ* by David M Baker¹⁰ fuelled speculation that Adkins may have added a stop to the Pedal (the Abbott notebooks which form the basis of the Baker article only show three Pedal stops) and possibly changed the strings on the Swell and Choir and one of the Swell reeds.

The specification given by Mr Baker was taken from the surviving records of the firm Abbott & Smith¹¹, now in the possession of Peter Wood, formerly of Wood, Wordsworth and Co. Ltd. The early records are far from complete and the specification given could be that of almost any of the III manual instruments built by Abbott during the 1880s. Certainly, the six three-manual instruments listed on the NPOR website all have very similar specifications¹² with cost and space most likely being determining factors for the final specification. I suspect that the specification given in *The Organ* was Abbott's proposal or an exemplar, as the notebooks contain details of costs for sound boards and bellows by length and square footage respectively, rather as a catalogue might show them, so the *Derby Mercury* article does seem very convincing as it reflects the organ largely as it is now. There are other large Abbott organs remaining though it would seem that the Abbott in St Luke's is one of the oldest still functioning; those given at¹² have a NPOR Certificate or are thought to be largely unaltered, though not necessarily playable. Other large Abbott organs have been put on electric action or were 'baroquified' in the 1970s.

John Poyser worked on the organ for many years and in 1982¹³ was asked to clean the instrument and restore it to a playable condition. After John's work, the organ was probably in the best condition it had enjoyed for half a century. Unfortunately, fate conspired against the organ. Scant weeks after the work was completed, the boiler chimney collapsed during a gale, crashing into the organ

chamber, damaging pipes and covering the organ with dirt and water yet again.

When I first began playing at St Luke's in the mid 1990s the organ was playable but in poor condition: the Swell barely made any sound at all; few of the Pedals worked; the Great Large Open Diapason was disconnected; in fact, the only way to accompany a service was to use full organ most of the time, but *never* with the substantial Great Trumpet, the conical pipes of which collected dirt and water more effectively than any others, and those pipes that did sound were reminiscent of a very large goat in considerable discomfort.

In December 2000 storms again deluged the organ leaving an inch of water standing on the bellows and thoroughly soaking the Great and treble Pedal chests. Insurance cover allowed work to the Great chest by Peter Collins and a generous gift allowed us to order some additional work to the treble Pedal chest and the high pressure bellows; unfortunately, the work to the Pedal chest was not successful leaving many 'dumb' notes.

In conversation with Andrew Lancaster, my predecessor at St Luke's, it became clear that the problems of water and dirt that have recently beset this fine instrument had repeated themselves for decades: the local sandstone of which the church is built is friable, resulting in a steady but inexorable accretion of grit on the chests and in the pipes; the roof of the organ chamber leaked for thirty years resulting in water periodically cascading into the organ; the blower has filled the organ with coal dust, and in more recent times, with fumes and hot air from the adjacent gas boiler and finally, dirt from the deal

underboarding of the roof falls freely into the organ during periods of high wind – a most unhappy combination. And yet, the Abbott is still able to produce a magnificent sound.

So, what of the most recent history of the organ? Ed Stow now cares for the organ and in 2003 cleaned the Swell which had become unusable. What a revelation it was to hear the reeds roar in combination with a bright mixture! Ed's tuning of the organ has resulted in a brighter, more harmonious sound, and his priceless ability to effect running repairs that the church can afford has kept the organ functioning in the face of all adversity.

Although the sound of the Abbott is still able to thrill, the noisy, inconsistent and heavy action requires regular adjustment which is becoming more difficult as buttons and threads wear; the leatherwork is in a very poor condition resulting in considerable loss of wind; the telescopic trunking between the bellows and the Great and Swell chests leaks air freely and noisily, and the blowing plant fan is clogged with coal dust causing imbalance and vibration.

Thanks to grants from English Heritage, the entire roof of this II* listed building is now completely weatherproof for the first time in decades, creating the right conditions for a complete restoration of the instrument. Fund raising is in hand and approaches are being made to grant-aiding bodies.

If any member would like to visit St Luke's to play the Abbott, or has any further information on the organ, please contact me at:

twes@gmx.com

Tony Westerman

- 1 Frances Alice Moss donated the land for the church and the money for the tower and bells. It was well known that she thought that the Abbott Op. 1 was inadequate for the church of 1871; her executor allocated £1,247 from her will to build the new organ, Op. 62
- 2 Lyall had been curate at St Michael's, became the Curate in Charge of St Andrew's, a new church, then moved to St Werburgh as curate responsible for St Luke's. A graduate of St John's College, Cambridge, he was a committed Tractarian.
- 3 The hut had been built in preparation for an expected outbreak of cholera that never materialised. After being used as a temporary church for St Luke, it became a temporary building for St Barnabas.
- 4 The one manual Abbott in Christ Church, Long Lane has this arrangement, as indeed do some of his Choir Organs on larger instruments.
- 5 The National Pipe Organ Register contains details of organs across the country and can be found at www.npor.org.uk
- 6 FJ Robinson also designed the Derby Diocesan College on Uttoxeter Road.
- 7 Some copies of the *Derby Mercury* can be found in the British Library; this extract is Gale Document Number: BA3202782472.
- 8 Ed Stow has the notebooks kept by Jack Scotchbrook, an employee of Adkins, who noted changes to the strings in 1918. The addition of veneer on the two pipe racks makes it clear that pipes of smaller scale were substituted. The veneer is a quite different material to that used by Abbott.
- 9 John Poyser had worked on the Abbott for over twenty years when he set up in business on his own in 1975.
- 10 The article appears in *The Organ* May 1978. My thanks to Ed Stow for drawing this to my attention.
- 11 After Abbott retired in 1889, the firm became Abbott & Smith, run by his son and Abbott's foreman.
- 12 St. Thomas of Canterbury, Waterloo, III + P 29, 1877 [C00173]; Church of the Ascension, Balham Hill, III + P 36, 1884 [D01328]; Holy Trinity, Queensbury, III + P 33, 1884 [N03403]; Holy Trinity, Wensley, III + P 31, 1885 [N01518]; St. Stephen, Kirkby Stephen, III + P 34, 1888 [D009908].
- 13 John Poyser's quote for work to the organ in 1982 mentions '...and twenty five pipes supplied in place of those missing'.

Recent Events

Visit to organs in Nottingham

On a rather cold, dull morning in March a few members gathered outside St Mary's and All Souls in Bulwell. Inside the contrast could not have been greater: it was bright and warm, with welcoming refreshments awaiting us. It was a pity that the visitors were almost outnumbered by the local welcoming group, although it did allow plenty of time for everyone to have a go. We were welcomed by the organist (Michael Anthony, one of our members) who described and demonstrated the instrument, originally built by Forster and Andrews in 1872. It was rebuilt and extended by Henry Groves and Sons in 2006-7, and now has 3 manuals with 37 stops. The console felt comfortable, and easy to play. The organ speaks out into the chancel, and despite an opening into the nave, the sound in the body of the church seemed somewhat diminished. In contrast, the impact on choir (and organist) could sometimes be overpowering. The church itself has recently been re-ordered to provide an upstairs parish room at the west end of the building and to my mind this fits in very well with the original interior.



St Mary's and All Saints, Bulwell

St John's, Carrington is a light and airy building that has also been re-ordered recently. This had been sensitively done to provide an excellent series of community rooms on two levels on the north side of the building. The organ was built by Roger Yates, originally as a house organ, and at St John's it used to stand in a chamber on the north side of the chancel. With the



St John's, Carrington

re-ordering it had to be moved, and was moved to the west gallery by Henry Groves and Sons, who also designed and supplied the new case. It has two manuals and 31 stops with a detached console, which is situated in the gallery to one side of the organ, so the player does not experience the full effect. Members who listened from the body of the church said that the sound was much greater there than at the console – a contrast with St Mary's.

St Paul's, Daybrook is a much darker building than the previous two, with the organ situated on the north side of the chancel. It is a two manual instrument built about the same time as the church (about 1890) by August Gern, originally a foreman with the French organ builder Aristide Cavallé-Coll. It was rebuilt in 1967 by Roger Yates who moved the whole structure further forward, improving the acoustic effect and also allowing more room for maintenance. The console was renewed and the tubular pneumatic action replaced by all-electric. There was also a tonal revision with several new stops (there are now 29), but its French pedigree is still discernable. As at Bulwell we were welcomed by the organist who gave a short demonstration, and there were also some welcome refreshments.

Although not one of our better-attended events it provided a fascinating day for those who did make the trip, and we are grateful to Denis Littleton for his work in organising the event. We are also most grateful (as ever) to the three churches for allowing us to visit and to their members who gave up their time to welcome and refresh us.

Chris Darrall

'Entertainment and Enlightenment'

Recital by Simon Lindley

It was refreshing to attend a recital with a programme specifically designed to entertain the audience, just as its title promised. The decision of the DDOA committee to sponsor this recital at Chesterfield Parish Church was well rewarded with an eminently successful coupling of player and instrument. Dr Lindley's programme successfully explored the variety of tonal colours available in the impressive four-manual organ. He saved up monumental sound for the triumphant final piece, *Carillon Sortie* by Henri Mulet, but for most of the foregoing programme he frequently caressed the instrument with delightful sounds of flutes, strings and solo reeds. For example, the modest scale of the opening *Concerto in G*, arranged by J.S.Bach, was beautifully judged, subtly conveying the interplay between the concertino and ensemble sections.



Simon Lindley

Dr Lindley explained that, as Civic Organist in Leeds, he called upon a broader repertoire than might be heard in church. A charming example was *Scherzo for the White Rabbit* by Nigel Ogden; simple but clever and definitely entertaining. He proudly offered several transcriptions of pieces by Albert Ketèlby, George Malcolm and Leroy Anderson, originally for orchestra, harpsichord and jazz piano respectively.

Pieces were given an extra sparkle of interest in Dr Lindley's introductions, delivered with characteristic flamboyance and peppered with pithy anecdotes.

Laurence Rogers

The programme details and accompanying notes are available for download at the DDOA website.

Annual Dinner 2011

Once again, members enjoyed a congenial evening in the rural surroundings of Alison House, Cromford for this annual social occasion. Our guest speaker was Professor David Shuker, accompanied by his wife, The Reverend Dr Linda Shuker. Both were professional chemists in their early careers, but their lives now revolve around churches and organs; for David as a builder and restorer of small portable organs.



David's after-dinner talk, entitled "The organ as a secular musical instrument – it's past and future" challenged us to think afresh about our generally held view of the organ as an instrument inextricably associated with churches. David traced back the history of the organ to Roman times and explained how completely developed was the instrument by the end of the first millennium. His main theme was that, throughout history, the organ has always had a secular presence, chamber organs in country houses, portable street organs, town hall organs, and in the 20th Century, cinema organs.

For the 21st Century, with the challenge brought about by declining church attendance David advocated taking the organ to the community, particularly in schools, and was very complimentary about our own *Children and the Organ* project. For his part, he is developing an affordable organ design using recycled materials which could be the focus of school-based projects.

David's enthusiasm and encyclopedic command of historical detail held us all in rapt attention, and afterwards our Chairman offered a hearty vote of thanks for an extremely stimulating talk.

Laurence Rogers

The text of David's talk is available for download at the DDOA website.

Historic Organs in Retrospect - Rodney Tomkins

In 1998 my book, "Historic Organs in Derbyshire", was published. It was promoted as "A Survey for the Millennium" and contained accounts of some 165 instruments in the county which I considered to be "historic", my stated criterion being that they should pre-date World War I and that they should be **substantially** intact examples of their style, period and builder, and that any later material should not unduly prejudice their original character.

Any gazetteer will always become out-of-date almost as soon as it is handed over to the printer, and this is certainly true of my book. A supplement at the end lists 36 organs under "Recent losses" (i.e. in the twenty years since 1980). Taking stock now I can identify a further 16 out of the basic 165 that have been lost since publication – a staggering proportion of 1 in 10. It may be of interest to list these since, being now out of the advisory business, I may not be aware of all that has happened, particularly in the Free Church sphere. Following are the 16 historic organs lost since 2000 :

- Alfreton Wycliffe URC
- Barrow-on-Trent PC
- Belper Convent
- Blackwell Methodist
- Chesterfield Assemblies of God
- Codnor Waingroves Methodist
- Darley Dale Over Hackney
- Denby Street Lane Methodist
- Derby St Augustine
- Derby Mackworth Methodist
- Derby Brook Street Wesley Chapel
- Handley PC
- Long Eaton Trinity Methodist
- Matlock Farley Hill Cong.
- Middleton/Wirksworth Main St. Meth.
- Pinxton Wharf Methodist



Denby Street Lane Methodist: c.1840



Matlock Farley Hill Cong.: Benson c.1886

Organs remodelled with electric actions, and therefore no longer qualifying as "historic", include Ashbourne Methodist, Brampton, Darley Abbey and Heath. In addition Crich, Elvaston and Kedleston remain silently "in situ".



Long Eaton Trinity Methodist: Lewis, 1885
"French" style console (advised by Guilment!)

In case this seems to be a tale of "doom and gloom", I should add that the recent decade has witnessed notable restorations of some of our prized instruments. Perhaps this might be the point at which to suggest that our current *Organs Adviser*, being now more in touch with such matters than I, takes up the story and describes for us what has actually been achieved during this period.

Rodney Tomkins

Forthcoming DDOA Meetings

Evening Visit to Newton Solney and Willington

Monday 18th July 7.30pm

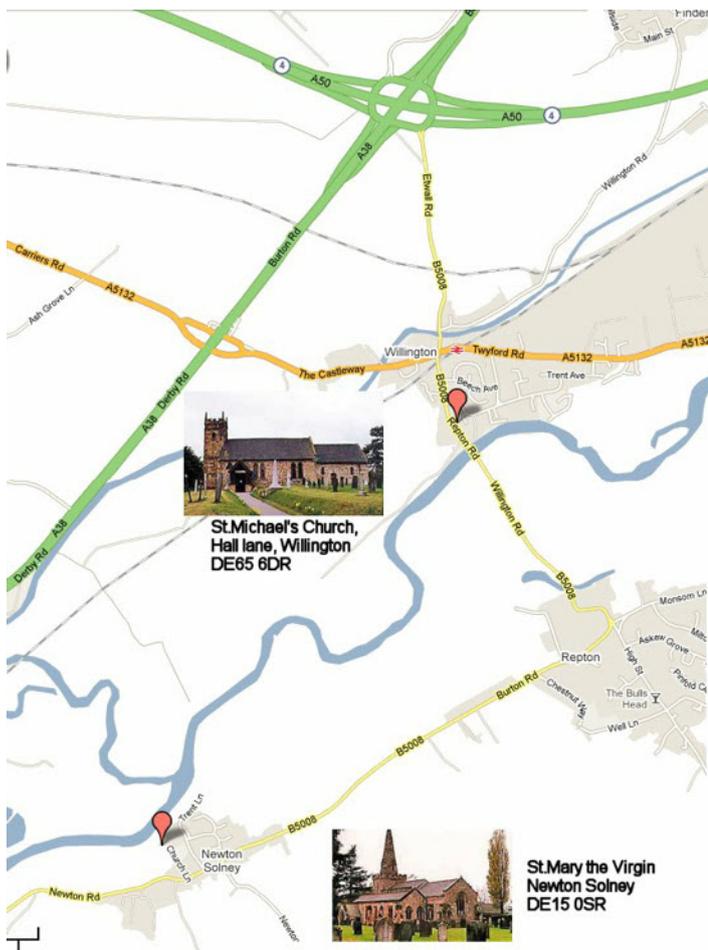
This evening visit gives an opportunity to view, hear and play organs in two small villages in the southern fringe of Derbyshire.

At Newton Solney there is a 2-manual Bevington organ from 1882, recently restored by Michael Thompson.
Gt. 8, 8, 4, 4, 2; Sw. 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, III, 8, 8; Ped. 16

Willington has a 2-manual organ by Bower & Dunn of Sheffield, 1924. Refurbished with upperwork tonal modifications by Michael Thompson in 2000.
Gt. 8, 8, 8, 4; Sw. 8, 8, 8, 4; Ped. 16, 8

Directions from Derby: The A38 offers the fastest route: Come off the A38 at the junction with the A50 and take the B5008 to Newton Solney through Willington and Repton. St.Mary's Church is at the end of Church Street and we are due there at 7.30 pm. Refreshments will be available.

We are due at St.Michael's Church, Willington at 8.30 pm.



Annual Outing 24th September

Visit organs At Oakham School Chapel, Oakham Parish Church and Peterborough Cathedral

Three splendid organs are on offer this year: New instruments built by Peter Collins and Kenneth Tickell at Oakham, and the restored Hill organ at Peterborough. Local organists will introduce the instruments and then allow members to play.

As well as booking a place for yourself, please give publicity amongst friends in your locality who would enjoy visiting a beautiful market town and one of our finest cathedrals. In recent years the outing has successfully attracted additional guests who not only add to the social mix, but also help to share the transport costs. Cost: £15 per person.

8.30: Coach Departs from Derby Council House
8.40: Pick up passengers at Church Lane, Darley Abbey
10.00: Arrive at Oakham School Chapel
11.15: Walk to Oakham Parish Church
12.30: Lunch in Oakham town centre. (Good choice of eating places for members' own arrangements)
2.00: Coach departs from Oakham
3.15: Arrive at Peterborough Cathedral
3.30: Evensong
4.30: Meet Cathedral Organist, Andrew Reid
6.16: Depart from Peterborough
8.15: Arrive in Derby

To book places, please return the booking form accompanying this newsletter.

Members' News

John Hunt R.I.P.

It is with sadness we report the death of Life Member, John Hunt, who was Treasurer to the Association for over 20 years before retiring in 1996 when he moved to Southampton. We offer our condolence to his widow, Gill, and their family.

DDOA - Your Association

Our Secretary

After his recent operation, it was a great pleasure to welcome back to our midst Stephen Johns at the Annual Dinner. As energetic as ever, Stephen spared no effort to ensure that all the catering arrangements went smoothly. Thank you Stephen.

DDOA on Facebook

Your Association now has a presence on the social network *Facebook*. Visiting this will allow you to keep up to date with DDOA events and other organ events in our region. We hope this will help publicise our Association, but the effect will be enhanced if members tell friends, and especially younger people, to look for us on *Facebook*:

Go to www.facebook.com and search for 'DerbyOrganists'.



Items of news or articles for the September/October edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 22nd August**, either via e-mail: DDOAnews@gmail.com or by post: Dr Laurence Rogers, 24 St.David's Crescent, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4SS. The Secretary, Stephen Johns, may be reached via mail@derbyorganists.co.uk Please visit the DDOA Website www.derbyorganists.co.uk for information about Association activities, past editions of the newsletter, photo gallery and many special features of local interest.