

Derby & District Organists' Registered Charity No. 510567 Association



Rodney Tomkins - In conversation

Rodney needs no introduction to members of the Association; his many contributions to our events over the years are a distinguished record indeed, service which was recognised when he was made a Life Member last year. I have long admired his encyclopedic knowledge of organs, especially those in Derbyshire, but also those in the country at large and beyond, on the continent of Europe. Recently I met Rodney to chat about some of the experiences that have influenced his present understanding of organs, their music and its performance. Appropriately we met at St. Peter's Belper where he is the incumbent organist and presides over an instrument which seems to fulfil perfectly all that he admires in historic English organs.

Considering his measured and authoritative demeanour, it is difficult to imagine Rodney as a rebel, but that he clearly was in his formative years. As a student, his emerging radical views were nurtured in the sixth form of Westcliff High School in Essex, amongst peers that shared

his passionate interest in music. Whilst many in this generation were listening to pop music from the banned pirate radio station *Radio Caroline*, moored somewhere in the North Sea, Rodney was tuning in to Radio Hilversum from the Netherlands and became entranced by the regular broadcasts of organ recitals. These recitals differed enormously from the genre typical of the occasional Sunday afternoon recitals on the BBC of those days. The sounds were brilliant, the articulated playing gave great clarity and excitement to the music, and altogether it was different from the tradition in England prevailing at the time.

Like many of our generation, Rodney was brought up on a diet of legato playing on organs which excelled in 8 foot tone. This might have suited the sober acoustics common in English churches, but the full potential of the Bach repertoire could not be realised properly. To Rodney, those broadcasts from Radio Hilversum were a wake-up call to another world of organ

DDOA Events 2011

- 26th March** Visit to organs in north Nottingham
- 18th May** Lecture recital by Simon Lindley.
- 14th June** Annual dinner.
- 18th July** Visit to local organs.
- 24th September** Outing to Oakham churches and Peterborough Cathedral.
- 24th October** Composers' workshop with Paul Fisher
- November** Chairman's Event and AGM

Concerts & Recitals

Saturday 19th March, 7.30 pm
St. Andrew's Church, Swanwick
Spring Concert - Greasley Singers with organists Stephen Foulkes and David Coates
Tickets: £6 including refreshments, available at the door or in advance (01773 605291 or 01773 541458).

Saturday 26th March, 7.30 pm
Derby Cathedral
Teixeira – Te Deum
Derwent Singers and Sinfonia Chorale conducted by Richard Roddis. £15, £12
See page 3 for details.

Saturday 2nd April, 7.30 pm
Derby Cathedral
Brahms – Ein Deutsches Requiem
Sitwell Singers conducted by Malcom Goldring. £12, £14, (£5)

Saturday 16th April, 7.30 pm
Derby Cathedral
Williamson – Procession of Palms
Goodall – Love Divine
Bernstein – Chichester Psalms
Fauré – Requiem
Derby Choral Union conducted by Richard Dacey. £15, £10

Cover photo: Rodney Tomkins at the console of the organ of Worcester Cathedral during the DDOA Annual Outing 2010.

- Educated at Westcliff High School, Essex.
- Read music at the University of Durham; Organist at University College.
- Gained FRCO, winning the Turpin Prize in 1957.
- Catterick Garrison church organist during National Service
- First teaching post in Colchester, Essex, 1959
- Finalist in the first St.Alban's International Organ Festival, 1963.
- Director of Music at Ralph Sherwin School, Darley Abbey, 1972
- Organist at Duffield Parish Church, 1977.
- Assistant organist at Derby Cathedral, 1982
- Diocesan Organ Adviser, 1985-2005
- Organist at St.Peter's Belper, 1985
- Elected Chairman of DDOA, 1975 & 1976
- Editor of DDOA Bulletin/Newsletter 1976-2004
- Author of 'Pipe Organs in Churches and Chapels of the Derbyshire Derwent and Ecclesbourne Valleys' (1995) and 'Historic Organs in Derbyshire' (1998) (Scarthin Books, Cromford).



expression, common on the continent but rare in England. As he found out more about this world, mainly in the Netherlands and Germany, he became increasingly critical of the customs and traditions in the playing of the Baroque repertoire implicit in his teachers and many eminent English players of the day.

A singular voice in England in the 1950s championing the neo-Baroque style of playing was that of Geraint Jones. In his radio broadcasts he would advise his listeners to "turn up the treble" so that the mixture stops and principal choruses could be heard with best effect. Rodney recalls a broadcast of a conversation between Jones and Harold Darke in which the latter referred to the "nasty noise" made by the Baroque organ. Being such a skilled player, Darke was able to demonstrate that he could also achieve clear textures on his traditionally voiced English organ at St.Michael's, Cornhill. This perhaps serves to demonstrate that context is so important when comparing practices; in the dry acoustic of St.Michael's, clarity may be achieved with mellow tones and judicious use of the swell pedal, whereas in a resonant acoustic common in continental churches, clarity is achieved with bright mutations and mixtures. The theme of respect for the context in which organs are to be found, was one to emerge several times in our conversation.

Whilst a student at Durham University, Rodney took lessons with Conrad Eden at the Cathedral. He describes Eden as an 'adventurous' player, often performing relatively unknown works such as those of Schönberg.

Having lived with the Willis organ at Durham, Eden had developed a remarkable skill in using its resources, and Rodney recalls an amazing performance of Bach's Toccata in F, conceived as an extended crescendo, adding stops for each new section. According to Rodney's radical views on Baroque playing, such a performance was "completely unauthentic", nevertheless the exciting and emotional effect of growing intensity could not be denied. Whilst in the north of England Rodney discovered the Baroque sounds of rare organs by Schulze, a dedicated student of Silbermann's designs.

By the time that Rodney's teaching career was launched, he was clearly a fan of the Baroque repertoire with uncompromising views on registration and playing style. He found affirmation of his views in the ground-breaking specifications of several new organs designed by Ralph Downes in the 1950s, the most significant of which being those at the Royal Festival Hall and St.Alban's Abbey. Rodney was himself a finalist at the very first International Organ Festival on the new organ at St.Alban's in 1963. Other finalists were Martin Neary and the eventual winner, Susan Landale.

With such dedication to the Baroque organ, I was curious to discover how Rodney had also developed his love of classical English organs. He recounted how he once cycled from Southend to Thaxted in Essex to play the 18th century organ there. It was this organ which Gustav Holst had presided over in the 1920s but sadly later fell into neglect and has

been unplayable for many years. Rodney remembers the charming sound of the unenclosed choir organ and the impressive sound of the great chorus, crowned with the sesquialtera mixture. Rodney explains that the key to the characteristic colour of the chorus is the sesquialtera stop, which, unlike its German counterpart with pure twelfth and tierce ranks (for solo effects), is conceived as a mixture. As such, it is designed to complete the harmonic development of the chorus, and like most mixtures has breaks in its composition as one moves from bass through to treble. Rodney maintains that "A good classical English organ has the qualities you look for in a Baroque organ." Unfortunately, sesquialtera mixtures went out of fashion during the 19th Century and this classical sound was lost. Rodney posits the theory that the change in fashion was prompted by the adoption of equal temperament which tended to make tierce ranks jar a little.

Unsurprisingly, the Holt organ at S.Peter's is equipped with a sesquialtera which endows it with the classical English chorus sound. Thus this instrument succeeds in satiating Rodney's tastes for both English and German Baroque. "It plays Bach in a pretty authentic sound", and as was demonstrated at our Association meeting last September, it is ideally suited to 18th Century English music. During our conversation Rodney showed me that it also copes very well with French Baroque, but that is a story for another time.

Laurence Rogers

Recent Events

Evening of DVDs in Belper

The major part, presented by Denis Littleton, consisted of a new, professionally produced DVD, "The Elusive English Organ". Presented by organ recitalist and researcher, Daniel Moult, with contributions from organist, Kimberley Marshall, and organ builders, Dominic Gwynn and John Mander, it was very much in the style of a TV documentary - interesting photo shots, but with frequent to-ing and fro-ing of interviewees, leaving one longing to hear an uninterrupted piece of music.

The general theme demonstrated the lack of complete surviving instruments before the C18th and how we need to go to Brittany to hear C17th organs by the numerous members of the Dallam family (who, as Catholic sympathizers, had taken refuge there during the Cromwellian period). We did, however, have a brief look at Dominic Gwynn's reproduction of two small C16th instruments based on soundboard fragments recently discovered in Suffolk. It finished with a visit to the large 1829 Bishop at Bermondsey - a large 3-manual with pedals, plus a small supplementary keyboard duplicating the pedals for those who refused to play on a "gridiron". Its effect was splendid, leading the way to our earliest Victorian organs of the Belper Holt type.

Following this Peter Williams played a DVD of King's College, Cambridge organ, with Stephen Cleobury performing Walton's "Crown Imperial" - a piece that could well be reduced in length by about 50%! This was followed by Daniel Moult (at Bridlington) giving a stunning display of manual and pedal gymnastics in a "Gothic Toccata" by Australian composer, Graham Koehne.

Our thanks to the two presenters as well as to our technical controller, David Shooter.

Rodney Tomkins

Used organ music

Roger Molyneux writes that he has recently issued a new catalogue of used organ music which is available from his website: www.usedorganmusic.co.uk

DDOA - Your Association

Children and the Organ Project

We are glad to report that we now have two pretty firm bookings for this Summer, one at Ashgate School, Derby and one at Middleton by Wirksworth. We are also taking bookings for the February 26th event for older pupils at St Mary's Ilkeston. John Forster has kindly rigged up our dummy pedalboard with sound, a great help. I have also recently received a request for information about our work from the Lichfield Association who are considering what they might do in this field, so our reputation is spreading.

We do however face an issue about expenses. The Committee has discussed this and agreed that, at the moment, our policy remains not to charge schools, partly because in the current economic climate we want to be as attractive as we can and also because, if the church we use makes a charge, the school pays it. We are, however, making a charge to individuals for the Ilkeston Organ Day because we have to meet the cost of using the church. The members who offer their time and expertise to this work do so willingly and free of charge but recently travel costs have increased very significantly. In the past some of our helpers have had to make two journeys to a venue to check facilities or tune an instrument and the cost of this mounts up. The Committee has agreed to try and put aside a small sum to help meet these expenses, at least in the short term.

However, what we really need is a separate 'CATO Support Fund' Ideally this might enable us not only to offer some modest travel allowance to helpers but also to contemplate more professional publicity materials. We are actively pursuing the possibility of a grant from the BRERETON MEMORIAL FUND.

The Committee also agreed that we should invite members to make a contribution if they wished to help further our work. If you feel you would like to do so, please send a cheque to Chris Darrall, our Treasurer at 2 Gorsey Close Belper DE56 2TT, payable to 'Derby and District Organists' Association' with a note to indicate it is for *The CATO Support Fund*.

Stephen Johns

Events Further Afield

For members who like to venture further afield, here are some events that have been recommended by other members:

Saturday 5th March London Organ Day at the Temple Church

Music of Franz Liszt with Thomas Trotter, Daniel Moult, Andrew McCrea, Henry Fairs and James Vivian

Information: www.iao.org.uk/pdf/lo_d2011web.pdf

May Festival at St. Stephen's, Bournemouth

30th April-2nd May

High Mass, Lectures, Concerts, Whitlock Recital. If you like the Anglo Catholic tradition in one of J.L. Pearson's most beautiful churches, this is one for you.

Information:

<http://btcp.org.uk/who-we-are/st-stephens/>

Tour de France 3-10 July Cavaillé-Coll organs in Northern France.

Information:

www.orgelmeisterkurse.de/englisch/

IAO Congress 20-25 July 2011 Northern Ireland and Dublin.

Visits to 8 cathedrals, 3 churches and 4 civic buildings. Excursion to Giant's Causeway.

Information: www.iao.org.uk

Members' Notes

Teixeira - Te Deum Derby Cathedral

Saturday 26th March at 7.30pm

Members are recommended to come and hear this sumptuous masterpiece that is to receive only its second performance in the UK. Antonio Teixeira ("Tay-share-a") composed it for five SATB choirs and an orchestra, and, after it was performed in Lisbon in 1750, the full score was lost until the 1980s. "The Sixteen" performed its UK premier in 1991, but no vocal parts have been available until 2011. The music has a fascinating "new" soundscape drawn from the influences of Handel, Pergolesi and the rhythms and colour of Portugal.

This unique project has been brought together by Richard Roddis

and the spectacular sound of the 20 part choral writing will be sung by the Derwent Singers of Derby and the Sinfonia Chorale of Nottingham with a Baroque ensemble led by Nicolette Moonen.

Please come and support this FIRST for Derby and Notts.

Tickets: (£15, £12) available at Foulds Music Shop or Credit card hotline 01332 345936.

Richard Arter

Your newsletter

As ever, I am grateful to our several contributors to this issue creating a varied mix of articles featuring people and events.

Several years ago Rodney Tomkins contributed to the newsletter a series of 'Reminiscences' in which he reflected upon his experiences as an organist. In my article I have sought to trace what ignited and nurtured his passion for the organ.

Perhaps other members have stories to tell of characters or events which inspired their interest in the organ? Do let me know if you have a story that could interest other members.

In planning future issues, it would help me enormously to hear about what you enjoy or would like to read in the newsletter. And please, do send me news of people or events.

Editor

DDOA Visit to Organs in Nottingham - Saturday 26th March

We are going to visit three contrasting organs in the northern suburbs of Nottingham:

St Mary's Bulwell

St John's Carrington

St Paul's Daybrook

All are substantial instruments and promise a very interesting day.

Members are asked to make their own travel arrangements. The easiest road access to all of these organs from Derby is probably from junction 26 of the M1, but public transport can also be used.

[See page 6 for directions and times.](#)

The first visit is to St Mary's Bulwell, by kind invitation of our member Michael Anthony, the titulaire. The 3 manual organ is a product of Forster & Andrews dating from 1872, most recently renovated by Henry Groves in 2006/7.

St Mary's, Bulwell

Great

Double Stopt Diapason	16
Open Diapason	8
Claribel	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Harmonic Flute	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Sesquialtera	IV
Trumpet	8

Swell

Lieblich bourdon	16
Violin Diapason	8
Lieblich Gedact	8
Fluta d'Amour	8
Vox Angelica	8
Principal	4
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	III 15.19.22
Cornocean	8
Oboe	8

Choir

Open Diapason	8
Stopped Diapason	8
Gemshorn	4
Lieblich Flute	4
Nazard	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Piccolo	2
Tierce	1 3/5
Cremona	8
Trumpet	8

Pedal

Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Lieblich Bourdon	16
Principal	8
Bass Flute	8
Fifteenth	4
Trombone	16

St John's, Carrington

Great

Violone	16
Open Diapason	8
Claribel Flute	8
Viola	8
Octave	4
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	19.22.26
Posaune	8
Oboe (Swell)	8
Tremolo	

Swell

Geigen	8
Bourdon	8
Salicional	8
Vox Angelica TC	8
Principal	4
Flûte Ouverte	4
Octavin	2
Cornet	12.17
Mixture	15.19.22
Bassoon	16
Trompette	8
Oboe	8
Tremolo	

Pedal

Open Diapason	16
Violone	16
Sub Bass	16
Quint	10 2/3
Principal	8
Flute	8
Fifteenth	4
Octave Flute	4
Posaune	16
Bassoon	16

The organ started life as a Roger Yates instrument of 2 manuals and 21 stops, and over the years has received attention from HNB, Wood & Groves.

St Paul's, Daybrook

Great

Open Diapason	8
Gedackt	8
Dulciana	8
Principal	4
Gedackt	4
Twelfth	2 2/3
Fifteenth	2
Mixture	IV
Trumpet	8
Clarion	4

Swell

Hohl Flote	8
Viole de Gambe	8
Voix Celeste	8
Principal	4
Octave	2
Cymbale	III
Basson	16
Trompette	8
Hautbois	8
Clarion	4
Tremulant	

Pedal

Open Diapason	16
Bourdon	16
Quint	10 2/3
Principal	8
Flute	8
Fifteenth	4
Basson	16
Trumpet	8
Clarion	4

Our thanks are to Denis Littleton who has organised arrangements and supplied specifications.

An English Organist in Slovakia - Roy Williamson

During my time as the Redundancies Officer of the British Institute of Organ Studies I received a letter from the minister of Hlohovec Lutheran church in Slovakia asking for an English organ to be gifted to them to replace a 1940's knackered pneumatic job built by Guna, a Slovak organbuilder from Prešov. Most instruments in Slovak churches are located sensibly on the 'west' gallery but often the available height militates against the straight transfer of an organ from the UK. However, a redundant instrument from Plymouth, which had already been 'downsized' to fit a modern church building, was offered and accepted; it was duly dismantled and put on a lorry for delivery to Hlohovec. The intention was to re-erect it without change but the Czech organ builder had other ideas. The Great's original specification had been 8 8 4 4 2; it became 8 4 4 2 III and the Swell changed from 8 8 4 8 to 8 4 1½ 8, the swellbox being removed. Only the ex-swell oboe and pedal bourdon remained virtually unchanged. The other pipes were revoiced, reallocated and joined by some new pipework.

While the organ was being rejigged in the Czech Republic, my domestic circumstances altered and I found myself visiting Hlohovec where I was invited to play at the Sunday morning service. This was before the pipe organ had been erected, the stand-in being an inappropriate electronic keyboard. To cut a long story short, by the end of 2001, I was spending increasing periods of time in Slovakia and, from 2003, playing the 'new' pipe organ for Sunday worship. My Anglican background as a church musician was of no great assistance in accompanying



Roy Williamson



The English organ at Hlohovec Lutheran church with church musicians and Roy Williamson (right)

the Lutheran service even though it is a liturgical service. The Communion Service in particular can be very moving when intoned by a good voice. Psalms are not sung by the congregation but antiphons are, and it took me some time to fit the chant to the words. Lutherans like to sing their hymns slowly; on the plus side, many of these hymns date from the 17th and 18th centuries and are the basis of many of the beloved Chorale Preludes which Bach and many others harmonised so beautifully. The Lutheran hymn book prints only the melody; it is the organist's job to supply the harmony but, if he or she is not sufficiently gifted to harmonise at sight, there is a book of accompaniments available. It seems not to be the practice for a voluntary to be played before the service, and after the service the congregation has usually left the building within one minute – hardly encouraging! As the resident ministers here are music lovers, we soon agreed to my performing short chorale preludes at the end of the sermon.

On important anniversaries, such as the 260th anniversary of J S Bach's death in July 2010, all organists, both Catholic and Lutheran, are encouraged to give a recital based on one of Bach's chorale preludes. Last year 'Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr' was the chosen work to be presented. Bach composed at least ten versions of varying difficulty and one is not

expected to perform all of them. However, it is rather pleasing to be part of a country-wide effort to mark significant dates in our musical history.

Organ recitals are generally well-attended in this country and (given a population of only about six million) there is a large number of young musicians capable of performing at international level. Although this is not a rich country, money has recently been found to build brand new, four-manual organs in Bratislava's Cathedral and the Reduta concert hall. I am fortunate in having the right contacts to access both of these instruments in due course.

Roy Williamson

James Muckle writes:

We are delighted to welcome Roy Williamson to the pages of the DDOA Newsletter. He took organ lessons with Michael Beyer of St Nikolai, Spandau, while in Berlin on National Service in the RAF. He later held four organists' posts in and around Cheltenham and began researching the history of Gloucestershire's organs. From 2001 he has spent increasing amounts of time in Slovakia where he serves as organist in a Lutheran church. He is author of three books: *The Organs of Cheltenham*; *The Organs of Gloucester*, *Tewkesbury and Cirencester*; and *The Organs of Gloucestershire* (which subsumes the first two books and is still available).

Forthcoming DDOA Meeting - Visit to Organs in Nottingham - Saturday 26th March

11:00 – 12:15

St Mary's Bulwell, NG6 9AD

Car: From M1 J26 take the A610 towards Nottingham, at the first island follow A610, then remain in the LH lane to go left at the next island, signposted Bulwell. In Bulwell town centre follow B682 Nottingham (Hucknall Road); you should be able to see the church overlooking the railway and the market place, just after the railway bridge the church entrance is on the left, go up the cobbled church drive to the car park.

Public transport: From Nottingham station or Royal Centre take a Hucknall tram to Bulwell, take the steps up to the road over the bridge, turn right, the church is about 50 yards on the left.

13:30 – 14:50

St John's Carrington, NG5 2DP

Car: From Bulwell turn left out of the church onto Highbury Road, after about 2 miles turn left at traffic lights onto the B6004 signposted Arnold. Follow this road until you meet the A611, turn right at the lights. You are now on Hucknall Road; go straight on at the island, where you cross the Ring road A6514. At the end of Hucknall Road, turn left on to the A60 signposted Mansfield, St John's is about ¾ mile on the left, parking is available on the surrounding streets, but not on Mansfield Road.

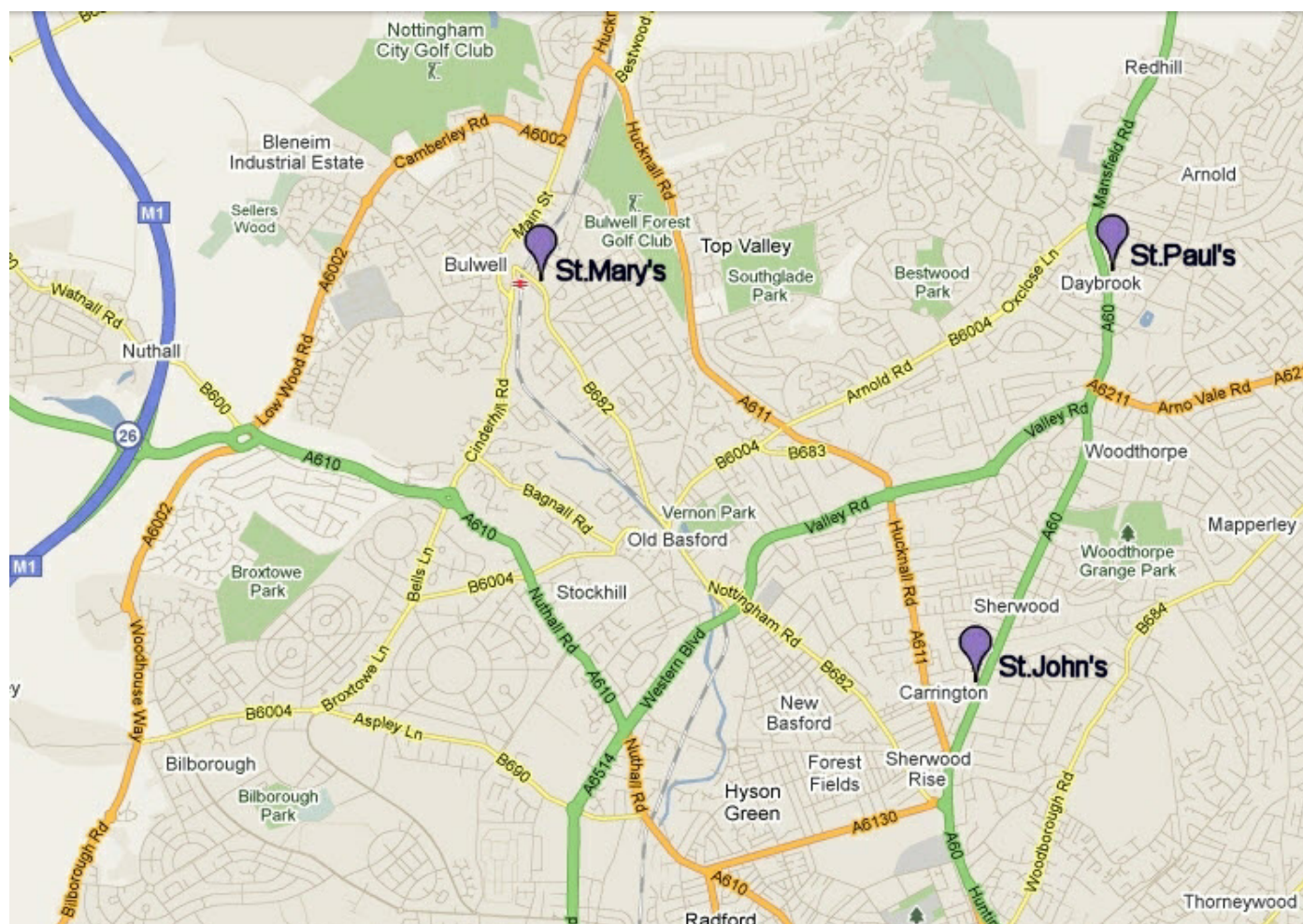
Public transport: Take the tram back to Royal Centre, walk across the front of the theatre and go about 200 yards down Parliament Street, where you will find some bus stops, the 56, 57, or 58 to Arnold (lime green) all pass St John's (the 3rd stop after Hucknall Road).

15:00- 16:00

St Paul's Daybrook, NG5 6JD

Car: From St. John's turn left onto Mansfield Road, and basically stay on the A60, you will pass the end of the ring road (A6514), further on are the monolithic premises of the former Home Brewery, now Notts County Council offices and a road immediately afterwards heading to Arnold town centre and Sainsbury's (Sir John Robinson Way), St Paul's Daybrook should be visible by now, take next right into Church Drive and park on the street.

Public transport: Take lime green bus 58 to Sainsbury's then walk to Church Drive and turn left to the church.



Items of news or articles for the May/June edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 18th April**, 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.