

Newsletter – April 2024

In this edition of the newsletter, you will find an interesting article written by our member Brian Moate on history of the hymn *Guide me O Thou Great Redeemer* and the tune *Cwm Rhondda*. I'm sure we've all sung this great hymn, and it is helpful to have some background to its words and the tune. There is also an article about some of the Town Hall organs in the region.

If you are able, please consider writing a short article for our newsletter. We'd love to include your review of a piece of music or a recording, a history of the organ you play or know well, some hints and tips you want to share about playing the organ, details of interesting instruments you have come across in your travels near and far, and anything else of organic interest. We can cope with most formats of material (including handwritten material). Please send your contributions to the Publications Officer.

The details of our forthcoming meetings show the great variety of instruments and buildings we are planning to visit. As the weather improves, we hope more of you, our members, will be able to join in these events.

Emails from CNEWOCA

We've made a small change to the email messages we send.

All members, for whom we have an email address and who agreed to receive email messages from the Association, will be sent

- messages about (late) changes to the programme of events,
- selected special announcements (of concerts and recitals etc.)
- a message with the link to access each newsletter online when it is published.

For most members this is not a change. Members who opted to receive the newsletter in paper form will continue to be sent their printed copy through the post as well as being sent the email with the link to the newsletter. Details of late changes to the meeting programme will continue to be sent only via email. Members who choose not to receive email from CNEWOCA, won't be sent anything.

The committee agreed to making this change so that information could be received by members with minimal delay. Some members have said that the posted newsletters are taking almost a week to be delivered.

If you would like to change your option to receive email from the Association you can let the Membership Secretary know or send me a message directly.

What would you like to do?

Your management committee is already planning visits for our 2024/2025 season and would value your input. Looking back through recent visits, our average attendance is eight (roughly a quarter of our membership) but can fall as low as five. Such a low number is a source of some embarrassment when our hosts have given up an evening or afternoon of their time to welcome us.

If you are one of those members who has not attended a meeting for a while, can you suggest anything which would make it possible for you to attend? This might include a more convenient venue or holding a meeting on a different day of the week. For example, our visit to Caernarfon in October was attended by seven members, including four local members for whom most of our visits are too far away.

Please send any ideas to secretary@cnewoca.org.uk or to any member of the committee.

Our next meeting...

St Mary's Coddington, Saturday April 20th 1:30pm – 3:30pm

We were to visit the United Reformed Church at Rhos-on-Sea to see, hear and play the Conacher organ in the church. Unfortunately, the organ has developed a fault which the church are not able to have repaired at the current time – so our visit to Rhos-on-Sea has been cancelled.

Instead, we are going to visit St Mary's Coddington, just outside Chester.

There has been a church on the site at Coddington since the 10th century and the present building was built in 1833 replacing an earlier church. It is a grade II listed building.

The small organ is in the west gallery: NPOR says it may be a Willis (post 1855) and that it has been restored in 1987 by either Sixsmith or Rushworth and Dreaper.

The stop list is

Pedal 16 Sub Bass;

Great Open Diapason 8, Lieblich Gedackt 8;

Swell Flute Harmonique 8, Geigen Principal 8,

Geigen Principal 4;

Swell to Grt, Grt to Ped, Sw to Ped.

Tracker action.

We will be able to see, play and hear this instrument.

Tea and coffee will be available and there will be time to chat and enjoy being together; there are toilets in the adjacent Parish Room.

There is parking alongside the Parish Room, with space for six cars if those arriving first reverse back to the field gate. This car park can get muddy in wet weather. You can park on the road.

Please be aware that the organ is located in a west gallery. Care should be taken on the steps and in the gallery itself where the floor is on different levels. Please do not walk behind the organ as the floor there is unsound.

The postcode for St Mary's is CH3 9LR.

Directions

- From A41 turn for Handley, then follow Aldersey Lane until you reach the church.
- From A534, turn opposite the entrance to Carden Park Hotel into Mill Lane; at the pond turn right onto Beachin Lane, then right again onto Aldersey Lane.
- (From A534 you can turn at Barton but this is not advisable as there is a single track section where you may well meet a caravan.)

We are grateful to Katriona and Raymond Moulton for arranging this visit for us.



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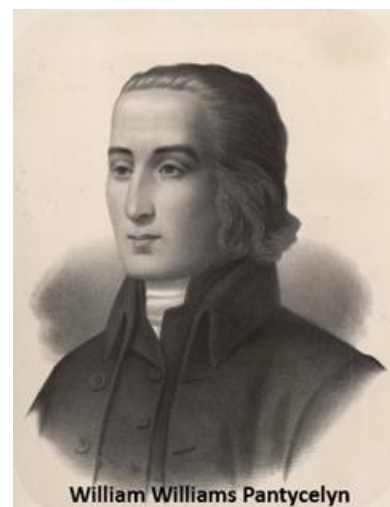
6 St Stephen's Close, Heswall, Wirral. CH60 3TA

Guide Me O Thou Great Redeemer

There are many fine Welsh hymns, but none greater than 'Guide me O thou great Redeemer'. In some translations Redeemer becomes Jehovah, and we sing it to that magnificent tune 'Cwm Rhondda'.

The hymn was written by the acknowledged greatest Welsh hymn writer William Williams Pantycelyn (1717-1791) from Carmarthenshire. (Pantycelyn was the name of a farm inherited by his wife). It was first published in Welsh in 1762, with six verses. Peter Williams (not related but a contemporary) translated some of it into English and it was published in 'Hymns on various subjects' in 1771. There is a Memorial Chapel dedicated to William on the main street in Llandovery.

This hymn is really a product of the Welsh revival movement which swept through the eighteenth century led by a 24-year-old Calvinistic preacher called Howell Harris. It was William Williams, who at 20 years old was touched by Howell's preaching, and travelled all over Wales himself on horseback preaching (usually outdoors) and singing the Gospel in his native tongue.



The hymn uses symbolic imagery of the Israelites travelling through the wilderness from the escape from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12-17) and their arrival some forty years later in the land of Canaan. Their needs were supplied by God, in the form of 'manna', referred to in our hymn as 'Bread of Heaven'. Twice they became faint through lack of water. Moses struck a large rock in Horeb with his staff, and out of it flowed a pure crystal stream. 'Open thou the crystal fountain whence the healing stream doth flow' we sing now. God guided their journey by a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. . We sing 'Let the cloudy, fiery pillar lead us all our journey through'. Miners in the Rhondda valley were said to sing it in their daily work, and it was used in the 1941 film 'How Green was my Valley' based on a 1939 novel by Richard Llewellyn. It was also sung in many events of State such as weddings and funerals.



Our famous tune was composed by John Hughes (1873-1932) in 1907. Hughes was born in Dowlais, and brought up in Pontypridd. At the age of 12 he began work in Glynn Colliery in his hometown and subsequently became a clerk at the Great Western Railway in Pontypridd. He served as a deacon and leader of the congregational singing in Salem Baptist Chapel in Pontypridd.

The hymn and tune are both in some circles often called 'Bread of Heaven' because of the repeated line in our usual

translation. The first version was written for a 'Cymanfa Ganu' (Hymn Festival) in Pontypridd 1905, at which time the Welsh Revivalist movement still remained. Its present form was for an organ inauguration in Hopkinstown in the Rhondda Valley. Some scholars have detected a similarity between the tune and Haydn's String Quartet Op76 no 3 (2nd movement) from 1797, which was later used as a basis for the German National Anthem. We know that as the hymn tune 'Austria' (sung to several hymns including 'Praise the Lord ye heavens adore Him'). But the tunes first use was for a Welsh hymn by Ann Griffiths which translates as 'Lo, between the myrtles standing'. It was to those words that it was first published in 1907.



There is also another later hymn 'God of Grace and God of Glory' which also uses the tune 'Cwm Rhondda'.

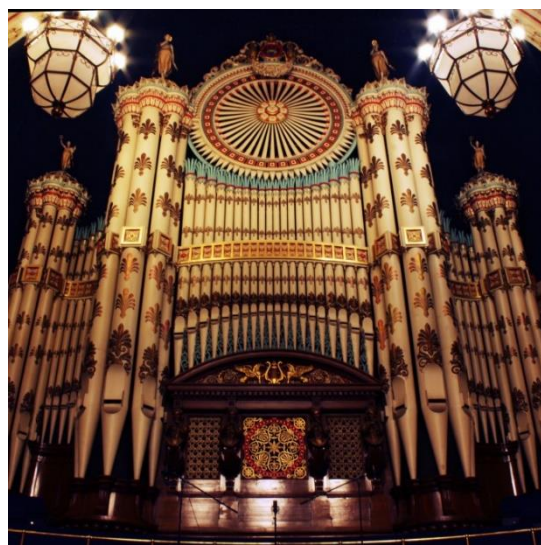
Town Hall Organs

In the nineteenth century many large cities and towns commissioned pipe organs for their Town Hall or other “public” hall. There was some civic rivalry between the towns and cities over the size and quality of their instruments. This note provides some information about some of the “Town Hall” organs in our region. Perhaps you might like to go and visit these “Town Halls” or attend a concert when you are in the area.

In **Liverpool**, the city fathers commissioned Father Henry Willis to build a large instrument for St George’s Hall. It was completed in 1855 with four manuals, pedals and 100 speaking stops and an unusual manual compass of 63 notes (GG to a). It comprised a total of 119 ranks of pipes, plus 10 couplers, 10 composition pedals, and 36 pistons to set combinations of stops.

W. T. Best was appointed corporation organist in 1855, a post he held until he had to retire due to ill health in 1894. For his nearly forty years he gave three recitals a week in St George’s Hall and his performances rapidly became famous throughout England. For many of his audience, this is where they heard much of the classical music repertoire played as transcriptions on the organ. Best published a great deal of music including editions of Mendelssohn’s organ sonatas and Bach’s organ works.

The organ was rebuilt by Willis III in 1931, when the number of stops was increased to 120. In 1979 Willis IV rebuilt the instrument and over the period 2000-2007 repairs were carried out by David Wells, Organ Builders, who maintain the instrument.



Across the Pennines, the famous London firm of Gray and Davidson completed the **Leeds Town Hall organ** in 1859. This instrument had almost 100 stops and included many technical innovations. Leeds’s resident organist was Dr William Spark, who had also helped design the organ. His frequent recitals were hugely popular. Most of the music he played was not organ music – arrangements of popular operatic airs and overtures featured heavily, and although the revival of interest in Bach’s music was acknowledged, it was considered a little too serious to be played frequently. The Leeds organ has been rebuilt in 1905 by Abbott & Smith, overhauled in 1927, and during the 1960s it became unreliable, and falling silent by 1968. Wood & Wordsworth rebuilt the instrument (as a smaller three manual organ) in 1972.

The organ is now being rebuilt / remodelled by Nicholson & Co. with six manual divisions, 108 speaking stops and a four manual

console. The Town Hall is also undergoing major refurbishment and it and the organ are expected to reopen in 2025.

The **Manchester Town Hall** organ was built by the Parisian organ builder Aristide Cavaillé-Coll in 1877, enlarged by him in 1893, and then rebuilt by the English firms Lewis & Co. in 1912 and Jardine & Co. in 1971. There were frequent concerts at the Town Hall when the instrument was first installed, though many English players found the French ventral stop control too difficult to cope with and some declined to play. The “English” rebuilds resulted in a more conventional concert instrument, and some revoicing and the addition of stops resulted in the organ’s French accent being anglicised.

I remember attending Tuesday lunchtime concerts in the early 2000s given by Nigel Ogden. These free concerts included “classical” organ repertoire and some “light classical” and popular pieces: sadly they were rather poorly attended and the organ’s deteriorating condition could sometimes not be disguised by the talented player.



Manchester Town Hall is a fine building designed by the famous Victorian architect Alfred Waterhouse. The Town Hall is presently being renovated and restored to its former glory and the organ too is being restored. The organ will be returned in almost every way to its 1893 condition, including the re-establishment of the original pitch, the manufacture of new actions (with three new Barker Lever machines), new console, chests, and aspects of the wind system, all in a strict replica of the Cavallé-Coll style. The casework will be returned to its original 1877 appearance. This major work is being carried out by Nicholson & Co. and Flentrop Orgelbouw and is expected to be finished in 2025 when the Town Hall restoration is

scheduled to be completed.

There is a huge amount of detail, include the full condition report about the organ and wonderful photographs of the work on the Nicholson website.



Rochdale Town Hall was designed by William Crossland and opened in 1871. The organ, which was installed in 1913 and was a gift of philanthropist Sir Samuel Turner on the occasion of the visit of King George V and



Queen Mary, who were present for its opening recital. Constructed by J.J Binns of Bramley in Leeds and considered one of his finest works, the instrument features 3,018 pipes and 53 speaking stops. It stood in pride of place for over 60 years, until it was rebuilt by J.W.Walker & Sons Ltd in the late 70s. It still remains one of the finest musical instruments in the country as well as a superb example of J.J. Binns' craftsmanship. Tonally the organ was clearly influenced by the work of Edmund Schulze – Binns was a great supporter of Schulze voicing and pipe

scaling and rebuilt the large Schulze organ at Armley (Leeds).

Apparently some major work needs to be carried out on the organ and Rochdale Council undertook a survey in 2022 about the future of the organ – I've not heard what the outcome was. It is still played and recorded on a regular basis and features in a number of recordings and YouTube videos by Jonnathan Scott.

Reference

Liverpool:

Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_George%27s_Hall,_Liverpool

St George's Hall: <https://www.stgeorghallliverpool.co.uk/events/st-georges-hall-organ-recitals/>

Leeds:

Nicholson website: <https://www.nicholsonorgans.co.uk/pf/lth/>

City Council: <https://www.leedstownhall.co.uk/support-us/organ-renewal-project/>

City Organist: <http://www.dariusbattiwalla.com/organ.html>

Manchester

Manchester City Council: https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500354/our_town_hall/7676/heritage_and_art/7

Nicholson website: <https://www.nicholsonorgans.co.uk/pf/mth/>





Rochdale

Rochdale Council: <https://consultations.rochdale.gov.uk/research/rochdale-town-hall-organ-survey/>

IAO: <https://iao.org.uk/ortoa/rthorgan.htm>

Jonathan Scott: <https://www.jonathanscott.co.uk/rochdaletownhallorgan.htm>

Future meetings this season

<p>Saturday 4th May 11:30am – 1:30pm</p>		<p>Visit to St Nicholas' Church Burton to hear and play the 1935 John Compton unit extension pipe organ (5 ranks), II/25. This organ was rebuilt by Rushworth and Dreaper in 1985. St Nicholas' Church, The Village, Burton, Neston. CH64 5TG NPOR: N04342 <i>It is intended that we move from Burton to Shotwick (about 5 miles, 12 minutes by car)</i></p>
<p>Saturday 4th May 1:30pm – 3:30pm</p>		<p>Visit to St Michael's Church Shotwick to hear and play the organ at the church. The church is a Grade 1* listed building with many interesting features and furnishings. The organ is not listed in the NPOR but looks interesting. St Michael's Church, Shotwick Lane, Shotwick. CH1 6HX <i>Shotwick Church will be open to the public on the day of our visit.</i></p>
<p>Saturday 22nd June 2:00pm – 4:00pm</p>		<p>Our Annual General Meeting, followed by an opportunity to hear and play the fine Hill organ (III/32) in All Saints' Church Gresford. Proceedings will start in Church House (opposite the church). All Saints' Church, The Green, Gresford. Wrexham, LL12 8RG NPOR: N11754</p>
<p>Saturday 20th July <i>Times to be confirmed</i></p>		<p>Visit to Ellesmere College to hear and play the Schulze organ in the Great Hall (moved here from St Mary's Church Tyne Dock, South Shields) III/34 and the Hill, Norman & Beard organ III/37 in the College Chapel. NPOR: Schulze Organ N04793 NPOR: H N&B Organ N18268 See also: The Organs of Ellesmere College</p>

Live music!

Chester Cathedral organ recitals

Thursdays at 1:10pm

Organ Recitals are free with a retiring collection and no ticket is required. The suggested donation for the recital is £5.

Thursday 11 th April	Geoffrey Woollatt (Manchester Cathedral)
Thursday 18 th April	Daniel Mathieson (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 25 th April	Martyn Strachan (Edinburg)
Thursday 2 nd May	Philip Rushforth (Chester Cathedral)
Thursday 9 th May	Lyndon Hills (Nantwich)
Thursday 16 th May	Ben Chewter (London)
Thursday 25 th May	Julian Kelly (London)
Thursday 30 th May	Alexander Lanigan-Palotai (Chester Cathedral)

Details of Chester Cathedral Grand Organ NPOR: [E01969](#)

Music at Wesley

Wesley Church Centre, St John Street, Chester

Tuesday Lunchtime Concerts

12.45 – 1.35 pm

Retiring collection

Tuesday 16 th April	Hefin Flute And Harp Duo
Tuesday 23 rd April	Chetham's School of Music Pianists
Tuesday 30 th April	Bethan Harper (Clarinet), Tim Stuart (Piano)
Tuesday 7 th May	Simon Watterton (Piano)
Tuesday 14 th May	Jeremy & Brian Heald (Piano Duets & Solos)
Tuesday 21 st May	Matthew Lau (Piano)
Tuesday 28 th May	Richard Haslam (Guitar), with David Hammond (Piano)

Saturday Organ Recitals

12.45 – 1.35 pm

Retiring Collection

Saturday 20 th April	Brian Heald (Wesley Chester)
Saturday 18 th May	Michael Reynolds (St Mary's Handbridge)
Saturday 15 th June	Paul Carr (Birmingham)

Details of the Binns organ in the Wesley Centre are at the NPOR [D04853](#).

Liverpool St George's Hall

Tuesdays from 12:45pm – 1:30pm. Tickets (at the door) £5.

Professor Ian Tracey, Organist to the City of Liverpool.

Tuesday 30 th April ^h	Tuesday 24 th September
Tuesday 21 st May	Tuesday 15 th October
Tuesday 18 th June	Tuesday 12 th November
Tuesday 2 nd July	Tuesday 10 th December

Details of the Willis Organ in St George's Hall may be found on the NPOR [N01921](#)

Liverpool Cathedral

Easter Organ Recital

Saturday 20th April 11:15am-12:30pm Richard Lea (Metropolitan Cathedral, Liverpool)
Admission £10.

Summer Organ Gala

Saturday 15th June 7:30pm -8:30pm Danile Bishop, Freddie Harvey, Ian Tracey and Ian Wells with the Liverpool 24 choir directed by Stephen Mannings
Admission £10.

Sunday Recital Series

Sundays at 2:15pm – 2:45pm (before Evensong) Retiring collection.

Sunday afternoons from April 21st until July 21st.

The recitalists are members of the Liverpool Cathedral music team.

Details of the Willis Organ in the cathedral may be found on the NPOR [E00301](#)

Sunday 19th May 3:00pm at Hamilton Street Methodist Church, Hoole, Chester

GRAHAM ECCLES will be giving a concert of PIANO and ORGAN solos.

The concert is free, will last around 45 minutes and will be followed by refreshments.

Music at Blackburn Cathedral (**Blackburn Cathedral Organ NPOR: [E00533](#)**)

Bank Holiday Celebrity Series

Monday 6th May 11:00am

Darius Battiwalla (Leeds City Organist)

Monday 27th May 11:00am

John Hosking (Organist in Residence , Blackburn Cathedral)

Monday 26th August 11:00am

Martin Baker (Former Master of Music, Westminster Cathedral)

Admission £10 (at the door)

Wednesday Concerts

Wednesday 17th April

Ed Jones (Wakefield)

Wednesday 24th April

Angela Hicks (soprano) John Robinson (piano)

Wednesday 1st May

Michal Szostak (Poland)

Wednesday 8th May

Brittany King (soprano)

Wednesday 15th May

Nigel Spooner (Lancashire)

Wednesday 22nd May

Lyndon Hills (Nantwich)

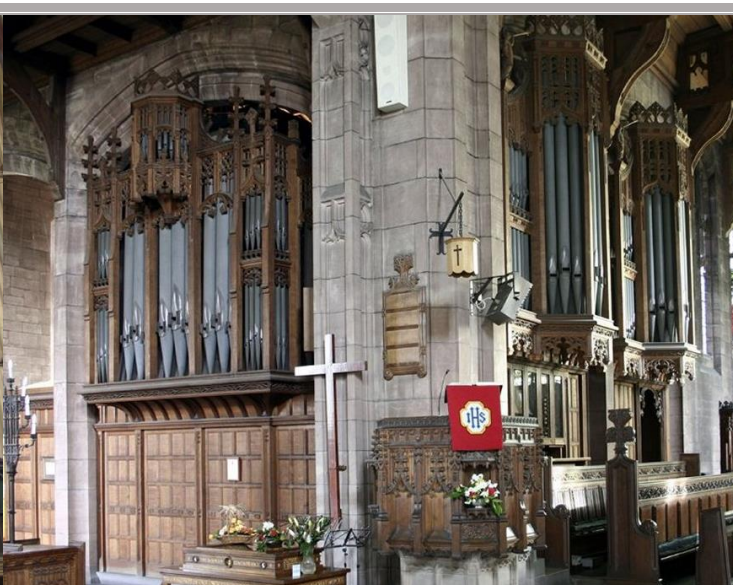
Wednesday 29th May

Matt Haynes (Stonyhurst College)

The concerts begin at 12:15pm and are free to attend. Unless stated, all Wednesday concerts feature the iconic Wood/Walker organ.



St Bartholomew, Armley, Leeds



Christ Church, Port Sunlight, Wirral



Salamanca Cathedral, Spain.