

# Derby & District Organists' Association

Registered Charity No. 510567

## Newsletter



### London Organ Day - Denis Littleton

This year's London Organ Day took place at the Guards' Chapel, on Birdcage Walk, which forms part of the Wellington Barracks complex.

The original building, in the style of a Greek temple, dated from 1838. It suffered bombing in 1940 and 1941, and was hit by a V1 rocket in 1944, during a service, killing 121 and injuring 141 military personnel and civilians. The only part of the building to survive was the apse containing beautiful mosaics. Soon afterwards a temporary structure was put in place which resembled a large Nissen hut.

A new chapel, built on the original foundations in the Modernist style was opened in 1963, incorporating the apse and mosaics. Initially a simple electronic organ was provided, but in 1971 a pipe organ was installed by Hill, Norman & Beard using second-hand material. A particular requirement in the chapel was to match a military band! Although adaptations were made in the 1980s and 1990s, its limitations and unreliability made it increasingly unable to meet the demands placed upon it. Eventually a new organ was commissioned from Harrison &

Harrison and completed in 2024. The project was funded by non-public money and private donations.

The Organ Day proceedings opened with a description of the chapel by the Organist, Martin Ford, and he explained how the organ is used from week to week. There cannot be many organists who have to cope with a military band on a regular basis. The chapel also has a professional choir. Martin then gave a recital consisting of *Fantasia in A* by Byrd, *Elegy* by Ernest Farrar, who was killed in WW1, *Saraband in modo elegiac* by Howells and *Praeludium* by Arthur Bliss. I can safely say that the organ would be more than a match for a military band and a congregation of hundreds.

Martin was joined by William McVicker, the organ consultant and Andrew Scott, Managing Director of Harrison's, who talked about the additional challenges of installing an organ in military setting, which include learning a completely new language consisting of acronyms and abbreviations and dealing with committees where the membership changes on a regular basis. On a more practical level, voicing the organ had to be done against military band rehearsals outside!

### DDOA Meetings 2026

#### Saturday 23rd May 2.00 pm

Visit organs in Radbourne and Ashbourne. See page 6.

#### Thursday 11th June 7.00 pm

Visit the Roger Yates organ (1953) at St Andrew's, Kegworth. See page 6.

#### Saturday 25th July Day visit

Visit organs in Selby and South Yorks.

#### Saturday 26th September 2.00 pm

Members' Recital at St Laurence's, Long Eaton.

#### Saturday 31st October 1.00 pm

Association Lunch. Makeney Hall, Milford

#### Saturday 21st November venue TBC

AGM and Chairman's event.

### Other Events

#### Saturday Tea-time Recitals at Holy Trinity, Millhouses S7 2GY. 4.00 pm

Free Entry, Refreshments and 'Have a go' on the organ for young and old.

9<sup>th</sup> May Gillian Chatto (Nether Heage)

13<sup>th</sup> June Andrew Storer (Wirksworth)

11<sup>th</sup> July Robert Quinney (Oxford)

8<sup>th</sup> August George Parsons (Ecclesall)

#### Thursday Lunchtime Concerts at Chesterfield Parish Church, 12.15–1.00 pm

7<sup>th</sup> May Lin Xu-Zhang (Piano)

14<sup>th</sup> May Thady Cooney (Flute)

#### Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> May 1.30 pm

St George's Church, Ticknall, DE73 7JU

*Come and Sing Fauré Requiem and Cantique de Jean Racine.* Derby Bach Choir

#### Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June 9.30 – 6.00 pm,

St Werburgh's Church & Derby Market Hall, Celebrating 50 years of twinning with Osnabrück. Derby Choral Union

#### Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> June 7.30 pm

St John's Church, Mill Street, Derby

*Whitacre, Copland, Barber, Erb, Paulus.*

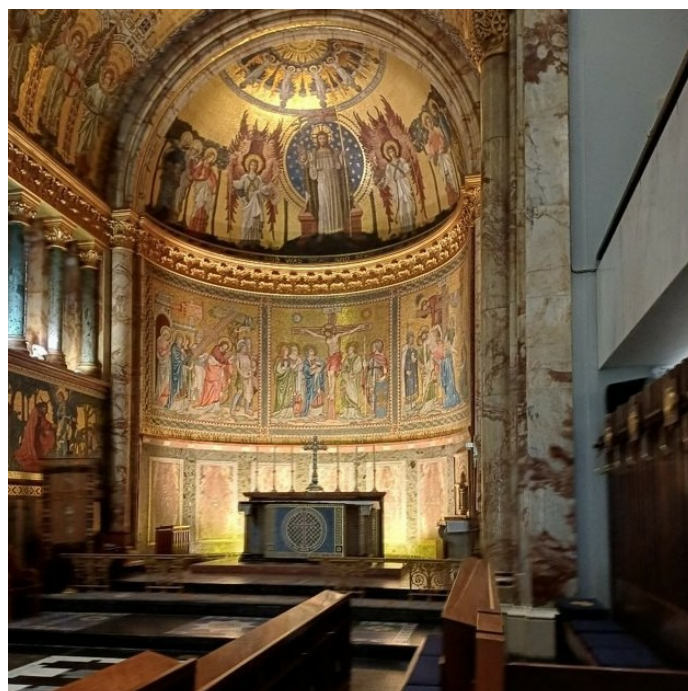
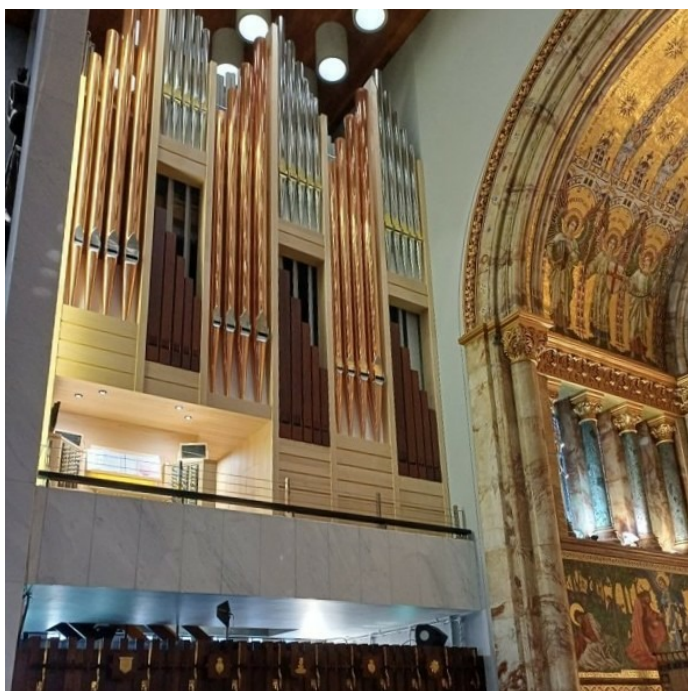
Derwent Singers

#### Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> June 7.30 pm

St John's Church, Mill Street, Derby

*Missa Solemnis - Beethoven.* Sitwell Singers

Main Photos: Guards Chapel, London:  
1971 organ by Norman & Beard  
2024 organ by Harrison & Harrison



The organ and apse at the east end of the chapel

The instrument has 40 stops over 3 manuals and pedal. The first manual is named *Orchestral* and has 5 stops including a 16' *Corno di Bassetto* with 73 notes. The second manual is the *Great* divided into *Primary Great* and *Secondary Great*; either of the *Great* divisions can be played on the *Orchestral* manual. The *Swell reeds* can be played on *Orchestral* or the *Pedal*. To achieve all this there are 21 couplers. In addition, there are 8 pistons on each division, 8 general pistons, 12 reversible pistons, 999 levels of general piston memory and 16 levels of divisional piston memory.

Tom Bell, Artistic Director of the London Organ Day, gave the 2nd recital of the day starting with the *Coronation March* by Meyerbeer, followed by *Praeludium in a minor*, by Buxtehude. This isn't one I know but it might be worth having a look at in a spare moment. Continuing the opera theme Tom concluded with *Fantasie und Fugue über den Choral "Ad nos ad salutarem undam" aus der oper "Der Prophet"* by Meyerbeer.

After lunch Andrew Scott spoke about his life in organ building. It all started when he joined a choir in North Shields and took part in a visit to Harrison's in Durham. At age 13 he wrote to Harrison's telling them that he wanted to be an organ builder. He got no reply, but persisted and was taken on as an apprentice at 16. Life was very different then; bullying in the workplace was rife, although the perpetrators probably regarded it as harmless fun. He said that if it

happened today dismissals would follow. Apparently, Andrew was the last apprentice to be crucified on a day when management were absent. This consisted of a brush handle being thrust through the arms of his boiler suit and being attached to a pulley block and hoisted off the ground, where he remained for about 40 minutes.

By the age of 18 he was going out tuning organs, usually accompanied by a 16-year-old apprentice, which caused some concern to the customers. On one occasion he tuned an organ and was told by the organist that it was not good enough. The organist said he would be back in an hour, so they left the organ alone until almost the appointed hour then made a show of tuning the last 3 notes on the reed stop. The organist returned and declared himself satisfied. Tuning took him to London where he succeeded David Chapman as the London tuner. A return to Durham saw more involvement in voicing and

design and eventually to becoming Managing Director in 2022.

Andrew spoke about apprenticeships. There is no recognised national qualification, partly due to the relatively small number of apprentices. The examining body wanted about 200 a year! Current apprentices consist of college leavers who start at age 16, but the requirement to attend college means that they miss out on a lot of on the job experience, so do not go out of the workshop until 18. Not all apprentices are school or college leavers, they have three who are much older in their 30s or 40s and have taken a large pay cut from more lucrative careers to work in organ building. In conclusion Andrew remembered a comment made to him by a previous MD, Mark Venning, who said that in organ building he would have a very interesting career but would never become a millionaire. He agrees with the first part of that statement, but is still trying to disprove the second part.



Andrew Scott

The final recital of the day was given by Erwan le Prado, Co-titulaire of the Cavaillé-Coll organ in St Etienne in Caen. The programme was all French and mostly loud. It consisted first of the *Rhapsodie Grégorien* by Langlais. This was followed by three pieces by César Franck, *Deuxième Choral*, *Cantabile* and *Pièce Héroïque*. For a grand finale we heard three pieces by Jehan Alain, *Première Fantaisie*, *Deuxième Fantaisie*, and *Litanies*.

Denis Littleton

## Recent Event

### Visit to Aston-on-Trent

For the first leg of the April meeting, members gathered to play the organ in All Saints' Church, Aston-on-Trent, which recently benefited from a restoration grant from the Edmund Stow legacy. The generous bequest from the estate of the late Edmund Stow has allowed the Association the opportunity to help a number of small churches restore their pipe organs to good playing order. Grants of up to £5,000 have been available, though now the fund is almost exhausted.

The history of the organs in All Saints' is a little more interesting than most as the first instrument was a II+P chamber organ by Joseph Walker in 1816, an unusual and expensive acquisition for a small village church. NPOR reports rather cryptically that 'an organ' was enlarged in 1881. However, the current instrument is by Bates, originally built for Holy Trinity, Derby, and moved to All Saints in 1974 by Harold Cantrill. Unfortunately, there was insufficient space for the Open Wood, though the stop remained and is now used for an extension of the Pedal Bourdon.

The recent restoration work by MC Thomson has seen new life breathed in to the instrument, which now has nineteen stops. There are three reeds as well as a good range of foundation stops. The organ speaks well into the building and is once more capable of leading the singing in a full church.

*Tony Westerman*



All Saints', Aston-on-Trent

### Visit to Swarkestone

For the second leg of our meeting, members transferred a few miles up river to St James Church at Swarkestone to join an audience for the opening concert of the organ that has also been a recent beneficiary of the Edmund Stow Legacy; in this case the instrument has been renovated by Simon Tipping of M. Thompson organ builders. The concert was performed by Alexander Binns (organ) together with some solos sung by Thomas Hygate, a junior choral scholar at Derby Cathedral. It was an excellent and varied programme of music. Alex certainly showed the wide variety of music that can be performed on the one manual and pedals organ. There was great variety from the little



St James', Swarkestone

known 18th C. composer Peter Prellieur through Bach, Haydn, Vierre, Guilman, and a tribute to the recently departed Nigel Ogden. The organ was built by Lloyd of Nottingham in the late 1870s and consists of just 7 stops. Originally it was placed in a north east chapel from where it didn't sound well in the nave. Some years ago Ed Stow refurbished it and moved it to a position towards the back of the north aisle from where it speaks very well into the nave. All the manual ranks are enclosed apart from the Open Diapason. It certainly gave a good account of itself in this concert and showed what can be achieved on a small organ with a little thought.



Thomas Hygate and Alexander Binns

Our thanks go to Alex and Thomas for providing us with a varied and interesting programme which was followed by refreshments.

*Andrew Storer*

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## News

### David Aprhamian Liddle R.I.P.

We are sad to receive the news of the death of David Liddle at the age of 66. Many members will recall his celebrity recital at Derby Cathedral in 2015. This was notable for the wonderful range of tonal colours he drew out of the Compton in a repertoire that included great blind organists of the Victorian era. David himself was blind from the age of 12 but this did not prevent him from study at St John's College, Cambridge and a subsequent international career as a recitalist in great cathedrals and concert halls and as a composer. A report of his Derby Cathedral recital appeared in [Newsletter 51 November 2015](#).



## The Making of a Ben Bloor Organist Video

This year the *YouTube* video platform celebrates its 21st birthday, but it became of age a good while ago: Its uses have multiplied exponentially such that it has become a major global broadcaster, with the important attribute that it allows absolutely anyone to originate and distribute audio-visual material. Several young organists have embraced the technology vigorously, and not least amongst these is Ben Bloor, the Derby-grown organist. To date, Ben has clocked up 500 videos of organ performances. Most recently he published a 'behind the scenes' video explaining how he goes about creating videos from his public performances. This one features a recital he gave in Great Malvern Priory back in February. Click on any of the images here to view the video. As ever, you will soon be charmed by his impish wit and unassuming personality. Clearly, as Organist at the London Oratory, he is a thoroughbred professional, and although he describes himself as an amateur video producer, he offers a refined product here, free of gimmicks, and gives lots of useful tips if you feel like following his example.

The essence of video recording these days is in everyone's pocket – the smart phone. Ben uses this



together with two additional cameras, a *GoPro Action Camera* and a legacy *Handycam*. The latter is focussed on the pedalboard and the *GoPro*, although designed for moving sports activities like skiing or mountain hiking, complements the phone camera making possible both right hand and left hand views of the console. All three cameras have to be suitably mounted on tripods, one of which incorporates a beauty-bar type of illuminator for lighting, so the amount of kit that Ben takes to a recital begins to multiply. Although all the cameras include sound recording, for the ultimate sound track, Ben uses a

high quality digital sound recorder in parallel with the video recordings. All the devices are battery driven and store data on SD memory cards. Ben demonstrates some of the vicissitudes (like flat batteries or wobbly music stands) of having to set up so much kit before a recital, but he shrugs these off with "Nothing like a bit of stress to keep you on your toes", or "No time to worry about the music itself"! At one point he admits that "recording recitals can be a massive pain". However, he clearly has the stomach for it; in this video you will see how Ben takes everything in his stride with consummate calm.



Capturing the images and sound is only the beginning of the journey towards the video that appears on *YouTube*. Editing the data on the SD cards is no small matter. It's all done on his laptop with the aid of software and, although most time with this is spent in his dining room, the portability of the kit allows him to snatch moments wherever he might be, like on the train returning home.

Synchronising the data sources, adjusting light levels, applying tasteful zooms and transitions all requires painstaking attention to detail, especially with regard to the phrasing of the music and changes

in the physical activity at the console. Without such care, a stop change might be hidden, or one hand could be hidden by another on a different manual. Ben takes us through much of this in some detail, in a manner that shows that he has learnt the craft from many previous pitfalls. So what of the outcome? Ben's example indicates a video of the final item in his recital, *Litanies* by Jehan Alain. You can see it [here](#); click on the thumbnail image. The four and a half minute product took 40 minutes of editing. With this sort of time ratio, it is no surprise that he has a back log of data awaiting editing.

Finally, there is the chore of submitting the video to *YouTube* for publication; there are several unexpected hoops to pass through here, but Ben explains all these with nonchalance.

*Laurence Rogers*



## The Organ Club Centenary 1926 - 2026

From time to time the Newsletter has carried reports on events organised by the Organ Club. For example, last year I was able to report on a 5-day tour of organs in Norfolk (Newsletter 109). In previous years there have been similar tours in the Birmingham area (Newsletter 99), and the Isle of Wight. Like our Association, membership is open to all who play or simply love to see and hear organs, but its national coverage makes available an enormous range of venues. Particular highlights for me have been opportunities to play organs in the Royal Festival Hall, London and the Symphony Hall, Birmingham. In the present year there have been playing visits to Rochester Cathedral, Brompton Oratory, and recital events at St Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Festival Hall and Oxford. This month sees a visit to Westminster Abbey. Normally visits occur on the third Saturday of each month. Each year there is also a mini-tour and some years an overseas tour. In this coming September there will be a tour of organs in the Basque country of northern Spain.

This year the club celebrates its centenary. The club was founded in 1926 by a group of enthusiasts and Henry Willis III was its first president. The very first organ visit was held at St Michael's Cornhill in the City of London, at which Dr Harold Darke demonstrated the

tone-colours of the newly restored organ in a recital. The pattern of monthly visits has continued ever since. At one stage the club membership peaked 900, although currently it is less than that and individual meetings normally attract about 40 members.

To mark this special year the club has commissioned two new works. *Belvedere* by Errollyn Wallen, Master of the King's Music, was premiered in a celebrity recital by Daniel Hyde at the Royal Festival Hall in January. *Variations on the hymn tune 'Westminster Abbey'* by Denis Bédard was premiered by the young German virtuoso, Jan Liebermann, in another celebrity recital at All Souls', Langham Place, in March.

A further celebratory commission is the book *A Century of Organs & Organists*. This is a compendium of fascinating articles, 21 in all. Edited by Paul Hale, the chapters are grouped under themes: The Club, The Organ, Church Music, Organ Performance and Teaching.

Coincidentally, the grand organ in Liverpool Cathedral celebrates its centenary this year and Ian Tracey will give the Centenary Recital there on 17th October. Organ Club members will be there in force.

If you find the range of club activities tempting, do join us. Here is the [website](#).

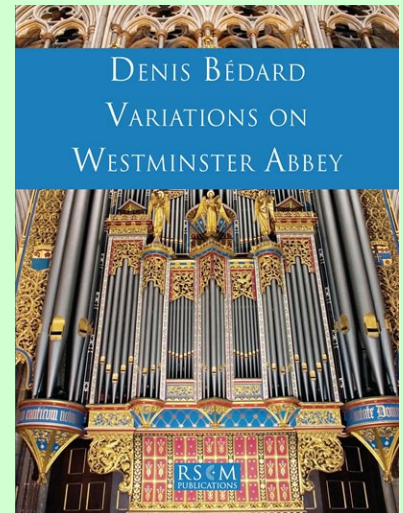
*Laurence Rogers*



Dr Harold Darke hosts the first club visit 1926

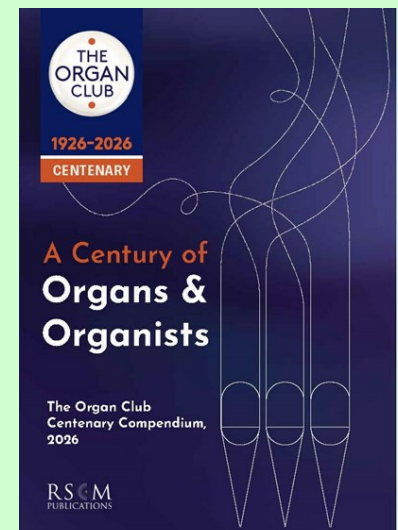


Jan Liebermann gives the centenary recital 2026



Specially commissioned for the centenary, these variations by Denis Bédard are a wonderful addition to the repertoire of pieces for liturgical use. Bédard's compositional style aims to be 'accessible' and in that respect these will not disappoint. It's a great hymn tune and the variety of forms will delight the listener: *Theme, Aria, Duo, Barcarolle, Introspection, Finale (Fanfare - Toccata - Grand Chorus)*

The score is available from [RSCM Publications](#).



Hardback book, 319 pages, charting the changes in organs and organ music in the past 100 years.

Available from [RSCM Publications](#)

## *Forthcoming DDOA Meetings*

**Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> May**

### **Visits to Organs in the Ashbourne Area**

**2.00 pm at St Andrew's Church, Radbourne DE6 4LY**

**3.30 pm at St Oswald's Church, Ashbourne DE5 1AN**

We plan to visit two contrasting organs in classic Derbyshire settings, hosted by two long standing DDOA members.

At **Radbourne** Dr David Wells will welcome us to St Andrew's Church to play the 2 manuals and pedals organ, originally by Conacher (1888) with later modifications by local builders, Harold Cantrill (1970) and Edmund Stow (1998). [Spec.](#) Refreshments will be available.

The church car park is about 80 yards from the church in Church Lane. Look out for the yellow defibrillator box.

Following a 20 minute drive to **Ashbourne**, Michael Halls will welcome us to St Oswald's Church. The organ of 49 stops, 3-manuals and pedals was originally by Hill (1858) and substantially rebuilt by Henry Groves of Nottingham (2011). [Spec.](#) A detailed report of the rebuild appeared in [Newsletter 27 November 2011](#).

Street parking is usually available in Mayfield Road, adjacent to the church.



**Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June, 7.00 pm**

### **Visit to the Roger Yates organ at St Andrew's, Kegworth DE74 2ED**



The organ builder, Roger Yates (1905 - 1975) is perhaps less well known than the big names of his time, but he quietly pioneered a recovery of interest in the historical tonal expressions of Silbermann and Bach, in stark contrast with the prevailing fashion in Britain for romantic organ sound. The Kegworth instrument is regarded as the most mature product of his ideals. Completed in 1953, this was a year before the 'revolutionary' design of the Royal Festival Hall organ appeared on the scene. [Spec.](#)

Come and see how much this instrument measures up to your image of 'Bach' sound and how well it serves music of other periods.

The much revered late Wallace Ross, former organist at Derby Cathedral, played at St Andrew's after his retirement from Derby.

Kegworth is just one mile from Junction 24 on the M1. St Andrew's is right in the centre of the village and there is a car park across the road from the church.

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



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