

Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

Newsletter



Sydney's Gilded 'Grande Dame' - Tony Westerman

Opportunities to play the world's great organs don't come along very often, usually because they are in buildings that are in constant use. When an email arrived from Robert Ampt, Sydney City Organist for the last forty years, confirming that I was 'in luck' and would be able to play the famous five-manual Hill organ in Sydney Town Hall I considered myself to be a very lucky boy. The organ, when installed in 1890, was the largest organ in the world; today it retains its original tonal structure with two stop additions. A few of the changes made since installation have been retained (concave radiating pedalboard, full enclosure of some departments) though perhaps the most significant change was the lowering of pitch in 1939 to allow performances with orchestras. For specific detail see [here](#).

Rob proved to be an engaging and genial host who gave up much of his Sunday afternoon, ignoring the siren song of his beloved garden after the first rainfall in the Sydney area for some time. Like

all good organists who want others to appreciate the beauty of the instruments with which they are so familiar, Rob was not only willing to move over and allow me to explore the 143 stop instrument, but left me to play for an hour and a half in the empty hall. For any keen organist life really doesn't get much better than that.

Along with his wife, Amy Johansen, Sydney University Organist, Rob presents concerts in the Town Hall introducing the organ to children, as well as encouraging those already well on the way to becoming the next generation of organists, and in Sydney it would seem that there are quite a few young people making that journey. Several of the city churches have created Organ Scholarships to help secure the next generation of players and there is an annual organ competition for Junior, Intermediate and Advanced players who have the opportunity to perform on the Hill organ in front of audiences numbering hundreds rather than handfuls.

DDOA Events 2019

4th February (Monday) 7.30 pm
'Women and the Organ' - Talk by Margaret Eades. St Matthew's, Darley Abbey.
(See page 6)

16th March (Saturday)
Extemporisation - Talk and demonstration by Nigel Allcoat.
St Matthew's, Darley Abbey

10th April (Wednesday)
Joint visit with Nottingham Association to Melton Mowbray Parish Church.

14th May (Tuesday)
Annual Dinner at Horsley Lodge.
Guest speaker: Colin Walsh

June (TBA)
Visit to Clumber Park or Retford.

July (TBA)
Visit to organs in Oxford (Queens and Merton).

September (TBA)
Visit to organs in Lincolnshire.

Concerts & Recitals

Saturday 9th February, 12.30 pm
St. Andrew's Church, Swanwick DE55 1AN.
Lunchtime recital by Martyn Noble, HM Chapels Royal, St. James's Palace
Light buffet from 12, Tickets £6 including buffet, available at the door.

Vacancy

All Saints, Bakewell seeks to appoint an organist to lead the choir and play for services. Adult robed choir with extensive repertoire. Fine 3-manual Brindley & Foster organ. Please contact Canon Tony Kaunhoven 01629 814462.
tony.kaunhoven@derby.anglican.org

Errata

With apologies to David Johnson, the report in the November *Newsletter* (page 3) on Tom Corfield's recital, should have attributed the premiere performance of *Prelude on 'Repton'* in 2005 to David. Francis Jackson, the composer, was present, but did not perform, as asserted, on that occasion.

Photo: Sydney Town Hall; Organ by William Hill 1890 - the "largest in the world", when built.



The Centennial Hall

The Town Hall itself is a magnificent building. The first phase of construction was 1868-1884 and originally housed the city council's offices and a large reception area. The Centennial Hall was constructed during the second phase, 1884-1889, and was designed to house the world-famous organ and provide a suitable venue for the development of Sydney's cultural aspirations.

The architecture is somewhat eclectic in style though it was entirely suitable as it reflected the disparate elements of the Australian population and the civic pride, not just of Sydney, but all of Australia at that time. Whilst some large municipal buildings impress by sheer size, the Centennial Hall impresses with space and elegant classical proportions. The recent restorations of the entire building in 2008-2009 and of the organ over a longer period, are a measure of the esteem in which Sydney holds the building and the organ. The City Hall's excellent [website](#) presents detailed information on the building; for the organ see [here](#).

Until the iconic Sydney Opera House was built, the Centennial Hall was the main concert venue for Sydney and was used extensively for live broadcasts. The coffered ceiling and several small domes help to distribute sound evenly in the vast, elegant, open space which provides comfortable seating for 2,000. During the restoration the acoustic rings that were installed at the request of Australian Broadcasting were removed, restoring the warm and generous reverberation that is

often lacking in civic halls. Even with all of the seating in place there was a reverberation period of a little over two seconds; Rob told me that when the seating on the main floor is removed, the reverberation is perhaps too much.

As a long-term admirer of Willis II & III I was not sure what to expect from an unchanged Hill dating from 1886/1890 as there are so few unchanged instruments in England upon which one can base an opinion; certainly, one would expect bold, well-balanced choruses on light wind pressures reflecting the influence of Snetzler. The playing experience was, however, a revelation, a Damascene moment from which there could be no return. Playing and hearing this instrument was, quite simply, electrifying. It doesn't shout, it doesn't shriek, it doesn't produce an opaque wall of sound – it sings, and it sings in a most musical way with a voice that is bold enough to fill a great concert hall.

Neither should the visual impact of the organ be underestimated: the white, gilded, baroque case designed by Arthur Hill is 82' wide and four stories high; the central tower of the 32' Metal Open Diapason (the largest pipe of which is actually 40' long) sits over the console with two flanking towers framing elegantly proportioned displays of smaller pipes.

There are no electrical components used in the organ action, which is pneumatic on 10" pressure to both keys and stops, with a Barker-lever machine to support five of the fourteen couplers. Piston changes need to be firm to avoid draining the action reservoir thus causing a grand old



Console - Plenty of choice

lady to become a little flustered and breathless. The key action was positive and did not change with the addition of those couplers operating through the Barker-lever machine.

Mixtures abound, though curiously there are few mutations – perhaps one of the reasons that Hill's contemporary commentators thought the design concept conservative when compared with the instruments of Cavallé-Coll.¹ There is, however, sufficient harmonic development in all ranks to overcome any suggestion of dullness, and all of this without resorting to high wind pressures or harmonic pipes in upper registers: Great and Swell flues 3 1/2", reeds 5"; Choir flues and reeds 2 3/4"; Solo flues 3", orchestral reeds 5", Tubas 10"; Pedal flues 3 1/4" and reeds on only 4 1/2".

The scaling of pipes is beautifully balanced and there is no tailing off in upper registers, but should one desire greater definition there are, of course, those forty five ranks of mixtures, including several tierce ranks; the mixtures add brilliance to the Diapason chorus and body to the upper registers of the reeds without competing for dominance. The clarity of line possible in a very grand *pleno* was startling.

At the console the Swell and Great are quite evenly matched, and there is little difference in volume between the Great reeds and Tubas, which are fine specimens – not too tubby and with sufficient bite to hold their own against Great and Swell. Rob encouraged me to play a last verse arrangement to hear the Tubas against Swell and Great. It was a splendid sound that would encourage any audience or

congregation to redouble their efforts and bring a tear to the eye.

The 32' Contra Bourdon on the Great complements the Swell Sub-octave coupler which does not act on the Swell but couples through to the Great at sub-octave pitch adding the joy of two 32' manual reeds to the ensemble; this did not cloud the texture as one might expect – it just raised the hairs on the back of the neck and enhanced the gravitas of the *pleno*.

Quiet stops project well into the hall from the wide case, and there are plenty of subtle combinations and colours available for the Romantic repertoire and to satisfy the accompanist; the 'Cloud of Celestes' from the Swell strings can provide the odour of sanctity beloved of English organists, whilst other flues can provide a canvas of many different textures on which to paint with orchestral colours. There is no extension anywhere on the organ, not even on the 32' and 64' pedal reeds (and yes, the pipes really are 64' long) which leads me to answer the questions most organists would ask.

What does a 64' pedal reed actually sound like?

The vibrations of the lowest notes are so slow that they can be experienced individually; certainly, one can match the vibrations by clapping the hands.

Is it of any use?

Most definitely, yes. It is an audible addition to the Pedal, even at full organ, though it is most useful in the keys of B, Bb, A, Ab



Tony Westerman enjoying a "moment from which there could be no return".

and G to continue the downward tonal progression of the 32' reed. (Imagine the effect of the 64' reed in Liszt's B.A.C.H.) The two ranks are well matched having a rounded tone that underpins the *pleno* without seeking attention.

Is the organ any good for Bach and the wider Baroque repertoire?

Yes. The monumental pieces work incredibly well and chill the spine, though one has to register a very full *pleno* to invest that vast hall with the majesty of Bach's grand works: the quieter pieces also work surprisingly well, with the Hill voicing producing that

subtlety of sound that seeks to caress rather than tire the ear.

Is the organ used very much?

Yes. There are recitals as well as concerts involving the use of the organ, with audience numbers measured in hundreds. Sydneysiders value their elegant Centennial Hall, and the stunning Hill organ, and support the contribution they make to the artistic life of the city.

WT Best gave the opening recital in 1890 to an audience of 4,000. When he and Dr Bridge, then organist at Westminster Abbey, tried the organ in the Hill workshop in England they declared it to be 'the finest organ ever built by an English builder' and 'a marvel of excellence in both tone and mechanism'. One hundred and twenty eight years later, Olivier Latry's view of the organ was that it was still one of the best ten instruments in the world – a marvellous tribute to the skill and vision of Thomas and Arthur Hill, and to the Sydney City Fathers for maintaining the hall and the organ to such a high standard.

My sincere thanks to Rob for his time, his boundless delight in the Hill organ and, perhaps most of all, for his desire to share it with others. I should perhaps also thank Amy (and Rob's garden) for sparing him on a Sunday afternoon.

Tony Westerman

¹ GA Audsley was critical of the instrument, preferring the specification drawn up by HL Roosevelt. See 'Art of Organ Building' Vol. II page 721-727.

Your Association

New Committee for 2019

The AGM last November was well supported, and members endorsed nominations for the committee as follows:

Chairman: Margaret Eades
Treasurer & Gift
Aid Secretary: Gillian Chatto
Secretary: Andy Storer
Newsletter
Editor: Laurence Rogers
Members: Terry Bennett
Geoff Howell
Denis Littleton
Richard Brice
Tom Corfield
Tony Westerman
Past Chairman: John Maxwell-Jones

GDPR

We have changed our Privacy Policy to reflect the fact that the legal basis of "contract" is allowed under GDPR. This would apply to members who pay an annual fee to the DDOA, and enables us to contact those members without explicit consent being obtained. The updated Privacy Policy will soon be available to view on the website.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions for 2019 are due on 1st January. Rates are unchanged from last year. Members will have received the renewal notice from the Treasurer; please respond with payment as soon as possible.

Members' News

David Shooter

We are very sorry to report that David is in poor health and is currently resident in Normanton Lodge Care Home. As a regular attender of meetings, David will be missed. We have appreciated his frequent provision of audio-visual facilities for our events and his role as Webmaster for our website which he founded many years ago.

Daniel Evans

We are delighted to welcome Daniel as a new member from Ashbourne. He is a student at Queen Elizabeth Grammar School Ashbourne, a chorister at St Oswald's, Ashbourne and Organist at St Barlock, Norbury.

Recent Events

Albert Hall Nottingham - The Anniversary Recital by Jonathan Scott, October 2018

Back in the days when Boots the Chemist also had libraries in their shops, the shop fittings in every branch were all to the same high standard and were made in the Boots factory in Nottingham. When Sir Jesse Boot gave the people of Nottingham the magnificent Binns organ, which is in the Albert Hall, the case was made by the same people who fitted the shops, and a magnificent case it is. This recital was to celebrate the opening of the organ, by Lemare, on October 29th 1910. Thanks to a full restoration carried out by Harrison and Harrison in 1993, the organ is in virtually the same state as at its opening.

Jonathan Scott is the organist of Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, and so very familiar with concert hall programmes. It was very much a tribute to the opening recital with two of Lemare's overture arrangements; *Tannhauser* and *Romeo and Juliet* (Tchaikovsky). Both displayed the resources of the organ and organist. Jonathan told us that Lemare's work involves a lot of thumbing down and I must admit that when I got home I had a good look at the Andantino and noticed the thumbing down which I have always ignored. Ketelby's *In a Persian Market* was also from the

first part of the twentieth century and the instrument was able to give an excellent account of it, quite appropriately as Britain led the world in light music at this time, Ketelby was a Midlander, and of course the doyen of light music - Eric Coates - was from Hucknall.

Jonathan himself had arranged the *Prelude, Mazurka and Waltz* from *Coppelia* and then, as if this wasn't enough, he concluded with his party piece - the final movement of Saint-Seans *Organ Symphony*, but as well as playing the organ part, he played the orchestra part as well!

Something I was not familiar with was Marcel Lanquetuit's *D major Toccata*, Jonathan commented that

it was beginning to overtake the Widor as a Wedding piece - I hope not too soon as it sounded fearfully difficult; and with the *Mozart F minor Fantasia* and the *Prelude and Fugue in G minor* by Dupre the organ's potential as a straightforward recital instrument was demonstrated.

All in all a splendid recital. If you have not yet been to one of these recitals, they take place on Sundays, generally about five a year. On-street parking is not too bad - above the Albert Hall is much cheaper than nearer the city centre. Go to the website for details of next year, including a recital by a DDOA member.

Richard Brice



The Binns organ, Albert Hall, Nottingham

Letters to the Editor

Canon Peter Gould writes:

I totally endorse all of the feelings given by Laurence Rogers in his editorial piece of the last newsletter concerning Derby Cathedral's dealings with Tom Corfield over the past year. I couldn't have put it better myself and was very sorry that I couldn't attend his cathedral recital. It was so unfortunate that the management of the cathedral at that time was undergoing change and one wonders if that has got something to do with the fact that the appointing committee for Hugh's replacement was unable to recommend his successor? Having missed Tom's cathedral appearance I was determined not to miss his talk on Parry last month and made a special journey to support him at Darley Abbey. How

gratifying it was to see so many people there. Of course it was helped by the presence of an enthusiastic scratch choir which added to the contrast and interest of the whole evening. For me personally it was lovely to see many friends that I hadn't seen for almost four years now. (How the time flies!) I seemed to have landed in Portsmouth with a bang and am already chair of the RSCM committee and President of the local organist's association. Neither position did I aim for nor expect to have placed upon me.

You may be interested to know that, having enjoyed my organ pilgrimage around Derbyshire churches in 2013/4 I am now planning to do the same in the Portsmouth Diocese in the year 2019. It is smaller than the Derby Diocese and I am hoping to do the whole lot in one year. I already

have my final recital planned in Portsmouth Cathedral in November.

I do enjoy reading your newsletter and wish that we had such a professional one in Portsmouth.

Best wishes to you all in your Christmas preparations and a prosperous new year when it comes!

Canon Peter Gould

Dear Sir,

A copy of your November newsletter recently crossed my desk. Although not a member of your illustrious society, I wholly concur with the editorial comment; Torquemada is alive and well and residing at Church House!

"A Village Organist"

(Name and address supplied.)

Recent Events

'Where it all began'

After the November AGM and refreshments prepared and administered by John Maxwell-Jones, members were entertained by a chat show hosted by our Chairman, Margaret Eades. Four volunteers agreed to be interviewed and tell the story of how they were originally attracted to the organ, leading on to becoming players themselves.



Chairman, Margaret Eades



For **Gillian Chatto**, the organ came to her as an adult. Learning the piano as a child, the repertoire of that instrument kept her completely fulfilled. When she first became aware of the organ it all appeared too complex for her to consider; not just one keyboard, but pedals as well, and as for all those stops and buttons, it all seemed overwhelming. However, after attending a wedding, her interest became piqued and she soon discovered that taken a step at a time it was well within her grasp. Taking lessons with Rodney Tomkins was a great boost; he gave her the foundation for what we all recognise as becoming an extremely competent player, albeit accompanied with great modesty.



Geoff Howell's inspiration as an organist was sparked by the role model of his grandfather, a banker by profession but also an amateur organist and choirmaster. As he gained seniority in the bank, transfers between branches allowed him to hold

a succession of church posts in different parts of the country. Although Geoff was only three years old when his grandfather died, it was a few years later that he discovered his grandfather's legacy from a box of photographs of organs that he encountered during his career. Geoff showed us a selection of these vintage photos projected on a screen. Geoff's own playing career began with lessons at school in Horsham and continued whilst reading Physics at Magdalen College, Oxford. His teacher at Horsham, James Hodgson, was a pupil of Thalben-Ball who in turn was a pupil of Stanford. At Oxford his teacher Walter Hillsman was taught by no less than Jean Langlais, Marie-Claire Alain and Karl Richter. It is no wonder that we can only admire Geoff's playing.



When **Richard Brice** took the chair he told us about his more recent career in Cumbria before moving to Belper. Our November *Newsletter* had carried an article by Stanley Monkhouse about the Whitehaven URC Harrison and Harrison organ - precisely the instrument that Richard played before moving south. He strongly endorsed all that Stanley had described with such enthusiasm. Richard then told us about the organ in Christ Church, Maryport, a bit further up the coast from Whitehaven. This was an example

of his career in rescuing old organs in collaboration with his friend Martin Renshaw. He showed us a photograph of the instrument in its fine mahogany case, originally built as a house organ for an aristocrat in Keswick, then donated and moved to the church in 1881. In most recent times the church decided to replace it with an electronic organ, and fearing its dreadful fate, Martin and Richard succeeded in finding it a new home in France.



For **Ed Turner**, now Assistant Director of Music at Derby Cathedral, his father and uncle were choristers at Southwell Minster, so it was natural that he should also become a chorister there, during Paul Hale's time as Rector Chori. Growing up in such a rich musical environment serviced by the two cathedral organs in the Minster, it wasn't long before Ed succumbed to the organ bug and took lessons from the then Assistant organist, Simon Bell. On to Oxford to read music, Ed became Organ Scholar at Worcester College and came under the influence of Stephen Farr at Christ Church. After graduation he took a teaching post at Dean Close School, Cheltenham in conjunction with assistant organist duties at Tewkesbury Abbey. Thence back to Southwell for a spell as assistant there before coming to Derby. Since the resignation of Hugh Morris, Ed now finds himself in the hot seat until a new Director of Music is appointed; great formative experience indeed, but Ed looks forward to his 'old' job coming back.

The contributions of volunteers were hosted by our ever-polite Chairman, who resisted emulating Graham Norton, but did a fine job more in the style of Michael Parkinson. This was an entertaining event, the venue was comfortable, refreshments excellent, and our thanks go to Margaret and John for their organisation.

Laurence Rogers

Forthcoming DDOA Meeting

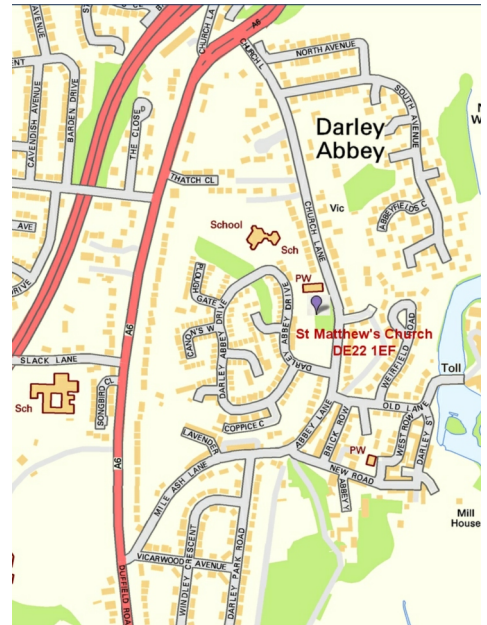
**Monday 4th February at 7.30 pm
at St Matthew's Church, Darley Abbey**

Women and the Organ

A talk and audio-visual presentation by Margaret Eades, surveying the careers of famous women organists in the 20th Century and up to the present day

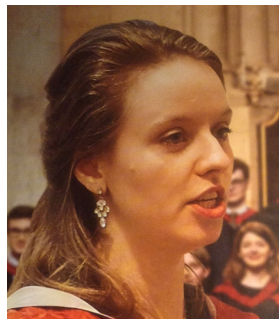
Margaret will talk about the significant role women have played throughout history as performers, educators and composers of organ music. While it appears that many more men in general are attracted to playing the organ, and most professional posts in cathedrals and large parish churches have in the past been the sole domain for male organists. Now that women's suffrage in the UK has celebrated its centenary, more women have the confidence and ability to claim their equal status in this profession and hold positions as cathedral organists and performers of distinction in the recital field.

The meeting will be held in the Fellowship Room at the west end of the church. A large park is adjacent to the church.



How many of these organists can you name?

Come along to the next meeting to find out more!



Items of news or articles for the March/April edition of the *Newsletter* should reach the Editor by **Monday 18th February**, either via e-mail: DDOAnews@gmail.com or by post: Dr Laurence Rogers, 24 St.David's Crescent, Coalville, Leicestershire LE67 4SS. The Secretary, Andy Storer, 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.