

# NEWSLETTER

MAY 2008

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## LOOKING AHEAD

### Saturday 17 May : Outing to Bridlington and Scarborough

The schedule for the day is:

- 08.00 Depart Derby Council House
- 08.10 Pick up at Allestree (northbound bus stop on A6, south of "Palm Court" island)
- 08.25 Pick up at Alfreton (southbound bus stop on B6179, south of Watchorn island)
- 11.00 Bridlington Priory
- 13.00 Lunch in Bridlington
- 14.30 Depart Bridlington
- 15.00 St Martin, Scarborough
- 17.00 Depart Scarborough
- 20.00 Arrive Derby

Please complete the reply slip below and return it, enclosing payment, to the Secretary not later than 10 May. Details of this trip have been circulated more widely than usual, in the hope of attracting a good coachload - so early booking is advised. It will be noted that the schedule at Bridlington allows members plenty of time to sample that resort's renowned *coastal cuisine* (i.e. fish and chips).

Space allows us to print only the briefest synoptic details of the organs:

**Bridlington Priory:** Anneesens 1889, Abbott & Smith 1909, HN&B 1922, Compton 1949, Laycock & Bannister 1968. Complete rebuild by Nicholson 2004-6.

**Gt:** 16, 8, 8, 4, 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, 2, V, III, III, 16, 8, 4 + chancel division 16, 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, 2

**Sw:** 16, 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 2, II, III, IV, 16, 8, 8, 8, 4 **Pos:** 8, 8, 4, 4, 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, 2, 2, 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>5</sub>, 1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>3</sub>. IV, 8, 8, 4

**So:** 8, 8, 4, 8, 8, 8, 8, 8 **Ped:** 32, 32, 16, 16, 16, 16, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, IV, 32, 16, 16, 8, 4 (some extension)

**St Martin, Scarborough:** Willis 1890, Walker 1984, restoration to original by Principal P. O. 2000.

**Gt:** 16, 8, 8, 8, 4, 4, 2<sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub>, 2, III, 16, 8, 4 **Sw:** 16, 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 2, III, 16, 8, 8, 8, 4

**Ch:** 8, 8, 8, 8, 4, 2, 8 **Ped:** 16, 16, 16, 8, 8, 16

### Saturday 21 June : Visit to organs in Leek

We are indebted to Denis Littleton who has arranged this (self-propelled) event. Three churches will be visited, all containing organs which at some time were products of the former Manchester builder Jardine. Full details next time.

### JULY MEETING : Organs in Cromford

In fixing this meeting for July 23 we managed to overlook the fact that Wednesday evenings in July are always occupied by Cathedral summer recitals. To avoid this conflict, we have changed the date to **Monday 28 July**. We regret any inconvenience caused. Further details in due course.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A clash of bookings at St Nicholas, Allestree, has obliged us also to move the date of the AGM. It will now be on **Tuesday 18 November**.

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To: Mrs S F Hurt, Somercotes House, Leabrooks Road, Somercotes, Alfreton, Derbys. DE55 4HB  
email: hurt@one-name.org ☎ 01773 606900

Please reserve . . . . place(s) @ £15.00 on the coach to Bridlington & Scarborough

Total enclosed £ . . . . . (Cheques etc. to Derby & District Organists' Association)

Name . . . . .

Joining at Derby Council House / Allestree "Palm Court" / Alfreton Watchorn island (delete)

## OTHER CHURCH/ORGAN-RELATED EVENTS TO NOTE

- Sat 26 Apr Philip Scriven : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00  
Sat 26 Apr Derby Choral Union : *German Requiem* (Brahms), *Te Deum* (Dvořák) :  
Cathedral, 7.30  
Fri 2 May Rodney Tomkins, Gillian Chatto + instrumentalists : *Music for a Summer's Evening* :  
Nether Heage Methodist, 7.00  
Sat 3 May Edmund Stow + Steve Callow : St James, Buxworth, 7.30  
Sat 3 May Andrew Storer : St John, Derby, 7.30 (*recital followed by cheese & wine*)  
Sat 10 May Derby Bach Choir *Come & Sing* : St Alkmund, Duffield  
*Dido & Aeneas* (Purcell), *Serenade to Music* (Vaughan Williams)  
(*contact Paul Marshall @ Foulds, Derby, ☎ 344842, to book*)  
Sun 11 May David Redfern : The Organ Loft, Belper, 2.30  
(*booking essential ☎ 01773 822670/828544*)  
Sat 17 May John Pryer : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00  
Sat 7 June Laurence Rogers *Bach for all Seasons* : Hugglescote PC (Coalville), 7.30  
Sun 15 June 4 Organists (inc. David Redfern) : Burton Town Hall, 2.30  
Sat 21 June Ian Tracey : Victoria Hall, Hanley, 12.00  
Sat 21 June Derby Cathedral Choir : All Saints, Matlock, 7.00  
Sat 21 June Derby Bach Choir *Midsummer Music* : St Wystan, Repton, 7.30  
Sat 21 June Nottingham Bach Choir *Lux Aeterna* (Lauridsen), *Mass for 2 Organs* (Widor) :  
St Mary Nottingham, 7.30

This year's series of DERBY CATHEDRAL SUMMER RECITALS begins on Wednesday 2 July with the visit of Naji Hakim (Paris). More information next time.

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## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Arthur Tipper informs us that he has resigned his long-held position at Tutbury Priory, and is now available to deputise elsewhere on occasion.

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## THE ASSOCIATION WEBSITE

We continue to be heavily indebted to David Shooter for his ongoing work in running the website ([www.derbyorganists.co.uk](http://www.derbyorganists.co.uk)). Those who have visited it will have seen that it features a significant local organ, which is changed from time to time. Members are invited to submit details of instruments they would like to be included. Entries must include the usual historical and technical information, a picture and a short sound recording - we can offer help in producing the latter. Contact the Secretary at [hurt@one-name.org](mailto:hurt@one-name.org) ☎ 01773 606900.

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## MEMBERS' FEEDBACK

As reported in our previous issue, no overall consensus has emerged from the debate over the changed style and content of *Organists' Review*, and consequently we are not in a position to make any representation on the subject to the IAO. The Committee did agree at its recent meeting, however, to make contact over the frequent failure to include any mention of us in the Association News section.

## O TASTE AND SEE VAUGHAN WILLIAMS - THE CHURCH AND THE ORGAN

Billed as a major event in this year's programme, this lecture-recital drew a splendid crowd to St. George's Ticknall and provided fascinating insights into the life and career of Ralph Vaughan Williams. The subject was chosen to honour the fiftieth anniversary of the composer's death and, for my generation, which was so well represented in the audience, it had a poignancy of childhood memories, the music of the Coronation and so on. Even as a young boy I can remember how the whole nation sensed that a great man of music had passed when his death was announced on 26th August 1958.

It is always a pleasure to listen to Tom Corfield who led the presentation, and Tom was on top form on this occasion. His colourful accounts of the forthright, sometimes disrespectful views of the composer, spicily illustrated with quotations from letters and biographies, painted a picture of a formidable character right from his early, but short lived, career as a church organist. As organists, it was astonishing, but somehow personally cheering, to discover what a poor view his organ teachers had of an ultimately great composer. The exasperated letter of Alan Gray to Sir Walter Parratt lamenting his pupil's organ talent was in stark contrast with the image that many of us have of the great man whose mighty legacy included the English Hymnal, Songs of Praise and Oxford Book of Carols. Ed Stow took us on a short tour of RVW's career as the musical editor of these great volumes and explained some of the principles which guided the choice of tunes, drawing heavily on ancient sources and in particular English folk melodies. The comparatively small number of tunes RVW composed for certain hymns was represented by King's Weston and the audience gave a hearty rendering of this with 'At the name of Jesus', supported by Derby Cathedral Voluntary Choir. It was so good, one wonders why the tune is not heard more often. (I guess it is due the popularity of that *other* tune.) Reflecting on the many slow tempi indications, 'Dignified and slow', in English Hymnal, Ed speculated as to how much empathy RVW might have had with congregational singing, and the possibility that the lack of this contributed to the shortness (two years) of his career as organist and choirmaster at St. Barnabas, Lambeth.

Choral illustrations were provided by the Derby Cathedral Voluntary Choir and conducted by Tom and Ed. The choir got off to an excellent and appropriate start with a superb performance of O Taste and See. This gem of a piece, admired for its poignant simplicity, is much harder than it sounds and I thought the solo and chorus parts were beautifully crafted. In a different genre, the Sanctus from the Mass in G minor reminded us of that unmistakable spacious and thrilling Vaughan Williams sound. With such a small output of RVW compositions for the organ, it was inevitable that we should hear one of the Preludes on Welsh Hymn Tunes; well, we heard exquisite performances of all three by Ed Stow, and what a delight they were!

One of the fascinating insights from Tom's presentation was the paradox of Vaughan Williams' atheism and agnosticism on one hand, and his enormous and unassailable influence on church music through hymnody in the Twentieth Century on the other. In attempting to understand this, Tom identified the deep rooted love that Vaughan Williams had of English literature which included Church literature and a love of musical expression handed down in England from previous centuries. He combined this love with a fundamental belief in the ability of music to reach beyond the literal meaning of words and to add to them a spiritual dimension.

Thank you Tom, Ed and Choir for such a splendid illuminating evening and thank you to the enterprising choir ladies who served cream teas afterwards! (O Taste!)

*Laurence Rogers*

## JOHN HOUSLEY ADKINS 1869-1947

*We are grateful to John Poyser for this account of his grandfather's life and work.*

John Housley Adkins was born on 28 December 1869, and became interested in pianos and organs during his boyhood, becoming, so others have assured me, a very competent player. My own recollection of this dates back to during the Second World War, when he used to entertain the troops at the YMCA, presenting without music a selection of "pops" and "classics".

As a boy he attended Derby Grammar School, which at that time occupied the old building in St Peter's Churchyard, now the Derby Heritage Centre. On leaving school he joined John Mitchell Grunwell, an ex Hill employee who had established himself in Traffic Street, Derby. My grandfather started work on 29 February 1884, and on 29 July of that year his father, Joseph Adkins, indentured him to Grunwell for seven years. I have these indentures in my possession, and they show that during the first year he would be paid four shillings per week, rising each year by two shillings.

On 11 June 1887, by mutual consent, these indentures were cancelled, and my grandfather went to work with White (later to become White & Sentance) in Grantham, where he was engaged on both organs and pianos. He lodged with a Mr & Mrs Henson, but must have returned to Derby at regular intervals as he met my grandmother at Brook Street Methodist Church, where they married in 1892. Incidentally, there was an early Harrison & Harrison organ in this church, moved there by White from a house in Grantham in 1888.

After their marriage my grandparents settled in Grantham. One of White's other employees was Arthur Spencer, who later had a large piano showroom in Chippenham (Wilts.). He also took on organ repairs, and engaged my grandfather to carry out the more specialist work. A son, Lewis, was born about 1893/4 and around that time Jack (as he was always known) left his employment in Grantham and moved to Denning of Stamford, who had both a piano and an organ connection. There is a Denning organ in Trusley Parish Church which was installed by Adkins in 1949.

Lewis died of a heart complaint in 1897/8 and my grandparents left Stamford and came back to Derby, starting the organ-building business in 1898. In order to supplement the organ work, my grandfather carried out piano tunings and repairs, the first job being a three-and-sixpenny piano tuning.

Grunwell and Denning must have given him a good background, as Jack Adkins was skilled in all aspects of the trade and soon took on and trained other staff. For a time he rented the old Wesleyan Chapel built in 1765 in St Michael's Lane, later purchasing the building; in later years it made way for modernisation, along with one of Derby's famous old inns, the Nottingham Castle. My mother was born in 1903 and by that time he had become firmly established. She remembered meeting Grunwell when she was a little girl, but I couldn't ascertain if Adkins bought his business or automatically picked up the connection.

The firm of J Housley Adkins (whose early labels were John H Adkins) built or rebuilt about 120 organs, and although the majority were fairly local some went as far afield as Chippenham, Luton, Barton-on-Humber, and Stewarton (Scotland); one instrument was even exported to Durban, S Africa.

Adkins' staff included two particular stalwarts, the foreman, Harold Sheraton, who was related to the famous cabinet maker of that name, and Charles Bamberger who shared the voicing and was, I believe, trained by Speechley.

During the period between the two World Wars Adkins carried out work on most of the organs in and around Derby and had a regular staff of a dozen or so men. Many of the organs are still in existence, and although some may not comply with current tonal trends they lack nothing in the quality of workmanship and construction. Electro-pneumatic actions were introduced in the 1930's, some of which are still in regular use, and mechanical floating beam couplers (as "discovered" by the *werkprinzip* enthusiasts) were incorporated into instruments built by Adkins around that time.

The Second World War saw most of Adkins' staff called up into the services, and afterwards (as happened to many organ-building firms) a number dispersed into industry. However, the firm continued to build and renovate organs until 1958 when it was taken over by J W Walker & Sons Ltd., who at the time were extending their connection throughout the country. Apart from Adkins, Hele of Plymouth, Taylor of Leicester and Nelson of Durham, to name a few, were incorporated.

Over the years I have been privileged to work on many of my grandfather's organs, and I have no doubt that long after my demise (and I don't intend going anywhere just yet) organists will appreciate the craftsmanship and durability of his work.

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