Chester & North-East Wales Organists' & Choirmasters' Association

Affiliated to the Incorporated Association of Organists

www.cnewoca.org.uk

Newsletter – November 2023

Welcome to the November edition of the Chester and North East Wales Organists and Choirmasters' Association newsletter. This edition includes details of our future meetings for the 2023 – 2024 season. Regrettably, we are now unable to visit Liverpool Hope University and apologise for any inconvenience or disappointment this causes any of our members. The newsletter includes a most interesting article on the organ that was in Methodist Central Hall, Chester (now demolished), details of local recitals and concerts and reports from our last meeting. We hope you enjoy reading it!

We welcome your contributions to the newsletter – please send them to newsletter@cnewoca.org.uk.

Membership renewal

Membership of the Chester and North East Wales Organists and Choirmasters Association (CNEWOCA) runs from September until the following August. Existing members of the Association should have received their renewal invitation from the Membership Secretary. Many members have already renewed their membership. ***Membership must be renewed by November 30th.*** If you haven't already renewed your membership, then please do so now so that you don't miss out on anything.

Anyone who would like to join the Association should please contact the Membership Secretary.

Membership secretary: Mr M Edwards, 5 Bradford Street, Handbridge, Chester. CH4 7DE.
☎01244 676504 rails@talktalk.net

Future meetings

Monday 20th November 7:30pm Hoole Methodist Church, Chester
(3M+P digital organ by Hugh Banton)

2024

Saturday 20th January 2:00pm St Laurence Frodsham
(3M+P Binns 1882, 1923, Sixsmith 1982. NPOR https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/H00016)

Monday 26th February following Evensong: Chester Cathedral (including a visit to the Bell Tower) (4M+P Gray & Davidson 1846, 1866, 1895; C.H. Whiteley 1875/76; Hill 1908; Rushworth & Dreaper 1969; David Wells 1991 ongoing refurbishment.
NPOR: https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/E01969)

Tuesday 12th March 7:00pm: St Mary's Mold
(2M+P Rushworth & Dreaper 1973) NPOR: https://www.npor.org.uk/survey/N08865)

Saturday 20th April 1:30pm – 3:30pm Rhos-on-Sea URC Church (Organ by Conacher)

Saturday 4th May: St Michael Burton and St Nicholas Shotwick

June: To be arranged.

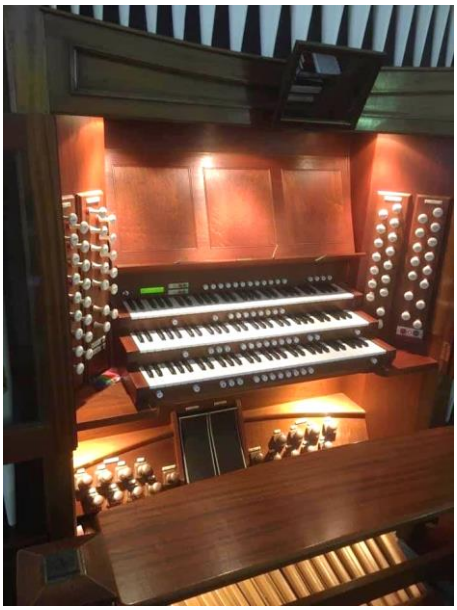
July 2024: Annual General Meeting and organ visit

Autumn 2024
Possible visits to Ellesmere College (Schultze and HN & B organs) , St Asaph Cathedral (Wood of Huddersfield), St John the Evangelist Great Sutton (Alex Young & Sons, 1907)

Our next meeting

Monday 20th November 7:30pm - 9:00pm

Visit to Hoole Methodist Church, Hamilton Street, Chester, CH2 3JG



We are very pleased to visit Hoole Methodist Church to hear from John Evans (our vice-chairman) about the digital organ installed in the church by Hugh Banton. This is a substantial three manual and pedal instrument built into the case of the previous pipe organ. It is regularly used for concerts as well as leading worship at the church. The organ has a great sound with lots of variety in tone colour. (Graham Eccles made a CD using this instrument a couple of years ago.). As you can see from the photograph, the console is well equipped with registration aids! John will demonstrate the organ to us before opening the console for members to try for themselves.

Recent meeting

Visit to Caernarfon on 21st October 2023

Our visit to Caernarfon on 21st October was attended by 6 members and 1 non-member. It was good to meet some of our Welsh members for whom many of our events are too distant.



We met at Castle Square English Presbyterian Church, where Association member, Alun Jones, and his wife, Eileen, welcomed us with tea, coffee and homemade cake. Alun gave us an interesting talk about the history of the organ, referring to the various documents he had laid out for us to see. He then demonstrated the organ before inviting those present to play. We found it to be a beautiful instrument with the comfort of a fully upholstered organ bench!



Alun then led us across to Seilo Welsh Presbyterian Chapel where Gwyn Lewis, one of their organists, made us most welcome. He gave us an illustrated talk on the history of Caernarfon's Welsh chapels and their organs. Seilo is the only Welsh medium chapel left – and even it is not in its original building, which was demolished to make way for a new road. Gwyn then demonstrated the organ using a favourite hymn tune and there was ample time for members to play. The brighter stops could be rather piercing but the action is very responsive; the glass swell box shutters, which sit proudly at the front of the case, entertain the audience/congregation.

Katriona Moulton

Nigel James added:

My thoughts on the Seilo Instrument. It had clear bright choruses as you'd expect from a Neoclassical design and it worked very well in playing Bach. However, I can see why the hosting organist felt the instrument he knew from his youth was superior. It was arguably too powerful, or perhaps harsh might be a better word, for the Chapel and of course it lacked string tone so that its utility is compromised. It was however very responsive on touch.

Details of both instruments may be found in our October newsletter.

Methodist Central Hall Chester

When you struggle to uncover information about something, it's easy to suspect there is some reason for the secrecy. As a youngster, I heard a lot about the great organ that was in the Methodist Central Hall, and it has surprised me how difficult it has been to find out more about it. Are there secrets untold and still to be unearthed?

The Methodist Central Hall in Chester was the venue for my first music exam back in the 1970s. Due to the difference in level between the road and the canal, the church was constructed above the church hall, and was accessed from City Road, with the church hall being at the same level as the canal.



The church opened in 1873, built to seat 672, and was closed due to structural issues and demolished in 1982. Many of the congregation migrated to what was to become a newly constructed church, now known as Caldy Valley Neighbourhood Church, near Sainsburys (combined Methodist/URC).

Back to the Central Hall Organ. I have often wondered just how good that organ was, having only heard it at the closing recital given by Ronald Frost. A story I do remember being told, was that Hadyn Isaacs, Brian Heald's predecessor at the Wesley Methodist Church, and the home of a wonderful and recently restored Binns organ, had applied for the organists post at Central Hall because he was so impressed with the sound and quality or the instrument. Hadyn didn't get the organist's position as it was given to Albert Jones, as he was the accompanist for the then named Cestrian Male Voice Choir (now City of Chester), who rehearsed at Central Hall, and indeed staged many grand concerts there.

I eventually managed to gain some information about the organ from a 1958 Cestrian Male Voice Choir Concert Programme, as I could not find any records on the National Pipe Organ Register. The Central Hall Organ was built by the Chester Organ Builders, Charles Whiteley. There are a lot of similarities between the Central Hall Organ and Wesley Organs. Both organs are of similar specification, Central Hall had 3 manuals and 30 stops (10 swell, 9 Great, 6 Choir and 5 Pedal), Wesley has 3 manuals and 29 stops (10 swell, 8 Great, 6 Choir and 5 Pedal). Both have tubular pneumatic action. The main difference between the two organs appears to be location, with the Central Hall Organ being directly behind the pulpit and speaking out directly into the church, whereas the sound from the organ at Wesley is somewhat restricted by its location.



It seems the Central Hall Organ was 'dismantled' by George Sixsmith. Perhaps this article will bring back a few memories from members of an organ that seems to have been played by very few and largely forgotten.

Sixsmiths have never responded to any requests for information, so I can only recount the stories I have heard and my own personal experiences. I heard several former Central Hall members say that some of the organ was used in the construction of the much smaller pipe organ installed in Caldy Valley Church. Having been organist at Caldy Valley, I couldn't support that story! Another story being that a rank or two were 'saved' for future extension of the organ in Tarvin Road Methodist Church, Chester. The most likely story is that it was transported to a church in Scotland, and I hope it is still making itself heard today.

Methodist Central Hall, City Road, Chester Organ Specification			
SWELL	GREAT	CHOIR	PEDAL
8’ Oboe	8’ Trumpet	8’ Clarinet	8’ Bass Flute
8’ Cornopean	III Mixture	4’ Lieblich Flute	8’ Octave
III Mixture	2’ Fifteenth	8’ Dulciana	16’ Sub-Bass
2’ Piccolo	4’ Principal	8’ Keraulophon	16’ Violone
4’ Gemshorn	8’ Harmonic Flute	8’ Rohr Flute	16’ Open Diapason
8’ Voix Celeste	8’ Clarabella	8’ Open Diapason	
8’ Voil d’Orchestre	8’ Open Diapason II		
8’ Lieblich Gedact	8’ Open Diapason I		
8’ Violin Diapason	16’ Contra Gamba		
16’ Lieblich Bourdon			
Swell Octave, Swell Sub-Octave, Swell to Great, Swell to Choir, Choir to Great Swell to Pedal, Great to Pedal, Choir to Pedal			
Four Thumb Pistons to Swell, Great and Pedal Four Pedal Pistons to Swell, Four Pedal Pistons to Great and Pedal			
Balance Crescendo Pedal to Swell			
Tubular Pneumatic Action Throughout on Charles Whiteley’s exclusive system, designed and executed in Chester by their own staff.			
The instrument was blown by an electric fan with a 3bh power motor.			
Built by Charles Whiteley of Chester			

Organ Recitals at Chester Cathedral

Thursday 9th November 1:10pm David Thorne (Shrewsbury)
Thursday 16th November 1:10pm Andrea Albertin (Italy)
Thursday 23rd November 1:10pm Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 30th November 1:10pm Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 7th December 1:10pm Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 14th December 1:10pm Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 21st December No recital
Thursday 28th December 1:10pm Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)

As of September 2023, organ recitals are now free with a retiring collection. The suggested donation for the recitals is £5. You can Gift Aid your donation; tick the Gift Aid box when donating online or speak with our Welcome Team for a Gift Aid form.

Further details at https://chestercathedral.com/worship-music/organ-recitals/

Music @ Wesley: Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester

Saturday concerts

(Retiring collection)
Saturday 18th November: Organ Day (details elsewhere in the newsletter)
Saturday 16th December, 12:45pm: “Music for Christmas” Claire, Jeremy and Brian Heald

Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts

All concerts start at 12:45pm and last about 50 minutes. Retiring collection.
Tuesday 7th November: Rachel Filhart (Clarinet), John Gough (Piano)
Tuesday 14th November: John Bush (Trumpet), Brian Heald (Piano)
Tuesday 21st November: Chester Competitive Music Festival Winners
Tuesday 28th November: John Gough (Piano)
Tuesday 5th December: Chetham’s School of Music Instrumentalists
Tuesday 12th December: Ben Holland (violin), John Gough (piano)
Tuesday 19th December: William Bracken (piano)

Saturday November 18th 2023

Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester CH1 1DA

ORGAN DAY: Sequence Of Organ Recitals

10.30am: Brian Heald (Wesley)

11.00am: Lawrence Albrighton (Saltney Methodist Church)

11.25am: Revd Roger Hutchings (Wesley)

11.50am: Revd Ken Walker (Wesley)

12.15pm: Greg Yates (Wesley)

12.40pm: Jeremy Heald (Wesley)

13.05pm: John Evans (Hoole Methodist Church)

13.30pm: Nigel James (St John's, Great Sutton)

Finish at 2pm

Drop in for as long as you'd like and enjoy refreshments at the Wesley Café

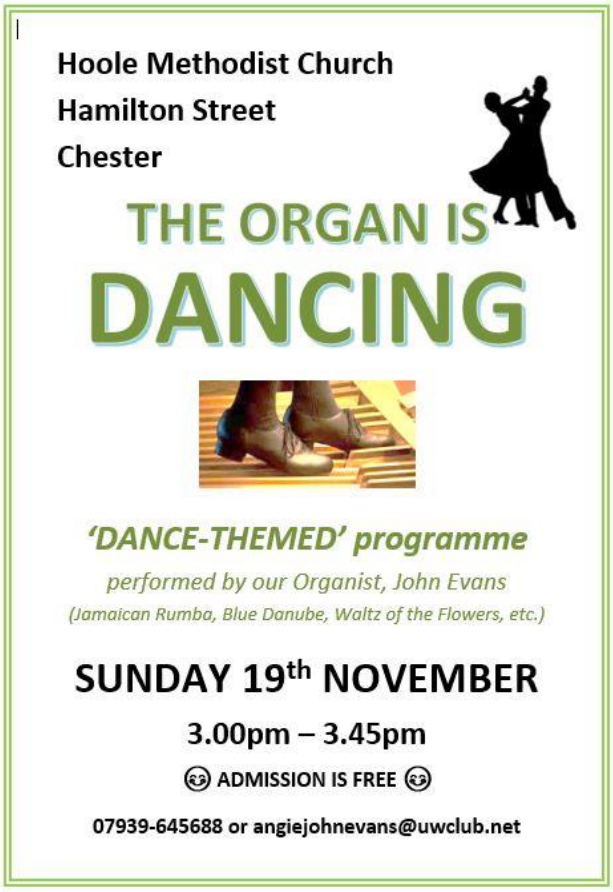
Donations in aid of Christian Aid

Organ Recitals UK

If you want to attend an organ recital, you may find the website https://www.organrecitals.uk/ helpful. It is operated by Roger Wilcox and is the "successor" website from one operated for over 18 years by Stephen Smith. It is easy to use – you can search for a recital by date, venue, and organist. The web site depends on venues, organiser and organists putting the details of their recitals on the website through a straightforward web form. Give it a try if you are hosting or playing a recital. (It's free!)

Liverpool St George's Hall

Prof Ian Tracey plays the 1855 Father Willis organ on Tuesday 5th December at 12:45pm-1:30pm Tickets £5 at the door.





Liverpool Philharmonic Hall
Monday 15th January 2024 1:00pm
Ian Tracey

Handel/Goss-Custard *Overture 'The Occasional Oratorio'*
Albinoni/Rawsthorne *Adagio*
J.S.Bach/Goss-Custard *Chaconne in D minor*
Dvořák/Goss-Custard *'Largo'* from *New World Symphony*
Tchaikovsky/Tracey *Suite* from *Nutcracker*
Porter-Heaps/Tracey *Nocturne for an Orange*
Respighi/Tracey *Pini della Via Appia 'The Pines of Rome'*

Ian Tracey returns to the console of the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall organ, presenting his 'one man band' in a programme of orchestral transcriptions of his own, alongside some by his two Liverpool Cathedral organist predecessors. **Tickets £12**

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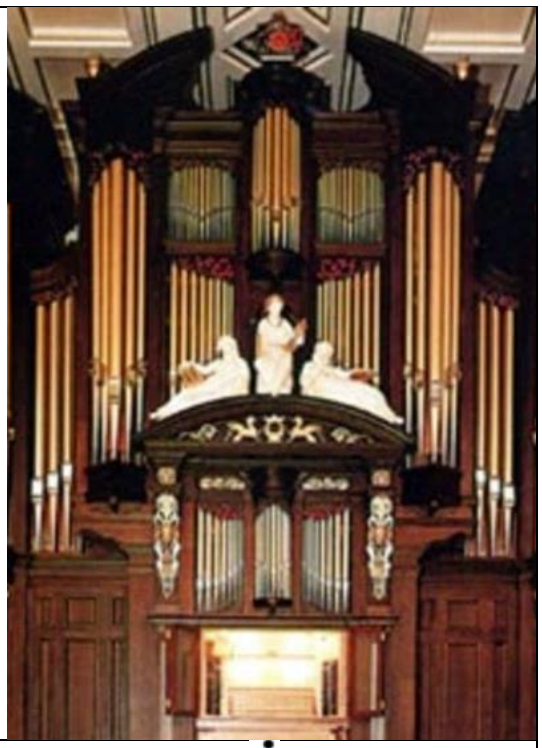
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Can you name the organ and its builder?







Bolton Town Hall	New College, Oxford	Grand Organs and Bradpeg	Klonkat
J.W. Walker	0E400V\vgvrug\uk.gro.rogo.www\\:sptth	https://www.rogo.org.uk/grugvg/52500A	https://ssslso.org.uk/?page_id=5454

Click ***i*** *for details of the organ*

IS / 8 November 2023